

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (INC.)
SUID-AFRIKAANSE INSTITUUT VIR RASSEVERHOUDINGS (INGELYF)

MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO INQUIRE INTO THE
TRAINING OF DENTISTS.

This memorandum will deal with the necessity for providing adequate dental services for Non-Europeans throughout the country and with the desirability of training Non-European dentists to work amongst their own people.

1. THE NEED FOR DENTAL SERVICES FOR NON-EUROPEANS -

To our knowledge no survey has been made of the need of Non-Europeans for dental treatment but according to the Report of the National Health Services Commission there is a very high incidence of dental caries in the population of South Africa the major portion of which "goes entirely without dental care". The effect of this "upon the general health of the country must, in the aggregate, be enormous." There is no need to stress the low level of health which the Non-European population endures. (Para 51, Para 59).

The resolve of the government to carry out in some form a national health service and the desire of the soldiers that a National War Memorial should take the form of the provision of health services for Non-Europeans seem to underline the need for full provision being made for the sound health of the whole population. Although "dental health is largely dependent upon adequate nutrition in the pre-natal period and during the first two years of life and upon proper dental and oral hygiene throughout the rest of life...." 1. there is constant need for prevention and conservation and for periodic examination. To-day the Non-European population does not receive such adequate diet and its dental need is presumably all the greater.

The problem therefore would appear to consist not only in ensuring adequate diet for the Non-European population but also, and at the same time, providing adequate facilities for extraction, preservation and care of the teeth of the present and future generations of Non-Europeans.

2. THE DEMAND FOR DENTAL TREATMENT -

It has been suggested that the Non-European population do not exercise an effective demand for dental treatment - that they are not "dental-minded". In the almost complete absence of dental facilities, it is difficult to estimate what the attitude of the Non-European peoples is to treatment: but even should such demand be relatively small at present, it is not to be doubted that in the near future, particularly if the needs of Non-European school children are attended to, there will be an increasing demand and one which the dental profession, whether in private practice or in public service, will not be able to meet. Experience in connection with Non-European hospitals would tend to show that Non-Europeans will make full use of health facilities offered to them. Africans are already definitely "hospital-minded" and it is not to be doubted that should opportunities for dental treatment be made available to them, they will be used to the full. It is said that Africans will go to those dentists who will take them.

3. EXISTING SERVICES -

"There are 721 dentists on the register of the Medical Council of whom 674 are in private practice. 2. The Public Health Department employs one dental officer, the Transvaal and Natal Provinces employ 3 full-time dentists each, and a few local authorities, e.g. Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Germiston, Johannesburg employ whole-time dentists. 3. Apart from one or two other instances, "almost all dental treatment is provided by private practitioners and those who are unable to

pay/-

1. p.33 para 13 National Health Services Commission Report.
2. National Health Services Commission Report p.50 para 47.
3. Ibid paras 48-50.

pay must either do without it or accept the charity of the dentist. The provision of dental treatment for low-income groups is negligible and, where it does exist, is due to the activities of a few local enthusiasts".⁴ There is no definite government policy.⁵

4. THE FUTURE -

The Report of the National Health Services Commission states that there are not enough annual registrations to keep the number of practitioners at its present level. At least one dentist to every 5,000 of the whole population is required; the ratio is now only 1 to every 15,000. With a total population of 11,000,000, 2,500 dentists are required, or for the Non-European population only, between 1800 to 1700. It is obviously necessary that efforts must be made now to obtain and to train a sufficiency of dental students.

5. TRAINING OF DENTISTS -

It is said that the dental profession is not popular for various reasons. Full training facilities exist only at the University of the Witwatersrand, and those only for European students, so that, even if candidates were forthcoming, present training accommodation and facilities are quite inadequate. To meet the needs of the Non-European races, three matters are involved :-

(a) The Supply of European Trainees -

At present the only full training facilities that exist are at the University of the Witwatersrand and this school has not the accommodation to turn out more than 30 graduates a year. It is understood that a new dental school is to be built to take the place of the present one

The Institute therefore recommends that the new dental school should provide adequate accommodation and facilities for the training of at least twice the present number of dental undergraduates.

It is also understood that at present the first two years of dental training can be taken at the University of Cape Town. In view of the reported difficulty of obtaining sufficient clinical material for dental students in the Johannesburg area.

The Institute recommends that a dental faculty be established at the University of Cape Town, and that steps be taken to obtain the necessary teaching personnel, if necessary from overseas.

