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NATIVE AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

by
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In advocating a progressive Agricultural Policy I do not think I can do better than to place before you a brief survey of the Agricultural Policy of the Transkeian Territories General Council who have for the past 25 years been endeavouring to educate the Native people as to the importance of this industry. Prior to 1903 no Public Body had attempted in any way to improve Agricultural methods in the Transkei, and it was not until the first session of the T. T. G. C. in 1903 that the all important subject of Agricultural Development was seriously discussed. The authorities realised something had to be done, the conditions then affecting life in the Native Areas as compared with those of former times was very different as with the growth of population necessity arose for obtaining increased produce from the land and better returns from the stock. The matter was dealt with by a select committee which recommended that a site be obtained as soon as possible for an Agricultural Institution and on requisition being made to the Government a grant of 1800 morgen of land was made to the Council for an Agricultural Institution. The objects were

1. To teach, foster and encourage improved methods of Agriculture.
2. To acquire well bred stock to be placed at the disposal of rate-payers and also breed additional stud animals which were to be sold at a later stage at reasonable rates to Natives desirous of improving their flocks and herds.
3. To teach and impart habits of industry and endeavour to create direct and more intelligent interest in all agricultural and pastoral pursuits.
4. To establish an object lesson calculated to serve as a help and guide to all natives interested in farming.

Up to this point the scheme was a very sound one as it is important in Agricultural development to have an institution where the practice as well as the theory of agriculture can be taught, and with the fore-mentioned objects it seemed that the scheme must be a successful one.

A commencement was made with paid apprentices who were indentured to serve for a period of 3 years, the intention being that at the end of their apprenticeship they would return to their own land and there practise the improved methods they had learnt. The system did not prove a success chiefly owing to the fact that the apprentices were wage earners instead of learners and in 1912 the Council resolved to abolish the apprentice scheme and start a School of Agriculture and in 1913 the first Native Agricultural School in the Union....

Union was opened at Tsolo with only four students. From this small beginning only 16 years ago the school has grown considerably and 60 students were accommodated at the end of 1928. The course of instruction is of two years duration during which time a thorough grounding in the theory and practice of modern agriculture is given. For some years past the applications have far exceeded the accommodation and it was resolved to start a second school at Teko near Butterworth on the same lines and this school was opened in 1922, and a third school is about to be established in Pondoland on similar lines. The staffs of the School comprise The Principal, three European lecturers, two assistant Native lecturers, a Native Clerk and Native Boarding Master and Matron. The fact that there will shortly be three Native Schools of Agriculture in the Transkei and one in the Ciskei is an indication of the unqualified success of the policy of Agricultural Schools for Natives and I cannot conceive of any other method whereby the native youth of the country can be taught improved methods of agriculture to greater advantage. The influence of these schools does not stop at the student attending the school. In 1916 two native demonstrators were appointed and each year more trained native demonstrators are appointed and today in the Transkei there are no less than 63 Native demonstrators in the 27 Magisterial districts. These demonstrators are under the control of the General Council Agricultural Director, with two European Supervisors to assist him. These men are selected from the most promising students who have completed their course at one of the Agricultural Schools. They are appointed to various locations where they live and by their actual work in the fields show what can be done by improved agricultural methods. They have done excellent work and their influence can be seen throughout the Territories. Demonstrators trained at the Council Schools have also been sent to the Belgian Congo, Tanganyika Territory, Southern Rhodesia, Swaziland, Bechuanaland, Basutoland, Natal, Transvaal and the Eastern Province of the Cape.

The Schools also cater for the needs of the older men by holding annually short courses for farmers. The staffs of the school attend the various Native Shows where lectures are delivered and any advice sought is readily and willingly given. The natives living in the more inaccessible parts of the country do not enjoy the advantages of those more favourably situated members of the community, and it is only to be expected that they do not show the same progress. These men however are not forgotten and in order to carry the necessary knowledge to these people the General Council decided on a policy of demonstration caravans. Last year the Agricultural Director with two European lecturers from the Schools of Agriculture toured the Transkei with a specially constructed motor lorry when over 1100 miles were travelled and no less than 4,000 people attended the lectures and demonstrations. The General Council issues a Native Farmers Paper to which the School Staffs contribute articles and reply to questions asked. Stud animals are kept at the Schools for the use of Rate-payers at very low fees while rams and bulls of good breeding are sold at very reasonable prices. The Schools are also used as Experimental stations to determine the best varieties of crops and stock suitable to their respective areas. I hope I have managed to show what a really important institution an Agricultural School may be in a Native Area and what a very wide influence it has not only

on those attending the schools but on the whole community. I feel that I cannot too strongly recommend that this conference support the resolution advocating the establishment of Native Agricultural Schools in Native Areas. The cost is not prohibitive and as an indication I shall give the figures of expenditure and revenue of the two existing schools in the Transkei for the last financial year. The expenditure at Tsolo amounted to £6,030 including £1500 for buildings, while the revenue was £3,229; at Teko expenditure was £4,830 including £980 buildings and revenue £3,356. The revenue in neither case includes value of stock increases.

