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THE RE - INTEGRATION OF NATIVE LIFE.

- THE ECONOMIC ASPECT. -

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INTRODUCTION.

It is not possible within the limits of a twenty minutes paper to do more than sketch the outlines of a discussion of the economic needs of Native life, but this may not be altogether a disadvantage. The country is today looking for practical suggestions and it will be quite worth while to concentrate upon presenting a series of proposals which can be turned to practical advantage as a working policy.

But, even so, we cannot proceed very far if we are not sure upon what principles we are basing our practical policy. It matters a great deal in building a road which way we are pointing - whether North and South or East and West. I propose therefore to commence by a declaration of principles.

In the first place I take it that the S. A. General Missionary Conference is seeking for a policy in Native Affairs that will on the one hand express what we believe to be Christian ideals in regard to human relationships, and will on the other assist the Native people to enter more fully into these relationships as Christians. The definite aim of Christian Missions is, I take it, the induction of the Bantu people as quickly as possible into the Christian life, so that the approach of Missions to Economic questions may be said to be definitely purposeful. This is an advantage in our present discussion for we can check ourselves frequently by the question: How does this help our aim?

However much we may idealise Bantu culture and it has, of course, far more of beauty in its texture than most people have supposed - yet we must recognise that if the Bantu are to be brought as a people to accept the Christian gospel, they must be enabled to share in the current Christian teaching, to adopt Christian institutions and to follow Christian ways of life. For example, Bantu family life under Native marriage customs is an entirely different thing from that which is developed under a Christian marriage. It is not so much Europeanisation of the Bantu that we need fear as their corruption under modern pagan influences. If the Bantu are to live as a people they can only do so by entering more and more fully into the best of our heritage of today. Just as it is impossible to have the economic conditions of the Middle ages of Europe flourishing side by side with modern conditions of life, so it is impossible for Bantu Culture and Bantu Tribal Life to survive the impact of our common civilisation of today.

And it is into our common civilisation the Bantu are entering whether or not they or we will it. And in South Africa we must recognise that the Bantu and the Europeans are in the coming years to realise more fully that they are confined together within the borders of the African Continent.

The recognition of these facts is evidenced in one of the resolutions passed unanimously by the European-Bantu Conference held by the Federal Council of the Dutch Reformed Churches in Cape Town in January 1927, viz:

"The Conference is of opinion that, Natives and Europeans being comprised in the same economic system, the co-operation of both is necessary for the material welfare and progress of South Africa, and that consequently all measures are to be welcomed which have as their object the improvement of the Native's economic position and his higher qualification as a worker".

This is really a good text, and all that follows here is merely an amplification of this Resolution. It is gratifying to believe that this resolution represents a very great advance in public opinion on inter-racial relations.

As a matter of fact there has been a very great advance in the last year or two, and it is a curious thing that the passage of the Colour Bar Act seems to have helped us to this. Certainly in industrial circles the futility of that Act has brought industrialists to a realisation that the last bolt had been flung for the artificial separation of the economic interests of Europeans and Bantu. Industrialists are now realising and acknowledging that national economic laws know nothing of Colour Bars.

But all those who had adequate appreciation of the remarkable similarity between the fates of the Poor Whites and the Poor Blacks know this some time ago. That these problems have similar root causes has been demonstrated by such publicists as Professor Macmillan, and in my paper on the Land Question at the Dutch Reformed Churches Conference I only set down parallels which a great many social workers would easily recognise.

There is, however, one important factor which makes the problem of the uplift of the Poor Black much more difficult to face adequately. It is not any real difference in economic conditions; it is not any real mental inferiority; it is the difference between a social environment that is permeated by Christian conceptions which illumine and afford emancipation to the mind and will and a social environment clouded by animistic and mentally enervating conceptions. Consequently the first and most urgent tasks in Native Affairs are the evangelisation and education of the Bantu. Without these ploughs of progress the development of the Bantu people is going to be delayed for many generations. Again I would say, the quickest means of uplifting the

Bantu is by more aggressive and more complete evangelisation and education.

