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NATIVE ECONOMIC COMMISSION

1931  
THABA'NCHU 20th FEBRUARY 1931 9.30 A.M.

SIXTYEIGHTH PUBLIC SITTING

PRESENT:

Dr. J. E. Holloway, (Chairman,  
Major Anderson, Mr. A. M. Mostert,  
Dr. H. C. M. Pourie, Dr. A. W. Roberts,  
Mr. F. A. W. Lucas, Senator P. W. LeRoux van Niekerk,  
Mr. C. Faye, (Secretary).

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Dr. CHARLES SEBE MOROKA, called and examined:

CHAIRMAN: How long have you been practising here as a doctor?- Since 1918.

You studied in Edinburgh?- Yes.

I understand that you have a very considerable Native practise here?- I have.

Can you tell us what the health conditions of the Native in this district are generally?- They are not too good.

What is the difficulty, what are the diseases from which they suffer?- The diseases are tuberculosis, consumption and syphilis.

We have been trying to get some idea of the proportion of population that may be infected with syphilis. Have you any experience of that?- Yes, I have a great deal of experience

• On which you can base an opinion as to the proportion?- I should say easily fortyfive percent.

Does that mean that 45% of the cases which you deal with are also infected with syphilis?- I make a point of asking every Native who comes to me as to whether he has had syphilis or not and I find that easily 45% of all the patients that come to me have had syphilis.

That would mean, of course, that the total amount of

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syphilis in the district would be less than 45% ?- That may be, but I should say that the minimum would be 35%.

Now, are there any other diseases?- Yes. There is a lot of tuberculosis and then people are suffering from diseases as a result of malnutrition.

That would have an effect on the infantile deathrate?- Undoubtedly.

What is the infantile mortality, is it high?- I would say that it is undoubtedly very high here.

I realise the difficulty of getting any figures?- Yes, it is very difficult to get any figures, because the deaths of Natives are not registered.

Have you made a point of enquiring from married women who come to you for treatment how many children they have had and how many of their children are alive?- Yes, I do that regularly.

Can you give us any details ?- Yes, I ask everyone how many children she has had and how many abortions and how many children are alive and how many dead.

Do you keep a record?- Yes, I do.

DR. ROBERTS: Do you get the age of a woman as well?- Yes, and I also ask her how long she has been married.

CHAIRMAN: Do you record all this data in your case book?- I cannot say that, but I make a point of enquiring.

Can you give us any data from that, or any idea whether cases of infantile mortality occur in most of these families?- They occur in practically all Native families. It is very rarely that you find a Native woman who has not lost one or two children at the very least.

DR. ROBERTS: Out of how many?- Out of, say, about 5.

CHAIRMAN: Does that refer to the full period of childbearing?- Yes.

In that respect, you naturally have a smaller number

of cases to go on because it is only the older women? - I have found that the ordinary Native women generally marry very young and they have children from the age of about 18 years up to about 35, and from that time onwards, as a rule, they have no more children.

So that you think that after 35 they do not have any more children? - That is so.

That is a very important point. What steps do you take to verify the ages. Do they know their age? - Well, they have a rough idea as to when they were born. They can tell you whether they were born before or after the Boer War and more or less when, and in that way you can tell how old they are.

To what do you attribute the fact that the fertile period ceases so much earlier than it does with European women? - I attribute that to the hardships they undergo and to the fact that, during their confinements they are not properly taken care of.

DR. ROBERTS: Do you not think that that is rather a low age to put down? - Yes, it is very low.

Because very many Native women have as many as ten or twelve children? - Yes, that is so.

And if they begin at 18, that would bring it to 40 years of age? - Yes. That did obtain at one time, but it does not do so now. I knew of one Native woman who had up to 20 children and in Basutoland I knew of one woman who had 30 children. The youngest was 5 years of age and the oldest was 45. Of course, that was an exceptional case and the present day Native women do not do that. The Natives are not breeding as rapidly as they used to.

MR. LUCAS: Is that stoppage at 35 years of age voluntary in many cases? - No, it certainly is not voluntary.

They come to me almost daily to find out why it is that they do not have any more children. They do not do it voluntarily and it is almost unknown for a Native women to come and have an abortion procured.

CHAIRMAN: Is there any difference in respect of venereal disease between the Natives in the town and the Natives on the farms and in the reserves?— During my practise, I have made a point of always asking a Native who comes to me with Venereal disease, where he comes from and I have found that syphilis is practically as widely spread on the farms as it is in the towns, and I have always attributed that to the habit of the Natives of always eating out of one dish. When they have three or four or five children, they never take the trouble of feeding out of different utensils, it is always out of the one dish and the children will, in the majority of cases, use one spoon, and if one child is infected the other children will become infected in time. That is what I have found in my experience, and I am continually trying to get the Native not to do that.

