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AT PIETERMARITZBURG.

26th July, 1947.

The Right Honourable the Minister of Education.

PRETORIA.

Sir,

The Committee appointed to enquire into Disturbances at Native Educational Institutions has the honour to report as follows:

The Terms of Reference were "to enquire into and report upon the causes of the disturbances which have taken place in recent times among students at State-aided Native educational institutions with boarding establishments and to make recommendations on such matters, including boarding and class fees, suitability and adequacy of accommodation, discipline, relations between staff and students, as may appear to it to call for further consideration and action in this connection."

Preliminary discussions took place in Pretoria on the 6th and 7th January, 1947, and thereafter the enquiry commenced at Faku missionary institution, Emfundisweni, on 10th February, 1947, and, with two intermissions, terminated on 29th May, 1947, in Johannesburg. During this period 33 institutions were visited and, at almost all centres, evidence was given by (a) the Head of the Institution, (b) members of the European teaching staff, (c) members of the African teaching staff, (d) members of the student body and (e) the boarding master/house master and/or the Lady Superintendent/matron. In addition evidence was also taken from a number of witnesses, African and European, not directly connected with the institutions, a number of School Inspectors and the Chief Inspectors of Native Education for the Provinces of Natal and the Transvaal. A list embodying the meetings held by the Committee and the witnesses interviewed is furnished in Appendix 'A'.

At twenty-six of the institutions visited the Committee inspected the institution premises and paid particular attention to the dining hall, kitchen, dormitories, ablution facilities, sanitary conveniences, African staff houses, European single staff quarters, African single staff quarters, library/reading room and sick bay. The question of the punishment of students was carefully investigated by the Committee, both in its Questionnaire and at all the institutions visited.

Owing/.....

Owing to the direction that undue publicity should be avoided the date and venue of the Committee's sittings were not advertised. The Heads of institutions were advised by letter of the dates on which their institutions would be visited, whilst meetings with persons not directly connected with the institutions were arranged by the Committee, officials of the Provincial Education Departments and officials of the Native Affairs Department.

A questionnaire, a specimen of which is contained in Appendix 'B', was sent to the Heads of all institutions for completion.

The Committee desires to record its appreciation of the manner in which its members were received and granted facilities for the enquiry by the various Heads of institutions and of the care with which the somewhat formidable questionnaire was completed. In many cases more information than was sought was furnished and valuable memoranda submitted by the Heads.

It further wishes to express its indebtedness to the officials and field officers of the Provincial Education Departments who so generously gave of their time and their knowledge to the Committee.

Finally it wishes to record its appreciation of the work of its Secretary, Mr. K.R. Crossman, who was so unfailing in his courtesy, and so successful in his efforts to bring the task of the Committee to a final and satisfactory conclusion.

On all sides the Committee met with requests that the information contained in the report should be made available to the general public.

CHAPTER I.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE SITUATION.

Any investigation into the education of the African in South Africa leads inevitably to the fact that it had its origin in Christian missions, and the Committee wishes to state, as it has done also in the body of the report, that although a good deal of criticism of missions and their handling of institutions will be found in the pages that follow, the African and European public of South Africa owes an incalculable debt of gratitude to the men and women who are engaged in the missionary enterprise and hold aloft the torch of civilisation in spite of disappointments and setbacks. When speaking of the romantic pioneering days one often hears the phrase: "There were giants in those days," but in the cold light of the prosaic and almost stark present, we often fail to recognise the stoutness of the effort and the heroic fight against apparently impossible odds, of the missionary men and women of our own time. African education, to be rightly understood and appraised, must be viewed against its political, economic and social background.

The Committee has frequently been told that the present unrest and general world situation have affected the attitude of the African student to Europeans in general and school authority in particular. It may be observed in passing that disturbances took place long before the present situation had developed and that the Committee was not greatly impressed by the relevance of this argument.