R U R A L. The next most urgent task is the initiation of a National Land Policy. No land policy worth having will take less than fifty years to develop, and we should therefore have a long-dated programme. The people - both European and Bantu - must be anchored to the land. This can only be done

- (1) By granting all land workers a definite legal and economic status. They must be able - despite drought, pest and flood - to reap where they have sown, earn where they have laboured. They must be assured of the benefits of any improvements they have effected, or command a wage that bears a definite relation to their needs and the intrinsic value of their labour; and in all things they must be able to stand on equal terms with their employers or landlords before the law of the land.
- (2) By recognising that the vast bulk of land workers (European or Native) are not and never will be competent to own their own land or even to cultivate land without supervision or organisation, and that consequently we must ensure that they are given a definite place as hired workers in our agrarian system.
- (3) By pressing upon Agriculture the necessity for safeguarding its own supply of labour by providing proper conditions of life and labour on farms.
- (4) By the organisation of agricultural education to assist those able to benefit by training and instruction in progressive methods.
- (5) By providing a land system in which the labourer can hope to rise - a ladder whose rungs are Wage-paid Labour; Rent-paying Leasing and Individual Ownership.

These are the essentials of any economically sound land system, whether for Europeans or Natives.

Segregations as a permanent principle will prove a failure. It can never be more than a temporary expedient to maintain a little longer the integrity of tribal life and to delay the inevitably free distribution of population. And while we are mouthing shibboleths we are deliberately preventing the development of a Native peasantry in European areas - a self-respecting, hardworking, rent paying peasant farmer. The squatter is not and never will be a peasant farmer contributing to the wealth of the country. Meanwhile the Land Act of 1913 deliberately prohibits the creation of a class of land worker which could prove - with a parallel class of white land worker - the agrarian backbone of the country.

The Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Natives pleaded before the Select Committee for the amendment of the 1913 Law and the legal recognition of

Leasing by Natives in European areas under the control and direction of a Land Board. I am glad to see from the new Select Committee Report that Dr. Loram has strongly supported this plea. Dr. Henderson in his evidence also put forward this view which is also to be found in the following resolutions of the D.R.C. Conference of 1927:-

1. "Seeing that the opportunity of acquiring land for Natives is rapidly passing away, so that much of the land that was to be had for that purpose in 1917 is today unobtainable, while the purchase price of land is gradually rising, the Conference recognises the urgency of the position and considers that the present opportunity of settling this difficult matter should not be allowed to escape."
2. "The Conference considers that the areas recommended by the Government Local Committees in 1917, the most authoritative survey of the position hitherto held, constitute the minimum acreage that would meet the immediate requirement of the Natives, and would urge the Government to set aside those areas, or their equivalents, for Native acquisition".
3. "Satisfactory areas for Native occupation having been demarcated, the Conference considers that the Government should, with sufficient safeguards for the interests of the Natives, place as few restrictions as possible upon the acquisition of land by Natives, and should encourage them in every way to enter upon ownership of the available land."
4. "In view of the fact that more than one-third of the Native population is to be found on European land, and of the time which must elapse before these recommendations can be carried into effect, the Conference believes that it would be wise gradually to substitute for squatting, labour tenancy and share-farming, a system of lease-farming, with fixed periods under the direction and control of a Land Board to be established for that purpose, thus securing beneficial occupation of the land, security of tenure during the periods of the leases - and inducement to progressive farming."
5. "In order to secure the objects defined in the previous sections, it will be necessary to establish the Land Board referred to above for the acquisition, development and general management of Native areas".
6. "That, as those proposals involve permanent expenditure on land for Natives, upon their agricultural training, and upon other cognate subjects, the Conference suggests that the necessary expenditure be financed by a loan".
7. "The Conference warmly appreciates the effort of the Government to provide additional agricultural

training for Natives and urges that this should be developed in every possible way". ----

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Indeed the resolutions are in themselves almost an epitome of a Land Policy.

What is needed then in rural areas is a progressive and Christian economic policy whose agencies should be

- (a) A peasantry with an assured legal and economic status,
- (b) A flourishing rural Christian Church,
- (c) A widespread and effective educational system.

U R B A N. When we turn to the towns we find awaiting us a well-nigh baffling task of adjustment. But it is possible to be over-awed by the problem. It is all so recent and so sudden. It however bears remarkable resemblance to historical developments in Europe. England, which, within two centuries saw her population urbanised - a population which was two thirds rural becoming three fourths urban - had just as baffling problems to solve, and we have now the immense advantage of European experience of industrialisation.