Do they take any notice?— No, they do not take any notice and it is a pity. The Natives do not realise the seriousness of syphilis. They think it is one of these diseases which, if you have had it once, you will never get it again and they think a man is not a man until he has had it. They think that he must get syphilis and then he is immune for the rest of his life.

CHAIRMAN: They do not realise that he keeps on having it?— That is a point which I know very well and I have tried to impress it upon these people, but they do not mind at all. In fact, if they go to a doctor for treatment and you have them one injection and tell them to come again, they do not come again. "Hulle hardloop weg en mens sien hulle nie meer nie", that is the unfortunate position.

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DR. ROBERTS: Is it more common with women than with men?- It is practically equally distributed.

MAJOR ANDERSON: Would not that account for a low birth rate and the early date of the cessation of childbearing?- Yes, and it results in much more abortion.

CHAIRMAN: From your experience, how many children would you say, on an average, a Native woman has after she has completed fertility?- The majority of Native women, on an average, bear about six to seven children, but, out of six children, hardly four reach the age of puberty.

In your Native practice, do you find a difficulty, which has been represented to us in another location, a difficulty which prevents a Native man from making a living in the location because the Natives will either not call him in until they are practically dead, or even if they do call him in, they will not pay him. Do these cases come to you very late?- In the year 1919, after I had been practising a little while in ThabaNchu, I gave up many of my habits. I used to treat Natives who would tell me that they would come again and pay me. They said to me, "Well, doctor, you are our child, you have grown up here, I shall come again." Well, I lost all that money because they did not come again. I am very careful about that sort of thing now.

MR. MOSTERT: I take it you have plenty of book debts?- Not now, I did then. If they want to be treated gratis now, I send them to the District Surgeon. I do not say I do not give any credit to Natives, but I only give it to those who, I know, will pay me in time. If a man has to depend upon what they tell you, that they will pay you later on, then you will finish up insolvent. Another thing I have found with the Natives is this, that they will wait until a patient is practically gone before they will call a doctor. That is due to poverty

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and that happens almost daily.

MR. LUCAS: You say poverty is the cause?— Yes, they want to save as much as they possibly can and sometimes they have to run about/before sending a patient to a doctor.

Is that general?— Yes, there is a very great deal of that and very often, when a doctor sees a patient, the case is almost hopeless, simply because they have waited too long.

But they can go to the District Surgeon?— Yes, if they are anywhere near him.

MR. MOSTERT: Do you find that there is much witchcraft here?— Yes, there is a great deal of it.

MR. LUCAS: Would you say that it is growing less?— Yes, but it is surprising to see how much witchcraft there is about considering the amount of preaching they have had and also the amount of teaching. What beats me is that even those men who have been to school and who know something will still believe in witchcraft. One would be surprised to learn of the superstitions which these people still have. Although they may have been to Lovedale or to other institutions, they are still immensely superstitious and their superstitions will drive them to the wierdest practises. I think that they should have given them a smattering of science at school which would have done a great deal to rectify that and might have made them more sensible.

MR. LUCAS: Do you have many cases of witchcraft coming to the court?— Well, the Natives here will not go to court because they know that the Magistrate will not listen to any man who comes to him and tells him that some other man has done him some harm by witchcraft. Consequently, one never hears of that sort of thing.

No, I did not mean that. What I meant was this. Have any charges been made for practising witchcraft - do they

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think that the Magistrate will not take a charge against a person who is practising as a witchdoctor? - (No answer):

CHAIRMAN: Witchcraft is a punishable offence? - Not in this district.

Why do they not bring a case to court where harm is done by witchcraft? - They think that if a man goes to a White man and tells him that he has been harmed by witchcraft, the White man will laugh at him.

He still believes in witchcraft and, therefore, he does not bring a case? - That is so.

I think you must have been struck by the very slow rate at which the Bantu progresses in the perfectly obvious way in which progress can be made. I am now referring to their unwillingness to adopt up-to-date farming methods. Do you think that that has anything to do with ideas which lurk in the minds of people that, if they were to adopt up-to-date methods, they might not be doing the right thing - that the spirit of their forefathers might not allow them to adopt those new methods. Do you think there is anything in that? - To my mind, a Native is very adaptable. I think, when you take an ordinary Native and you teach him certain things and shew him how to do these things properly, he is most adaptable. But I think that what has been lacking, or rather what has been wrong is this, - the Native has not always been led properly or rightly.