It cannot, however, be gainsaid that the political situation within South Africa itself has had, and is still exercising, a profound influence upon African thought and reaction towards the European. Much of the legislation affecting Africans which has been enacted during recent times has tended towards a restriction of their privileges rather than towards an enlargement of them, and had its climax in the Acts of 1936. The effect of this upon the African does not appear to be sufficiently appreciated by the South African European public. The mere withdrawal of a privilege tends to enhance its value in the eyes of the

person/...

person who has been deprived of it, and there is no doubt that these Acts solidified and deepened African resentment against the European.

Then again, the economic position of the African people has steadily deteriorated in the last few years. The testimony of all those qualified to speak is to the effect that the African has become poorer. The reserves, which at one time contributed quite a substantial proportion of the African's income, have become overstocked, eroded and less fertile, forcing him to spend more time at work in centres of labour. The wages of the African worker have improved, but the improvement has not kept pace with the rising cost of living, and the African finds himself in a perpetual state of penury. The temptations to spend in the city are so strong that he often returns to his home in the reserve without having saved enough to keep the family in mealie-meal for a month, far less sufficient to buy a few head of cattle. Should a drought intervene, the family position finally becomes so desperate that his women and children follow him to the town, and he joins the ranks of the detribalised African whose fortunes are linked with the town dweller.

The African who seeks work finds the avenues of almost all but the unskilled occupations closed to him. Even with the earnings of his wife and elder children he finds himself in a grim economic position. It can hardly be wondered at that he sometimes drowns his sorrow in one of the many brands of liquor that are at his elbow in the city.

In the unusual event of his being able to save enough money his great ambition, like European town dwellers, is to re-establish himself on the land, but the African again finds his way barred, for only in certain prescribed areas can he attain his end.

With regard to his social position the African in the city appears to the sympathetic European to be in a worse case than ever, but the African feels the deficiencies of this aspect of his life less than might be expected. The housing of himself and his family, unless he is fortunate enough to get accommodation in a municipal housing scheme, is often of the poorest, with squalid and insanitary surroundings. He cannot always get education for his children - in rural areas because schools are insufficient, in the town because they are crowded - entertainments/....

tainments cost money and often lead one into trouble, clothing becomes soiled and tattered. It is only if he has an affiliation with a Christian Church that a ray of warmth and hope shines into his rather drab existence. On one day of the week at least he can dress himself and his family decently and hold his head erect, while he moves in a society of brotherliness and mutual respect. To the non-Christian, for whom the week-end only brings either unoccupied indolence or sordid indulgence, the prospect is dark, forbidding and increasingly fearful. This undoubtedly accounts for the increased numbers of African witch-doctors in the urban areas and also for the African's endeavour to recoup his vanished fortunes by recourse to gambling of various types.

Elsewhere in this report the African is described as "emergent". It is an apt phrase which indicates that behind all these political, economic and social conditions which have been so scantily sketched here, there lies further back a dark curtain of pagan belief based upon illiteracy, ignorance and superstition. From this primitive stage the African is only just putting forth a tentative head and shoulders. Illiteracy, and superstition, still hold the majority of the African population in their grip, and this is often put forward, with some justification, by political and industrial authorities as a reason for withholding some of the privileges which the African claims.

These are factors which cannot be ignored by the Committee, for it is from these homes and these conditions that the students in institutions come. It is commonly asserted that many students in the institutions are supported by income acquired by their mothers through the manufacture and sale of illicit liquor. They hear their parents discussing heatedly and sometimes bitterly their small measure of representation in Parliament, the colour bar which seems to deny them economic opportunity, and the social disabilities in housing, education and leisure time activities, under which they live. They hear the European referred to as callous and oppressive and they are inclined, thoughtlessly, when they find themselves in the strange and maybe irksome environment of an institution to regard all the Europeans they meet as cold/...

cold, calculating and unfriendly.