In so far as European dentists are concerned they, like doctors and pharmacists, "tend to gravitate not towards those areas where their services are most needed but towards those where the most remunerative connection can be built up".⁶ It is obvious that should more European dentists be trained and go into private practice, they will be attracted to European practice, and the needs of the Non-European will not be met. It is therefore, necessary to provide some inducement to European matriculants not only to enter the dental profession but to undertake work amongst Non-Europeans.

The Institute therefore recommends that the central and provincial and local authorities be asked to create posts for work amongst Non-Europeans remunerated on a scale sufficiently high to attract men to this type of work.

The National Health Services Commission Report has suggested that one dentist be attached to each health centre established and the Institute supports this suggestion.

To/.....

-
4. National Health Services Commission Report Para. 55.
 5. Ibid Para. 56.
 7. National Health Services Commission Report.

To our knowledge little is done for the dental needs of Non-European school children.

The Institute recommends that the Provincial Education Departments be asked to ensure that sufficient dental appointments be made in the educational services at sufficiently high salaries in order to meet the needs of the Non-European school children.

Certain municipalities are already doing work in this field. The Institute recommends that the Union Government come to a financial arrangement satisfactory to both parties whereby the municipalities are enabled to create posts sufficiently attractive to induce European dentists to undertake Non-European work.

(b) Facilities for Non-European Trainees:

At present it is not possible for Non-European dentists to be trained in the Union. The first two years of the course can be taken at the University of the Witwatersrand but it is stated that there are no clinical or laboratory facilities available for the rest of the course. The only alternative for Non-Europeans anxious to enter the profession is for them to go overseas. The cost of this is prohibitive and, in any case, at the present time almost impossible owing to the overcrowded conditions of overseas dental schools. As already mentioned, it is proposed to build a new dental school at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The Institute recommends that adequate accommodation should be provided at that school for Non-European students. It is also recommended that initially the authorities should envisage a Non-European enrolment of at least five Non-Europeans per annum and that the government assist both university and municipality in providing clinical facilities in the African Townships of Johannesburg and that such facilities be available for European and Non-European students alike.

In this connection it is stressed that the same staff should teach and supervise Non-European and European alike. This is essential to ensure that the standard of training of Non-Europeans is as high as that of Europeans.

The suggestion has been made that a dental school be established at the University of Cape Town. As this is the main centre of the Cape Coloured population,

The Institute recommends that when such a school is established provision should be made for the training of coloured students.

It is understood that the plans for the future of Natal University College include the building of a Non-European Medical School.

The Institute recommends that the Government should ensure that accommodation be provided for a faculty of dentistry at the Medical school.

(c) Supply of Non-European Candidates for Training:

It is possible, should facilities be provided, that sufficient number of Non-European candidates might not be forthcoming. This might be due to two facts :-

- (i) The lack of Non-Europeans sufficiently qualified to enter upon such a course,
- (ii) the high cost of such training.

To-day there are 74 high schools for Africans, and the number of matriculants leaving them is about 120 for 1945. At present many of these enter the teaching profession as there are so few other opportunities for the matriculated African. If no financial assistance is offered the prospective dental trainee, it is unlikely that owing to the second factor, not many, if any,

Non-European candidates will present themselves for training. The Union Education Department at present offers 6 bursaries to Africans anxious to enter upon medical or dental training. Owing to the impossibility of Africans securing dental training, all the scholarships have been taken up by those anxious to take the full medical training. Should, however, dental facilities be made available, and should the Government provide help on the scale at present given medical trainees, it is certain that candidates would be forthcoming.

The Institute therefore recommends that the Government provide for Non-Europeans at least 6 scholarships on the same scale and on the same conditions as the present scholarships which are offered to Africans for medical training. In this way, it is hoped that Non-Europeans will serve their own people in the areas where they are most needed.

6. CONCLUSION -

In urging the attraction of European dentists to Non-European work, it is felt that the need for dental services in this field is one of immediate urgency, and that the need will be met most quickly in this way. It is, however, envisaged, when the flow of Non-European dentists begins and grows greater, that they will be offered remunerative posts by central, provincial, and local authorities in order to serve their people. It is also stressed, that, to meet the growing needs of Non-Europeans in all fields and to ensure a regular and increasing entry of Non-Europeans into the dental profession, it is necessary that the present provision of primary, secondary, and high schools for Non-Europeans be continually augmented.

QUINTIN WHITE.

Collection Number: AD1715

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974

PUBLISHER:

Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR), held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.