

by the few. All these institutions represent, each in their own way, relatively late developments of Western economy, and the emancipation of the Africans, which is only just beginning, cannot start with these.

Rome was not built in a day, and Africans cannot be expected to jump certain necessary development stages. They already do enough jumping, as it is.

The two greatest obstacles to African advancement, the lack of capital and the lack of experience (both equally important), since they occur conjointly, must be surmounted conjointly, and the road towards a beginning of their conquest must necessarily begin where the Africans are at this moment.

It is only when a beginning is made by a small group in a simple way, a way congenial to them and which enables each member of the group to follow and understand each operation, that the women can acquire economic and organisational experience and learn political responsibility. For the ultimate purpose one has in mind, must go beyond the mere "more occasions for earning more money to buy more goods....."

In order to achieve the above, it would be necessary to study the regulations forbidding factories to work through home-industry; to study the present shopping position in the townships quantitatively and qualitatively; to investigate the women's position as to trading licences.

As to such licences, these should not be available on the mere payment of a yearly sum and according to certain school standards, but only after tests and upon successful passing of an examination in subjects such as cost-calculation, simple arithmetic and book-keeping, business ethics, price-fluctuations, etc. (1)

Small loans could become available to small groups of women ready to attempt a small joint enterprise of whatever nature. If my general experience is valid, then there already do exist, even amongst the not highly educated women, quite a few who understand the nature of a loan, and the function of "working capital". Such loans should be "loans" and not "gifts".

It might/.....

(1) I made certain abortive attempts to discover how much profit was made by some women who at the moment run some vegetable and fruit stalls in Johannesburg and Durban. In spite of the assistance of two different classes of informants, the university graduate, and the woman of their own class, this has not been possible. Whilst I myself rather inclined to take it that the stall-holders did not want to say what they were earning, the majority of African opinion held that they did not really know, "as long as there was some money to buy the next lot".

It might be objected that the opening up of new opportunities of earning money could decrease the drive towards formal education and the run on the professions. In my opinion, this is not such a great loss. Many girls now choose a profession because "there is nothing else", rather than because of vocation or natural suitability. A normal sifting in the coveted profession of nurses, for instance, could do no harm.

In conclusion, I would repeat that shops, workshops, organised piece-work, bulk buying, communal laundries, and all possible forms of joint enterprise, common endeavour, and group activity could help to meet the greatest need of the lower strata of the middle classes of women, the semi-educated, yet often intelligent, ambitious, energetic and resourceful women. They could earn money in a legitimate, decent and character-building way, near home if not at home, so that the pre-school age children are not left alone.

Markets -

One would hope for the speedy establishment of markets. Up to now, and, I believe, not without much persuasion, a very small number of women have been allowed small fruit and vegetable stalls at certain open spaces in some of the locations. Yet one could visualise a larger variety of merchandise being bought and sold in markets on an extended scale, and amongst the goods other foodstuffs of a less perishable nature, as well as small articles of daily use: from bicycle spare parts to shoelaces, from outglass to candles.

The very real value of such markets is twofold. For market trade no large capital nor special premises are necessary and the establishment of such markets need not be delayed till the present housing shortage has been rectified. Besides these material advantages, there are the more human and less easily definable values. Many a woman is "homesick" for the village-well where she went after the work in the fields was done, and many a girl remembers how, when mother came home and took over the care of the younger children, she went with her pitcher to fetch water from the dam or the stream, and the gossip and the fun and the laughter....And they all remember how they lingered on for hours over the washing along the riverside to tease each other and joke at passersby, and how the lover and future husband was met and courted there.....

One need not be a classical Athenian to recognise the value of the market place for human gregariousness, social intercourse, refreshing and stimulating talk, and even the emergence of new ideas,

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the occasion for new encounters, the formation of groups, the birth of joint activities, the experience of social approval and disapproval and, last but not least, the education towards citizenship. A town without a market is a town without a soul.

Since Orlando is not allowed to integrate its life with that of White Johannesburg, it should be allowed to start a life of its own.... It seems to me that such markets are a more pressing and a more general need, and considerably less expensive, than the grand central "civic centre" which seems to under consideration for a rather distant future.

Banks, Hotels, etc -

When Barclay's Bank opened its first Non-European bank in South Africa in Alexandra Township (The Star, 11 October 1954), the press comments expressed some surprise at the quick African response, which would go far to show how greatly the financial and "capitalistic" awareness of Africans is generally underestimated and how little it is realised that many women keep their savings at home simply because of the enormous difficulties involved in going to a bank in town. More such local banks, employing African tellers and clerks, thus affording a few more employment opportunities, would be a desirable development, and, as far as the women are concerned, a great need would be met in having in each bank one properly instructed and trained mature woman as a "general adviser" on women's particular problems. She could also make it more widely known amongst the women that their bank account is their own and cannot, as I have been told, be calimed by the husband.

The establishment of hotels would be of very real use in a town which has so many visitors, and in which most residents live in too small houses. These hotels should have all the attributes of first class Bantu hotels and should not be "hostels" or "compounds". Well-mannered behaviour can only be encouraged by respectable surroundings.

Women's residences for living and holidays -

The need for what is generally called hostels is great, specially for the young, unmarried, professional girls and young women. They have simply nowhere to live in dignity and according to their new civilised requirements.

The two existing hostels are highly unsatisfactory according to my informants, girls of education and European standards of living. In the Helping Hand Hostels, for instance, there is no place to study, and whilst each girl buys and cooks her own food, there is no place

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to keep the food. Food is not allowed to be kept in the lockers. The common dormitories are noisy and restless.

Why can these young women not have simply and inexpensively built "bachelors' flats" (each consisting of one room, a kitchenette and shower cubicle)?.