It is here, the Committee feels, that the African teacher, with his broader knowledge of the situation and his more balanced judgment, can do a great service to African education, by helping the student to adjust himself, and, by allying himself with authority, he can succeed in convincing the student that there are many sympathetic Europeans both in and outside the institutions who are willing actively to assist the African to attain in a reasonable and lawful manner to his legitimate aspirations.

It is feared that he has not always done so, but if the authorities in charge of institutions and the European public generally will bear the foregoing considerations in mind they will view with a kindlier eye the growing-pains of a youthful people of which the disturbances dealt with in this report are but a symptom.

+ In the course of this report . . .

CHAPTER II.

RACE RELATIONS.

One of the questions on which the Committee required information was the extent to which World Conditions have affected Race Relations within the institutions. On this point evidence was rather vague and inconclusive. While African graduates and others among the Africans are somewhat concerned as to what is happening overseas, e.g., the United Nations Organisation debates on South West Africa and the Indians in the Union, it would seem that these are not influential conditioning factors in most of the institutions.

It is true that an increasing number of Africans are reading the newspapers, both European and African. It should be borne in mind that there has been a phenomenal development in the provision of newspapers and periodicals for Africans in the last few years. Fifteen of these are to-day published by one syndicate alone, and, while statistics are not available to the Committee, it may be taken as a conservative estimate that there are half a million Africans to-day who are more or less regular readers of newspapers.

In addition to the press, there is the radio which reaches a

much/...

much smaller number, largely in the big towns.

But it is probable that news of the World generally, while it is of interest to a few intelligent readers, is not, as yet, a factor to be considered in our enquiry.

Rather, it would appear that events more directly affecting African in the Union are those which impinge more or less directly on the lives of the large, local constituency of which the bulk of parents and students form a part. We shall touch on two or three of these before discussing racial factors within the school.

Africans in the war.

Of the 80,000 Africans who volunteered for service in the last war, about one-half saw service in the Middle East. Contacts with forces from other lands, undoubtedly had a powerful influence on the thinking of these volunteers. In thousands of homes, up and down the land to-day, are tales told of the appearance and training and exploits of the Indian Gurkha and Sikh regiments; of the well-equipped and smartly trained Negro troops, whose flying units were the special envy of the Africans; and the hundreds of thousands of Africans in the King's African Rifles and Askari divisions - armed with rifles and taking their share in the Abyssinian, Burmese and other campaigns. As these stories are told, there is much bitterness and resentment expressed because, among all these men of colour, only the Africans from the Union, the Native Military Corps, were deprived of a share in the actual fighting. They were condemned to their traditional role of servant - motor driver, ambulance carrier, etc., to the white man. While the Africans did their duty, and did it nobly, there is undoubtedly a strong intensification of racial feeling as the result of this lowering of the prestige of the South African Natives in the eyes of men of colour from other lands.

A United Front.

Just how much the talk of "A United Front" between all Non-European groups has reached the African student, it is impossible to judge. Some parents, probably, have attended meetings addressed by African, Indian, and Coloured speakers, calling on all Non-Europeans

to join/....

to join together to throw off the white man's yoke, even by violence, if it be necessary.

The Communists.

Outside the circulation, gratis to students and staff, of copies of "The Guardian" and "The Torch", leftist newspapers, there does not seem to be any definite drive by Communists to organise students or to precipitate strikes. Here and there students were mentioned who seemed to be attracted to the Communist programme, and it was intimated to the Committee that some of the African graduates from Fort Hare were communistically inclined. ~~While, undoubtedly, Communist propaganda must have some influence in forming the mental background and attitude of certain parents and students, its extent is negligible.~~ *Another & substitute*

Growth of African Trade Unions.

Another influence strongly operating in the urban areas, from whence considerable numbers of African students come, is the rapid development of African Trade Unionism. In Johannesburg to-day are over fifty trade union organisations with an African membership. These are based on what must appear to Africans to be an acceptance of the fact that workers in European industry must combine and be prepared to fight for their rights. The success of the strike, and the strike-threat methods in numbers of industries, have demonstrated to the evident satisfaction of numbers of Africans that they have discovered the key for redressing wrongs in modern industrial relationships.