DR. ROBERTS: By whom has he not been led rightly? - I would say by his supervisors, by the people who had to lead him, and when I say that, I am referring to agriculture in particular. I should like to illustrate my meaning, by telling you what has happened here. In this area, at one time practically the whole of Thaba'Nchu belonged to the Baralongs. The late Chief, before he died, divided Thaba'Nchu



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into farms and these farms he gave to his sons and to his followers. After 1884, after his death, Thabakhu was annexed and it became part of the Free State and at about the same time certain laws were passed which debarred the Natives from buying land from other Natives. In that law, or in one of those laws, there was a provision that a man could only buy land or sell land to or from his immediate relatives. That is to say, I could buy land from my father, mother or brother, but I could not buy land from my uncle or from any of my relatives who were distant relatives. What followed was this, that these people who got land practically for nothing, these farms were given to them, they had no hardships in acquiring these lands and consequently they did not value their possessions.

They went in for kaffercorn and kaffer beer and they went in for brandy and the result was that they got themselves into debt and they passed mortgages on their farms. Well, in those days, our European friends were always ready to part with their money to give bonds on Native farms. And they also knew, they knew it perfectly well, that if any Native farm were to come on to the market, the Natives would be debarred from buying, so that the only people who could buy were the Europeans. It is quite a common thing and well known that, if I go bankrupt myself, my children and my immediate relatives will be <sup>in</sup> the same soup as I am myself and the result is that these farms have to go to other people, because none but my immediate relatives can buy from me. And that is why I believe that the Natives in this district have lost the farms such as they had. My contention is that, if a door had been left open to Natives to enable them to buy farms, some of these farms would still have been in Native hands

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instead of European as they are today.

Do you think that the Chief's action in dividing up the land was an unwise one?- I think it was an ideal thing to do, because I still believe that, even if he had not done that, this place would have become part of the Free State entirely. It would have become a Free State district and it would have been incorporated in the Free State and the Natives would undoubtedly have lost everything that they have today.

But if it had remained a reserve as it was before, a Native area, then the individuals could not have got into debt and then the land could not have been alienated. Take the Transkei, where the land cannot be alienated to Europeans --- would not the same have happened here ---? Probably that might have happened, but you must remember that Thaba'Nchu was very much inside the Free State. It is a small district and surrounded almost entirely by the Free State and, not only that, it is one of the best districts that you can get anywhere.

Now, if the old Chief had not given out these pieces of land to several people, then only the Chief could have alienated, only one man could have alienated the land. By giving out the land in the way he did, it meant that a large number of people were able to sell. Did that not make the alienation easier? - But why? Why was Thaba'Nchu annexed?

That followed after Samuel Moroka's rising against Sebuari?- Why did the Free State take it? - Simply because I find that my brother does not give you the right to take my property.

MR. LUCAS: What is your answer to your own question?- My opinion is this, that I do believe that old Samuel did not just come along and kill Sebuari voluntarily. I do feel that

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old Samuel was instigated by Europeans to come and kill Sebuari. There is plenty of evidence to prove that it was not simply the Natives who came along to kill Sebuari. My contention is, and there is evidence for it, that there were several Europeans, instigators who knew that if that happened it would be a much easier way of getting Thaba'Nchu. That is my view and I think that is also held by many others.

SENATOR VAN NIEKERK: That is a very strong statement to make?- (No answer).

CHAIRMAN: The point I really wanted to get at was somewhat different. My original question was, "Why is it that the Native who, as you say rightly, is quick to imitate, why is it that he is so slow when he gets back into his own tribal surroundings to imitate the things which he has learned from the European on the farm. Is it because he has a vague fear, which still survives from his witchcraft days, that that might be wrong?-" My own personal opinion is that, at the present time, the Native has not reached that stage of civilisation when he will follow everything which the White man tells him.

When you say, "stage of civilisation", what do you mean by that?-" He has not sufficiently improved intellectually to be able to follow everything of the intricacies of European civilisation. If you go to an ordinary Native and tell him to farm properly, he will not be able to take it up at once, he will still want to do what old Moroka did. What I believe should have been done, if the Europeans had the interest of the Natives at heart here in the district, they should have put up an agricultural college in this place. That would have been the right thing to do and they should have tried to shew the Natives that unless they were prepared to change their customs, they would lag behind.

DR. ROBERTS: At what date would you have had that

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college. Are you referring to the present time or to the past? I would have had that college some time back, but even now we should have it, although it would have been much better if it had been started some time ago. At present, half the district has gone out of the hands of the Natives, and it is still going out of their hands.

CHAIRMAN: You say he still wants to do as his father did. Is there in his mind any idea that, if he does not do as his father did, then he affronts the spirits of his fathers?— The Natives, as I have said, are very superstitious, but not so badly that, if they are led, they cannot follow.

And that is why you want them to be taught agricultural methods?— Yes.

Are there any agricultural demonstrators in this area?— There are.

Are they of the race which you find here?— Yes, some of them are. Actually, the first demonstrator whom we had here was a boy from Winburg. His father had been a minister here for some time and he had trouble to get the Natives, especially the older ones, to follow him.