When on holidays, these young women have simply nowhere to go. Often they are "first generation", and no longer feel at home in the "kraal" with their parents.

Many and small community centres

She needs places where she can meet other women, and places where she can have her "meetings", her "lectures", her "demonstrations". In my opinion, no large community centre or communal hall can fulfil the needs which small, simple, but many centres can satisfy. The ideal would be if they could combine club-cum-restaurant. It seems to me that they could be run as "social club houses" with a closed membership. This membership must be selective and members only acceptable after, for instance, a three months' trial period. Membership should acquire snob value. The snob provides, not only for Africans, a valuable incentive towards improvement.

A "widow" could be put in charge, again carefully selected according to reputation, status, age, as well as after tests and the passing of an examination. It might take away some widows from beer-brewing and other practices, and afford an income for the many respectable widows who lead a precarious existence.

The "Club-centre" would not need more than three rooms. One room for lectures and demonstrations, and a "sitting-room" for meetings and for social get-togethers, and the kitchen, serving the restaurant, could be used for cooking-demonstrations. This kitchen should not be different from the average housewife's kitchen. The environment in which cooking demonstrations are given must not be different from the normal one.

Such "Club-centres" should be used for community activity on a small scale, and nothing should be given for nothing.

In such centres could be organised Adult Clubs and Adolescent Clubs, Mixed Clubs and Women's Clubs. They would, at the same time, satisfy the immense need for places to go to for married couples, and boy-cum-girl couples.

Against such "Club-centres" militates the fact that neighbourhoods, at present, contain too many divergent human beings to be able to form "communities". But it may well be that gradually a certain

Class/.....

class grouping comes into being in a residential district, when experiments could be made starting with the more upper class districts.

It is my firm opinion that the "club" with closed and selected membership deserves encouragement.

Employment Bureaux.

This is a very great need indeed for washerwomen and for domestic servants. I personally have never heard of an employment bureau that was really successful. They either acquire a bad reputation, through bribery or through the fact that rightly or wrongly it came to be believed that "good workers do not come to employment bureaux", or the organisers (individual social workers who saw the need) had to give up their efforts because either the European Missus or the African maid did not keep her appointment or promise. The fact is, however, that African women (and it was discussed with many), want them badly, mainly for two reasons: (in addition to their purpose of helping them find "a laundry address" or a "cleaning job"), namely for "protection against nasty Missusses" and for "fixing the wages".

Although I have no suggestion to offer, the need for some form of employment agency appears pressing.

Sources of information and help.

This is a very general and very real need for all classes of women. Women are running around with a hundred and one unanswered and never-answered questions, and equally numerous seemingly insoluble problems. They need some reliable and knowledgeable person or place where they can appeal for general advice or specific information. They complain pitifully: "We can't get through", or "We do not have the right channels". It is the complaint of the isolated, the confused, the lost. They have nowhere to turn; nobody to ask. It would possibly give them some protection against the "intermediaries" mentioned in the text.

A way to meet this need might be the following:

Each superintendent should have at his side an African woman, a mature woman of status, carefully selected and properly trained, possibly as a social worker, but not necessarily a qualified social worker (for this kind of job, character and personality seem more important than specialised training). This woman would be specially in charge of women's matters and women's organisations. She could be a general adviser and source of information.

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She could form a link between the individual women, bring together like with like, help in settling the "little misunderstanding", appeal to the superintendent for tactful assistance with the "unreasonable" amongst the husbands. While acting as liaison between the women she could also act as liaison officer between their organisations and European welfare workers. In this co-ordinating function she might be able to prevent some of the over-lapping, the playing off of one European organisation against the other, and thus avoid certain mistakes and erroneous selections.

Whilst I am conscious of being on slippery ground here, I would like to submit that two such women are known to me. They both fulfil precisely this function: both are trained social workers of maturer age, both are working in Reef towns. One acts as a kind of "Magistrate" (unofficially) and is invaluable. The other acts as general adviser, organiser and assistant to all women's organisations and activities. Both are exceptionally fine women, members of the Zenzele YWCA branches in their town, whence some of their ideas derive. A third woman known to me and respected by me for her general sagacity and maturity, acted for several years in a similar capacity in one of the Reef towns, but is now employed elsewhere. These three women were highly praised by the European welfare officers with whom they worked or are working.

This introduction of a female element in a so far exclusively male staff would be a blessing for many women.

Instruction.

Some people say that women need literacy classes, more people say that is not what they want or need. What they need is practical instruction, for instance, on how to run a home, to repair and to mend, to buy and to cook. But people who have tried to give them such instruction say they do not want it. All they want is to earn money and more money. And then, if they earn more money, they do not know what to do with it or how to spend it. All this is only too true.

Certainly what they need is a certain ambition, and an inner urge to advance, to make an effort. Further, instruction given to women should be more general and cover a wide variety of subjects. Also, they need to learn how to transmute money into VALUES.

In thus giving a very brief summary of the main needs pertaining to the women of the broad middle classes, it has been possible, with an effort of will, to omit all mention of the "basic facts".

Thus/.....

Thus it has, on the whole, been possible to avoid mention of the fact that a beginning should be made by giving them a chance to acquire political training and experience, by giving them some say in their own affairs, and by giving certain advanced elements some responsibility which would give significance to the authority they exercise without real meaning.

However, wherever one turns to examine the need of urban women, one ultimately strikes these "basic facts". It must therefore not be left unsaid, that nearly everything one can mention as needs, or suggest as their satisfaction, must always remain in the form of a "symptomatic care".

These "basic facts", in terms of needs, are :-

- the need for physical safety
- the need for legal security
- the need for economic opportunity.

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