In regard to the fencing of Native lands one cannot but realise the enormous advantage to the land owner of having his arable land fenced whereby he is enabled to control his land to better advantage during preparation prior to planting and during the growth of the crop and also allowing of some system of crop rotation which is becoming more and more necessary. The natives themselves are becoming aware of these advantages but unfortunately to the ordinary peasant the cost of erecting a fence round his land is more than he can afford. In order therefore to assist those more progressive natives some help should be forthcoming. It is not to be expected that any Public Body will consent to Grants being made to individuals but it is not unreasonable to ask for Grants where groups of people are concerned and I think some scheme whereby Grants be asked for Boundary fences on the £ for £ principle might be adopted. These grants to be available in respect of approved applications where there are not less than ten allotments in a group. Internal fencing of lands to be left entirely in the hands of allotment holders. This scheme besides providing the necessary fencing promotes the idea of co-operation which is so important a factor to the success and advancement of all farming communities.

The Land and Agricultural Bank of South Africa was established for the purpose of promoting agriculture in the Union by providing financial assistance to farmers at reasonable rates. The native farmer is a tremendous asset to the Union and it seems to me to be unreasonable that the privilege of borrowing money from the Land Bank should be denied the Native farmer. No provision for assisting him in the matter of loans is made and frequently development with excellent prospects of success to the individual himself and the country generally is checked through the lack of capital.

Agricultural Shows in Native Areas should be given every encouragement. The average Native is not a man who travels or reads a great deal and his education in most matters must of necessity be very largely of a practical nature and in the matter of farming this need is supplied by Agricultural Shows where the Natives can see for themselves what is being done and what can be done in the matter of improving his stock and crops. It also serves as a meeting ground for agriculturists where they can discuss matters concerning farming and at the same time get valuable information and advice from the officials and judges of the show. The spirit of competition is encouraged and where Native shows are already in existence no one visiting them could but be struck by the keenness and enthusiasm

which exists. These shows may be started under the guidance and supervision of competent Europeans and gradually handed over to the entire management by the Natives themselves. There are already several Native shows run and controlled entirely by Natives and the thorough manner in which these are conducted is an indication of the intelligent interest Natives are showing in the matter. All European Shows are aided by Grants from the Government and it is not unreasonable to hope that the Government will donate Grants to encourage and assist Native Shows. There are some 10 Native Agricultural Shows held annually in the Transkei to which the Transkeian Territories General Council give Grants of £150 each.

The formation of Co-operative Credit societies is one which should be given every encouragement. The whole matter of co-operation is one which at the present time is a very difficult proposition owing largely to suspicion and lack of trust among the Natives themselves. It is gratifying however to note that several Native Co-operative Credit societies are already in existence, and as the Native becomes educated up to the importance of co-operation these Credit Societies will increase largely and prove a great boon to the Native Agriculturist. In dealing with the improvement of stock in Native areas we find ourselves up against a very difficult question. The wealth of the ordinary native is determined by the number of stock he possesses irrespective of the quality of the animals and he seems to have little or no idea of the economical side of stock breeding. He keeps large numbers of nondescript cows which donot give him as much milk as two or three well bred well fed cows would. The Lobola system I contend is largely responsible for this as it is numbers and not the quality of the animals which determine the value of the bride. We find as a result of this that most Native areas are overstocked and the losses during droughts and during the winter months are enormous. Coming to the smaller stock we find in all Native areas large herds of the common Boer goat. These goats from an economical point of view are valueless. Their hair has no market value and they produce barely sufficient milk for their young. They are used largely amongst the more backward natives for sacrificial and ceremonial purposes and it is gratifying to see amongst the more enlightened natives that they realise the uselessness of these animals and are replacing them with the more profitable sheep. Sheep breeding is a branch which is making big strides but there is still much room for improvement as the majority of native sheep are only carrying half the quantity of wool they are capable of. The improvement must of necessity be a gradual one and the surest and best method is to use better sires, and to prohibit the use of inferior males. As the prohibition of the use of inferior sires is a practical proposition I might mention that at the last session of the General Council a resolution was adopted whereby only rams conforming to a certain standard be allowed in Native locations and this policy is now being given effect to. The result is the destruction of all low grade scrub rams and the increased use of all well bred animals which is bound to produce a very great improvement in both the yield and quality of the wool in the very near future. The carrying out of such a scheme is bound to be faced with many difficulties but these are not insurmountable and the resultant improvement in the class of sheep and quality of the wool will many times repay the difficulties and cost of such a scheme.

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