It should be borne in mind, in this connection, that not all students in the larger institutions are immature. Many are mature men and women returning to school to advance themselves by further study. While these may not be the actual instigators of disturbance, it might be expected that some of their ideas would communicate themselves to the impressionable youths.

Race Relations in the Institution.

African students come to the institutions with a stereotyped picture of the European which makes them suspicious of the good intentions of any white man. As an eminent African points out: "Students' judgments/.....

judgments are based on black and white judgments. They don't feel free to go to a white man for they feel he will not give justice, because he is white". Many students are sent to institutions to get them away from town influences; some sent by parents to be reformed. Many are not Christians in their attitudes, not infrequently being brought up in an atmosphere where the church is sneered at and missionaries condemned. A reading of the Eunga Blue Books reveals that, even in the country districts, "there is a good deal of criticism of the Church .. coming from the African people".

So the European in the institution starts under a handicap of initial suspicion in his work for the students. If he can demonstrate that he is a different, exceptional sort of white man, he may, after a time, secure the good will and co-operation of students by making it necessary for them to reverse their judgments of white men generally. If, on the other hand, the student sees in the missionary and the European staff member, individuals who are cold, aloof, unapproachable, and, in the school he finds rules and regulations, which he does not understand the necessity of; and a rigid discipline to which he must conform, he may be confirmed in his feeling that here, as outside, you must adopt the same methods for obtaining redress, i.e., disturbances, threats, strikes. As witnesses pointed out:

"The institution is a microcosm identical with the world without. The student's agitated state of mind is not eased by the conditions within the institution. Here the student meets the European teacher - people he considers as apostles of the tenets of white supremacy, or suspects of paying lip-service to equality. ... Outside the institution established authority is used to keep the African down, and is repudiated by way of strikes. Such authority is likewise repudiated within the institution."

The Committee has been continually impressed by the fact that strikes and disturbances arise out of conditions which are considered by the students as repressive and frustrative. Recent studies into the psychology of racial tensions have pointed out that "wherever frustration occurs, aggression of some kind and in some degree, will inevitably result." Frustration in the urban areas results in various forms of hostility/...

hostility, e.g., the stoning of trams, parades of protest, the boycott of bus companies, theft, and serious crime. Within institutions, where disturbances occur, it would be well to conduct an inventory of the points of racial tension to discover where students consider that their natural wishes and desires to do something or be somebody are thwarted and frustrated.

There is the further very important factor of resentment at another's failure to justify one's faith or one's hope in him or her. The missionary and European member of an institution staff are looked upon by many students and parents as those who should be friendly; should treat the African kindly; should exemplify the Christian ideal of a common brotherhood of all men under One Father. When the missionary fails to measure up at some point, the result is felt the more keenly than the failure of another white man, because of him more was expected. Says an outstanding member of the Native Representative Council:

"Every African is looked upon simply as a "boy" even by juvenile Europeans. It is skin pigmentation that matters. We don't get any different treatment from the missionary and this we resent more as we consider he should know better by reason of his spiritual training and the fact that we have more points of contact with him."

any more comments such as the foregoing were made to the Committee by Africans who had been trained at missionary institutions and yet were bitter, feeling that the missionary had "let them down". One more will suffice:

"The missionary will only shake hands with an African of his own church. We interpret this as meaning that he will accept only the hand of someone who brings money to him. The African who has been educated sees the European in his true colours. This opinion seeps into our children's minds".

