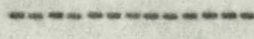


Aide-Memoire of Conference with Dr. Eiselen, Chief Inspector of Native Education, Transvaal, concerning

The Effects of Abolishing Fees in Native Schools

in Pretoria on Monday, March 3rd, 9.30 - 11.30 a.m.



Preliminary Note: The order of points in this aide-memoire does not attempt to reproduce the order of the actual discussion.

1. The abolition of fees in Native Schools was suggested by Dr. Eiselen to Mr. D.L. Smit, Secretary for Native Affairs, about a week before the meeting of the Native Representative Council, last December. The actual announcement of the abolition at the Council Meeting came as a surprise to Dr. Eiselen. The effects of the decision so suddenly taken had, obviously, not been considered in detail.

2. The Provincial Councils of the three Northern Provinces have accepted the Union Government's proposal to make good out of the Native Trust Fund the amount of the loss of income due to the abolition of fees. The abolition will come into effect as from April 1st.

3. The amount to be paid by the Union Government in lieu of fees has been calculated, at Dr. Eiselen's suggestion, at three-quarters of the old fee-income, the maximum enrolment during the third and fourth terms of 1940 being taken as the standard for determining the amount of such fee-income.

4. This reduction of 25% was justified by Dr. Eiselen chiefly on two grounds, viz: (a) expected savings in buying school equipment, etc. from a central supply, at wholesale prices, instead of single schools buying at higher rates from local stores; (b) the stoppage of the practice, indulged in by some Missions, of diverting fee-income to the financing of non-educational Mission-activities - a practice against which Native parents had increasingly protested.

5. The Department will, in future, take over the payment of the salaries of "private" teachers in "recognised" (or "assisted") schools, i.e. teachers appointed by the Missions and paid out of fee-income, as distinct from teachers whose salaries the Government pays. The number of such teachers is calculated to be about 300, all except about 20 uncertificated. The Government will pay the salaries of all these teachers at the uncertificated rate, leaving the higher salaries of the few certificated teachers to be settled by negotiation.

6. The attention of Dr. Eiselen was drawn to the fact that out of the fee-income of their schools, the Missions had not only paid the salaries of the "private" teachers, but met also a great variety of additional expenditures, such as:-

- (a) sanitary fees (e.g. £220 p.a. in the Anglican schools in Sophiatown).
- (b) repairs to school buildings.
- (c) rents for farm-school buildings erected by farmers (such rents frequently exacted for the whole year in advance).

- (d) interest and amortisation on loans raised for erecting, or enlarging, school-buildings; improving them (e.g. installing water-borne sewerage under municipal compulsion); founding new schools, etc.
- (e) temporary loans, or advance payments of salaries to teachers at times when, for one reason or another, the arrival of Government salary cheques is delayed.
- (f) purchase of books and equipment.

7. Dr. Eiselen admitted that, in view of the loss of fee-income, the Government grant would have to provide funds for (a),(b),(c),(d) - in part; (f) - from its own central supply. He offered no relief under (e), apparently hesitating to adopt the suggested stop-order system. Obviously, the range of payments, over and above teachers' salaries and school equipment, for which the Government must now make itself responsible, had not been clearly thought out in advance when it was agreed to stabilise the financial liability of the Native Trust Fund at $\frac{3}{4}$ of the fee-income, as defined in (2) above.

8. It was pointed out that, with the loss of the fee-income, Missions and Superintendents would lose the degree of freedom in school-management which the fee-income had made possible. In future, the Provincial Government, administering the Union-grant in lieu of fees, will have complete control of management on the principle of "he who pays the piper, calls the tune". (Privately, the suggestion was made that the Missions might ask the parents for voluntary contributions to a "School Fund", to be administered by the Superintendent in consultation with the parents, for expenditures in the interest of the subscribing school which are not covered by the Government grant.)