We have to face the fact that a large section of the Native people will be permanently urbanised. Partington schemes for the sweeping back of the black tide cannot possibly succeed for more than a moment of time. Improved land conditions would certainly ease the flow; but a continuous filling of the urban reservoir of labour must take place. Why? Because

- (1) of the attractiveness of a cash weekly Wage as against the problematical yield of the land of the infinitesimal (and also often problematical) wage on the farms,
- (2) the amenities of town life are attractive to a gregarious people.

and for many more reasons one might give.

In the towns, as in the country, the depressed condition of the Native people is responsible for many evils, which seem to be more acute and are more noticeable than in the country. In the towns the white worker realises that this depressed condition of the Native is a serious menace to him; although actually, of course, it is not really any less of a menace to the white worker than the rural Native is depressed. In both cases the wealth and general economic level of the country are adversely affected. Only in the towns it seems more pressing and is certainly more obvious.

The position of the Native in Industry has been so recently discussed by the Johannesburg Joint Council of Europeans and Natives in its memorandum on "The Native in Industry" that I need not discuss it at length here. I shall content myself with extracts from the memorandum to form a summary of its findings:-

"The majority of the Native workers in other industrial and commercial occupations is becoming more and more divorced from the land through the lack of unoccupied land in Native areas and the unsatisfactory conditions of service on the farms of Europeans. A very large proportion - if not the greater part - of these workers has broken away entirely from all tribal connections and is dependent entirely upon wages earned in the towns. For these Natives the ruling rates of wages seem to be quite inadequate, and the Joint Council has been impressed by the gap which exists between the reasonable needs of these workers and their actual incomes. Their wages since 1913 have not advanced to the same extent as the cost of living, while their social needs - e.g. housing, clothing, children's education (in the Transvaal Natives alone pay fees for elementary education), recreation - have advanced enormously, largely through their determination to adopt civilised standards of life. A generation ago a Native worker needed little more than a "tin shanty", an open fire for warmth and cooking, mealies and bread for food, and odd bits of clothing to satisfy all his wants while working for wages which were to supplement his subsistence farming when he returned to the kraal. Today he has his wife and children with him in the town, and he asks for a house of at least 2 rooms. The whole family eats European food and wears European clothes, the children go to school and fees must be paid. In fact the Native worker today, to an ever increasing degree, lives on a level with the unskilled worker in European cities"

Having shown that Native wages leave a big gap between what Native families need and what the Native worker earns, the report goes on to say:-

"The need for an adjustment of Native wages is also seen in the dilemma of the municipalities where the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1923 is in force. Everywhere the Municipalities are endeavouring to provide housing for their Native populations at a cost that is quite uneconomic whether the rental charged is viewed from the standpoint of the capacity of the Natives to pay, or from that of the return on the Municipal outlay. In some instances such rentals are more than one-third of the wages, and there are cases in which they approximate to one-half. In Johannesburg the rentals in the new Western Native Township are £1. 5. 0. per month for 2 roomed houses.

"In Pietersburg, Transvaal, where the average wage is £2 per month (£3 is a very good wage), the Municipal rental for a 2 roomed house with a lean-to kitchen is £1. 15. 0. per month.

"The truth is that Industry and Commerce are benefiting at the expense of both the Municipalities and the Native workers. These latter together make up the deficiency on Native wages. The Municipalities make it up by loan charges which are borne either by the Native Revenue Account or by general rates. The Natives make up their share of the difference by stinting on food rather than on the outward and visible signs of a civilised life. It is by no means wholly due to ignorance that the infant death rate among Natives in the Johannesburg Municipality is 705.26 per 1000 (for the year 1925/26) and in Benoni 847 in 1926/27 (in December 1926 the rate was 947). Inadequate nutrition has a great deal to do with it."

"The Joint Council feels that the limit of sacrifice has been reached. While it is doing all in its power to support the efforts of those bodies (e.g. Municipalities and Missionary Medical services) which are striving to tackle the hygienic problems of Native life in the towns, it believes that there can be no real advance until the general level of Native life there is raised by economic and legal means. The time has come to determine the Native worker's place in the economic system of the country. His status as a worker is unsound, whether viewed economically or legally.