The basis of many complaints concerning the missionary and European staff members, centres around such things as speaking to Africans on the streets in towns; shaking of hands; relegating to the bottom of lists the names of Africans and placing the Europeans on top - small matters, but indicating to the sensitive mind of the African that he is regarded/.....

by the Europeans as inferior. This recognition is always humiliating to anyone. Says John Dollard, the psychologist and anthropologist:

"The recognition by a black person that he is regarded as inferior is bound to be a process wounding to the basic sense of the integrity of the individual. This is, indeed, one of the basic frustrations ... which generates hostility toward the white caste."^{*}

This feeling of resentment by the individual is, as already suggested, the more keenly felt when the one who so regards him as inferior is his friend, and an apostle of the Christian faith which professedly is "no respecter of persons."

It is understandable that the attitude of the missionary towards Africans has a tendency to be moulded on that of the European in and round about the institution. It takes courage, moral and physical, to stand against a group attitude when dealing with prejudiced European staff members and when doing business with Europeans in the towns with whom one would like to be on good terms.

~~But the missionary to-day is succeeding or failing by the manner in which he stands up to the critical judgments of students who are on the watch to see how completely he will identify himself with them, treat them "as members of one family" - "brothers in Christ" - "as his own children".~~ The old time missionary, who is remembered with nostalgic affection, was kindly and humane, he had a "joking relationship" with the students - could laugh with them, could call them by name, could make them feel that they counted with him. That gave them a sense of dignity and worth which meant much.

re-drafted

The Report of the "Smit Commission" states: "... It is still not sufficiently recognised that Natives possess a dignity and self-respect which is necessary to the proper adjustment of the racial relationships between them and the European community." And the Honourable the Minister of Education, Mr. J.H. Hofmeyr, calls for "a generous respect for the dignity of all men and an open-hearted readiness to concede to others what we regard the fatherhood of God as meaning for ourselves."

Much of/.....

* Dollard, John, and others, of the Institute of Human Relations, Yale University; Frustration and Aggression. London: Kegan Paul, 1944.

Much of what has been said in this section does not apply to many missionary Heads of institutions who are courageously carrying on the older missionary tradition in the face of difficulties of a type not experienced by their forebears. These men are exerting an influence on the African and African Education of incalculable value.

Much more can be done in nearly every institution visited by the Committee to provide (a) ~~more opportunities~~ for social intercourse between European and African staff members, (b) attracting parents to the institutions to see Head and staff and visit their children, and (c) ~~the formation of a strong Old Students' (Alumni) Association to retain and strengthen the interest of former students in the institution.~~

Chapter III/....

CHAPTER III.THE MISSIONARY AND
THE
MISSIONARY INSTITUTION.

The Missionary Head (Governor, Warden, or Principal) of an institution to-day has an arduous and unenviable position. He is the heir of the work of others who have laboured before him, who have started from small beginnings - themselves and one or two teachers whom they themselves had to train - and who painfully, against great odds, down through the years, saw the tiny school grow into an institution with hundreds of students and an increasingly competent staff. The difficulties of the present-day missionary Head are those created by the very success of the enterprise. They are inherent in the operation and control of a many-sided organisation whose size and complexity could not have been envisaged by the early pioneers and the requirements of which are only partially understood by the supporters and wellwishers of the missionary enterprise at the present time. So rapid has been the development in education in the last two or three decades, that it should come as a surprise to no one that stresses and strains have appeared and that old time-honoured methods of administration and control are showing signs of inadequacy and incipient disintegration. No one is more conscious of the situation in which he finds himself to-day than the missionary himself who is in charge of a High school and a Training school of several hundred students of both sexes; a large staff of Europeans and Africans; a wealth of administrative and financial detail to handle almost single-handed, in addition to a circuit of churches and schools round about the institution which are equally his responsibility to his church. Even where the missionary is freed from a circuit of churches and schools his is the burden of finding the finance for keeping the institution afloat, of discovering suitable African and European staff and housing them, and of feeding and looking after the welfare and leisure-time activities of an active, inquiring body of students which is responsive, as never before, to the stirrings of a new sense of freedom and self-determination everywhere present among emergent peoples to-day. These factors should be borne in mind when we consider the criticisms of the missionary Heads of institutions and touch on the various/.....

various difficulties found in relation to staff and students and the provision of satisfactory living conditions.