9. It was also pointed out that, though the abolition of fees is a boon to the parents affected, the total effect on the development of Native Education is unfavourable for the immediate future at least, and probably also for the more distant future. For,

(a) in order to fix the Government's liability, the enrolment (which determines the amount of fee-income) has been fixed at the maximum reached in the second half of 1940, and no additional enrolments (which, under the old system would have meant additional fee-income) are permitted in 1941. The growth of the number of Native children attending school is thus stopped, and will stay stopped until the Government chooses to increase its grant and to allow (and pay for) the "recognition" of schools not hitherto assisted, or the building of new "assisted" schools, or the extension of existing "assisted" schools.

(b) the likelihood of additions to the amount of the grant so fixed was said to be not great. Dr. Eiselen pointed out that the abolition of fees had become possible only through the Native Trust having surplus funds in hand, due to the stoppage of land purchases and of nearly all improvements in the Reserves owing to the War. If and when these purchases and improvements are resumed after the War, the resulting calls on the Native Trust Fund are not likely to permit of additional sums for education. Indeed, Parliament,

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responsible for finding the money with which to pay interest on war-loans and meet other "aftermath war-expenditures, is not likely to vote much money for the Native Trust Fund.

10. The new policy, thus, looks like operating (partly owing to the War, but not wholly so) so as to put a complete check on the expansion of Native education. (Incidentally, Dr. Eiselen suggested also that schools well-managed in the past were likely to suffer somewhat under the new policy, whilst schools badly managed in the past would benefit by comparison.)

11. It also marks a further step in the substitution of Government control in the place of Mission control. (The provision of school-buildings by Municipalities in their Native Locations also tends to have this effect.)

12. Incidentally, Dr. Eiselen suggested that, when the Government pays a rent covering interest and amortisation on loans raised by Missions in the past, or to be raised in the future, for the purpose of erecting or enlarging school-buildings, such rent should be reduced, or even abolished, once the loans have been paid off. This suggestion was contested by the deputation, (a) on general business principles; (b) because the Government might claim that, having by its rents in fact paid off the loan, it ought to be regarded as the purchaser and owner of the buildings concerned; and because this would once more operate to limit the expansion of Native education (for, after a loan is paid off out of fees, the fees still continue to come in and can now be devoted to fresh purposes, whereas the Government's rent-payments will cease and the corresponding amounts will be re-absorbed into the Native Trust Fund, without becoming necessarily available for further development of school facilities for Natives.)

13. The Government, in abolishing Native school fees, wholly ignored the fact that the advocates of such abolition had, in the past, always asked for it as merely part of a more comprehensive policy aiming to make Native education, not merely free, but also compulsory, and involving the recognition of the Government's responsibility for providing, gradually, education for every Native child, in the form of an adequate per capita grant on enrolment, which enrolment, even if regulated, should none the less be allowed to grow at the rate of a 10% increase p.a. (See recommendations of the Inter-Departmental Committee). The present policy stops further enrolment, makes no provision for development, and does not even pretend to meet the growing need or demand for additional educational facilities for Natives.

14. It was also pointed out that the heaviest burden on Native parents of school-going children is not the fees to be paid, but the expense of books which always greatly exceeds the amount of the fees, especially so in the higher classes. This aspect of Native school economics is left untouched by the new policy. The suggestion that, instead of abolishing fees, the Government grant be used to supply books, etc. did not find favour with Dr. Eiselen.

15. The suggestion that the Government grant be simply distributed to Missions pro rata of past fee-income, was rejected by Dr. Eiselen on the ground that some Missions had misused their fee-income (See sect. (3) above.).

16. The net result was that the more the deputation explored the mouth of the gift horse, the less it liked what it saw. The outlook for Native education as a whole, which was never very rosy, has not been made more rosy by the new policy.

Collection Number: AD1715

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS (SAIRR), 1892-1974

PUBLISHER:

Collection Funder:- Atlantic Philanthropies Foundation

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

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