"Until recently the whole of the machinery whether legal or economic, available for dealing with Native labour ignored entirely the needs and condition of the urbanised Native. On the legal side this machinery was designed to deal with indentured labour imported from the Reserves or from outside the Union. This is still the position except in so far as it has been modified by the activities of the Wage Board, of which it will be necessary to speak later."

After discussing the effects of the penal clauses of such legislation as the Masters and Servants Law and the Native Recruiting Act in preventing the legitimate claims of Native labour being considered, the Report shows that the ordinary industrial laws of the country should be made available for the adjustment of Native wages. The Wage Act and the Industrial Conciliation Act should be used, not to exclude the Native from their benefits, but to assist him to bridge the economic gulf which exists between the white worker and the Native worker. It quotes the economic and Wage Commission as to the extent to which Natives are dependent upon their wages in the towns for the maintenance of a standard of life that is on a level with unskilled workers in Europe.

"The Memorandum then enunciates a definite economic policy in respect of Industrial Natives:-

"We can now put forward what seem to us to be the essentials of a sound industrial policy in regard to wages and conditions of labour, and they are these:-

- a. "Recognition of the necessity for giving the non-European a permanent place in Industry. The Joint Council has previously expressed its conviction that a definite "status" must be given to the Native as an Agricultural worker.
- b. "No differentiation between European and non-European workers merely on the ground of race or colour. Their respective places in Industries to be subject to the same conditions as to capacity, efficiency and value to the economic life of the country.
- c. "Disabling laws such as the Masters' and Servants' Laws and the Native Recruiting Law to cease to apply to industrial Natives as they are brought within the range of the ordinary industrial laws.
- d. "Special representation of non-European workers on Industrial Councils or before the Wage Board, until such time as they are included as an integral part of registered trades unions having adequate representation before these bodies".

These are the purely economic aspects of the problem of the urban Native. Behind are such questions as Housing, Health Conditions and the provision of religious and educational influences for the uplift of the Bantu. Until we recognise the inevitability of the inflow of Natives into towns, we shall continue to build our social and economic system on a morass. Our Municipality will continue to build houses for Natives which must be paid for out of the rates because Industry refuses to pay for them by paying a living wage; while the white workers will endeavour to oust the Native from Industry because his low wages make him a menace. Truly, the Native is ground between the upper and the nether millstone.

Once we admit the inevitable and accept the Native as a town worker we shall turn our attention to other aspects of labour conditions. It is not and cannot be either morally or economically sound that we should build up vast industries on a system of indentured and compounded labour. From the moral viewpoint it is thoroughly bad and leads to the most frightful and disgusting practices. From the economic standpoint such labour is costly for it is intermittent - losing efficiency by long absences - and it is indiscriminating. Indeed it is not far wrong to say that what is needed as regards Native labour is



not so much a big rise in wages as more discrimination in wages and greater encouragement to individual effort and to continuous work.

Dr Henderson, in his evidence before the Select Committee on the Native Bills said:-

"What would therefore appear to be needed is the creation of decent healthy Native villages at the great centres of Native labour, where Native labourers could settle permanently with their families, in self-respecting conditions, thus providing what there is not at present, a steady supply of experienced labour and creating its best reservoir for the future".

In such circumstances the development of a healthy communal life would become possible. Christian marriage would become less precarious; family life would develop and grow under settled conditions, religious agencies would become more effective and all-providing; education and recreation would play their part more vitally.

And so, here, too, we can reduce the problem to the very simple term -

S T A T U S. We need to develop in the towns a Native Working Class - well organised in craft unions (rather than in semi-political, semi-industrial mass organisations), able to command a wage that will support a family in respectable decency; a working class no longer herded in compounds or in hovels, but dwelling in healthy villages within reach of their work, able to employ the leisure hours in harmless occupations and surrounded by religious and educative influences. It may be a dream; it may come true. But it can never be unless we adopt - as in rural areas - a progressive and Christian economic policy whose agencies should be

- (a) A Native working class with an assured legal and economic status,
- (b) A flourishing urban Christian Church, and
- (c) An efficient educational system.

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