Yes, we know that any prophet has that trouble?— At one time, before the present Magistrate was here, Mr. Gilpin told me that it was of no use keeping a demonstrator here as the Natives would take no heed of him and I said, "Well, it is like that with all people and you cannot expect people, especially people like the Natives, to take readily to a scheme like that". I told Mr. Gilpin that it was a thing which it would take time for the Natives to adapt themselves to. I told him that we had to persevere with it and I think it is meeting with success now. We cannot say that, just because a thing does not take on readily at once, that it will be a failure, therefore, for all time.

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We cannot give it up simply because it is not a success at once.

(MR. NOSTERT: Has there been any improvement?- Yes, there has been a very great deal of improvement in my opinion.

CHAIRMAN: How many are there, how many demonstrators?- I think there is only one just now.

And do you think that the Natives are beginning to follow him?- Yes, I think so.

Are they beginning to follow him in the reserves and are they taking to his methods?- Yes, I think so. These Natives will go to a demonstration whenever one is given. They always turn out to see what the demonstrator is doing and some of them are undoubtedly following his message today.

Now, you think that the work should be extended?- That, certainly, is my personal opinion and I think it would have excellent results.

You mentioned an agricultural college. Do you not think that if you were able to get a large number of demonstrators who would get right among the people, that that would be better than an agricultural school or college, which must be fixed at one particular spot only?- Yes, no doubt it would be a very good thing to have a number of demonstrators.

But your point is that you want an agricultural school as well?- I say that there should, a long time ago, have been a Native college in Thaba'Nchu for the simple reason that Thaba'Nchu occupies an unique place in the Free State. It is the only place where the Natives own their own farms and the Natives who have been there have done their best to advance themselves. The Europeans, too, have helped the Natives in many ways. Of course, I want to say this, that the Natives realise that those who have lost their farms here are not likely to get them elsewhere and I think the Europeans too have realised that, and many of them are now anxious to

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help the Natives here to keep what they have got.

Do you think that the Natives here are sufficiently advanced so that they will now begin to react to agricultural teaching?- I am perfectly sure of it.

Do you think that, in the reserve, they are overstocked?- Yes, I am sorry to say it, but they are hopelessly overstocked.

Do the Natives realise that it is a bad thing to keep more animals on the ground than the ground can reasonably carry?- The ordinary Native is wedded to his stock. It is very difficult for a man to go and tell a Native, "The moment you have so many cattle you have got to start reducing them". It is very difficult to tell a man that he is allowed to have so many cattle and no more. If you tell that to a certain type of Native, you make an enemy of him at once. That is the sort of thing that leads to illfeeling and we have had to deal with it in our Native Board. I am a member of the Native Board, and we had to pass a resolution which was against the feelings of a number of the Native inhabitants of Thaba'Nohu, but we passed the resolution because we knew that we were doing the right thing by limiting the number of stock in the locations. But they did not take kindly to it at all.

Now, that condition which you describe about the Native being wedded to his stock, that is one which one finds with all the Bantus and the Commission has been trying for a considerable time to get to the bottom of that. First of all, you have the lobolo system fairly general here still?- Not as general as it used to be.

Do you mean that it is breaking down?- Yes, it is breaking down pretty rapidly.

The point we have been trying to get at is this. Is this love of the Native for his cattle simply the result of lobolo or is it something that goes deeper?- No, it is something

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that goes much deeper.

Do you feel what your people feel - can you describe that to us? - A Native, almost from time immemorial, has looked upon his cattle as constituting everything. The Native valued land, he valued agriculture only half as much as he valued his cattle. If you sat down with a man, or if you sat down with old Natives, it does not matter whether they were Basutos or Zulus or other Natives, no matter where they come from, and if you were to ask<sup>ed</sup> them candidly whether, in the past, they had been fighting for the land, whether they had wanted to expand the district - if you had asked them what they had been fighting for, the answer would always be, "They came in and stole our cattle and we went after them to get our cattle back". It is one thing which I have always made a point of asking the old Natives who had lived in this district, and I always got the same answer. It does not matter whether a man is a Basuto or whether he belongs to any other tribe, they always take up the same attitude.

MR. MOSTERT: Does he value his cattle more than he values his wife? - Well, I can say this about them. In the olden days, when Natives married, the men never used to go to the girls to propose. The boy never went to a certain house and said to the girl, "I want you". It was the father of the house who went out and chose the girl for the boy. The father would go and say to the boy, "Now, my boy, I have a wife for you and I want you to take her", and whether the boy liked it or not, he had to take that girl. Nor was the girl ever consulted. All that was said to her was, "We have a husband for you", and whether she liked it or not she had to take that husband. What they used to do in certain cases, if a girl did not want to take a man for her husband, was this. They would say to her, "If you do not

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