The missionary Heads of institutions are being subjected to searching criticism to-day by both Africans and Europeans, not only by those of a somewhat radical turn of mind, but also by well-meaning friends and well-wishers from within the institutions, from Government inspectors and even by ministers of their own churches. They are held responsible in large measure for the failure of the system under which they work to adapt itself satisfactorily to the demands of a new day.

Examples of the kind of criticism being levelled at the missionary and the institutions to-day are as follows:

By prominent Africans:

"The administration of our institutions is out-moded".

"Treatment of students; diet, etc., are out of date."

By an Inspector of Schools:

"The control of institutions by churches should be faced up to. There is a lack of confidence to-day not only by parents, but also by ministers."

The missionary himself comes in for a good deal of adverse criticism. African teachers say:

"The missionary spirit has gone away. I came here when the real missionary was here. Now they are only pretending. Missionaries are now like other white men."

"Missionaries are slow to adapt themselves to changed conditions. The present system is bound to go."

~~Another Inspector of Schools:~~

~~"B.A.'s. and educationally trained men do not want the religiously trained director."~~

And the Head of an institution summarizes much of this feeling:

"Africans feel they have been in leading strings long enough to the missionary."

When the question is asked, "Just what do you object to in the present situation?", the replies are many and varied. For the most part they can be grouped as follows:

(1) The attitude of Heads is dictatorial; aloof; unenlightened.

(a) They do not trust the staff:

Students in some institutions are compelled to obtain passes from the authorities before visiting African staff members. Staff members are not invited to share in conduct of sports, literary societies, etc., implying an unwillingness on the part of authorities to trust students with them. Accusations are made that some Heads set students to spy on other students and staff members, and "even among the staff the Head has his own men, - a divide and rule policy." Witnesses complain: "There is little consultation by the Head with staff, especially African staff members."

(b)/.....

(b) They do not treat the students paternally:

Students say: "The authorities don't regard us as their children. They call us 'boy' - don't bother to learn our names."

The Head of an institution: "The attitude is that of teacher and taught, not the father-mother attitude towards students."

Students are used as house-servants by authorities and European staff, and students complain that they are regarded as servants.

The Head of an institution: "Modern children wish to be treated as European children ... as human beings."

An African teacher: "Children like to be handled in a kindly manner. They are sensitive to good treatment."

Before a recent disturbance students were reported to have said: "We are tired of being bullied!"

The Principal Teacher of a training school says: "The Head has meetings with the boys and girls at Sunday service, but no personal contact. He is regarded as sort of a Magistrate to enforce the rules and regulations."

(c) Changes are made suddenly with no explanation:

A head teacher says: "Students resent changes brought about by new Governors."

For instance: Privileges are withdrawn without reason; the food ration is cut; table cloths removed; the shape of the bar of soap changed; permission to visit nearby shops withdrawn; the school band is dispensed with; debates and social occasions with neighbouring schools stopped; girls forbidden to plait their hair; celebration of Guy Fawkes Day cancelled, etc., etc.

This sort of arbitrary action in what is seemingly very trivial, adds up to a good deal of resentment and is "interpreted as the wish of the authorities to ignore them."

(d) Discriminations against African Staff Members:

Usually African staff members are housed in small inadequate dwellings - quite unsatisfactory as compared with those provided for the European staff.

In all institutions (except Fort Hare), African staff salaries are lower than those of European teachers doing similar work.

African staff members are sometimes discriminated against in such matters as seating in church and at sports, the use of tennis courts, provision of common rooms, segregation from Europeans at tea socials, they are reprimanded before students, called by their first names in public, are told they must not make friends with girl students, etc. Very trivial matters, again, assume large proportions. Says an African Boarding Master: "Students resent the way African staff members are treated by the authorities like big babies. They are not referred to as 'Mister'."

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