

11.16.24

P.O. Box 4587,

JOHANNESBURG,

27th October, 1948.

Mr. P.C. Coetsee,  
Merensky Library,  
University of Pretoria,  
PRETORIA.

Dear Mr. Coetsee,

I am sorry that I have not replied before this to your letter of the 20th September. It arrived whilst I was in Capetown and since my return I have been on leave and having to rest as much as possible under doctor's orders.

I fully appreciate the dilemma in which the Non-European Libraries Committee of the S.A. Library Association finds itself. It is a dilemma which faces the Union on the political and other points of racial relationships, and every solution offered seems to bring out such difficulties as to make any "solution" impossible to achieve. This was well brought out in the late Professor Hoernle's masterly analysis of our racial situation in his South African Native Policy and the Liberal Spirit.

I have read with deep interest the report of the sub-committee and particularly the account of the discussions at which I was unfortunately unable to be present. I have noted that Dr. Eiselen and Messrs. Franz and Brent recommended the establishment of a separate Non-European Library Association as they are opposed to Non-Europeans continuing as members of the S.A. Library Association either as full members or "with restricted privileges". I have noted also that they say that their advice is based on the sole consideration that their proposal offers "the only way in which the interests of the Natives themselves would be served".

After having read the report and before having formulated my own views on the issues, I took the liberty of placing the report before an African member of the Association, and asking for his views, without indicating in any way my reactions to the report. I have since received his reply, and I attach a copy to this letter. You will see that his views are totally opposed to those of the advisers.

I find that the advisers support their recommendation with the following arguments:-

- (1). Where Natives are admitted to common membership with Europeans they are treated as inferiors, and are thus



prevented from learning to conduct their own affairs.

- (2). Natives have proved themselves capable of conducting their own affairs in their own organizations.
- (3). In professional and educational organizations, Non-Europeans should be free to decide for themselves what their aim should be, and this can only be achieved in organizations which do not include Europeans.
- (4). Native mentality is different from that of the European and therefore requires persons to serve them who have understanding of their mentality. Natives however who have been trained with Europeans are ignorant of their own people's mentality.
- (5). Native librarians should know their people's mentality and be able to identify themselves with their own people.
- (6). Admission of Non-Europeans into common membership is based upon an ill-liberal attitude, because only a selected few are so admitted and declared equal to Europeans, whilst care is taken to prevent the danger of Europeans being swamped.
- (7). "Trusteeship" constitutes the truly liberal attitude.

I believe I have extracted from the report of the discussion the main arguments used. I take it that the arguments are held to be about equally applicable to the other Non-European races. I have given the arguments careful consideration and I submit my comments on them.

(1). It is undoubtedly true that Europeans dominate organizations in which both Europeans and Non-Europeans are found. The traditional master-servant, if not the conqueror-conquered, attitude pervades both the Europeans and Non-Europeans. When to this is added the European's fear of the predominating numbers of Non-Europeans - with their political, economic and social significance - it is not surprising that Europeans, consciously or unconsciously resist any development likely to undermine their dominance. Moreover, since educated Non-Europeans form a comparatively small portion of the total Non-European population, in any racial group, and the social distances between educated Europeans and educated Non-Europeans are very great, it is difficult for Europeans to discriminate in their attitude towards the educated and the mass of Non-Europeans.

But there are many signs of change. Men like Professor Jabavu and Matthews, Doctors Moroka and Xuma, the two Mashabanes (Ministers) Councillors Thema, Mosaka and Godlo, to name only a few, take part freely in bodies where both Europeans and Non-Europeans meet on the basis of common membership. In the Institute of Race Relations, the Professor Jabavu, as Vice-Chairman, with dignity and competence has presided on numerous



occasions at meetings of the Council and the Executive Committee. The African members of the Transvaal Advisory Board on Native Education, of which I am Chairman, take a full part in the discussions.

I believe we have to face the fact that the old subservient attitude is disappearing from among intelligent Non-Europeans, and that, however much Europeans may dislike the aggressiveness which has replaced it in many instances, it is the beginning of a new place in the development of Non-Europeans which, if wisely handled, will bring to the Non-Europeans a new self-respect and a new self-reliance. It will not help our racial situation if Europeans try to resist this development or try to turn it aside.

(2). It is also true that Natives are showing increasingly their ability to conduct their own affairs. They have a talent for dialectics which come from the immemorial practices of tribal public business. They have not yet shown equal capacity for organization along lines which modern life and interests require. Their poverty is a great handicap too and they are handicapped by their limited first-hand experience of the way Europeans handle public affairs. They are also discouraged by their inability to "open doors", i.e., to get easy access to those who wield authority. The feeling of frustration which their impotence creates has been dramatically expressed by the action of the Natives' Representative Council in refusing to carry on.

While the domineering attitude of Europeans has undoubtedly caused Natives generally to seek escape from it in their own organizations. I have found that all types and classes are most eager to secure the fullest measure of the advantages which contact with sympathetic Europeans can yield, and that they seek European leadership because they feel they have not the training or experience to enable them to conduct their own affairs without it. African life does not provide the knowledge and experience necessary to enable them to act with confidence in their life today: this is true in the Reserves as well as outside. Hence their eagerness to learn from the European.

There is a great deal to be said for giving the Non-Europeans opportunities for conducting their own affairs in local governments and in other directions, but if their educated ones are cut off from all association with Europeans then they will be deprived of opportunities for gaining knowledge and experience that would be helpful to them in their leadership of their own people.

(3). In view of the self assurance which educated Non-Europeans are acquiring, I do not think we need be afraid that they will long acquiesce in any policy that is inimical to their best interests. If at any stage they should feel that these interests are not being served by their continuing as members of the Association they would be quite free to break away. But surely  
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it is not a free choice that the advisers recommend but a "lock out". If at any time Non-Europeans found continued membership incompatible with their self-respect it might be a reflection upon the treatment meted out to them by the Europeans or their own attitude might have contributed to an unhappy situation; but at least the Europeans could not be charged with having cast them into the outer darkness. At present Non-Europeans are free to come in, and they are free to form their own association. Why should Europeans make the choice for them, as the advisers propose?

(4). It is surely not necessary to prevent educated Africans from associating with Europeans to ensure that they understand their own people's mentality. If, as is asserted by one of the advisers, it is true that African doctors have had to acquire from Europeans their understanding of their own people, this is a strong argument for extending their knowledge and widening their understanding through association with knowledgeable and understanding Europeans. He little knows of the African mind who only the African mind knows. Is it really contended that Professor Z.K. Matthews' training in Social Anthropology at Yale and London Universities has not equipped him better to understand his own people? Did the late Dr. Vilakazi's association with Professor Doke and other Europeans disqualify him to express the mind of his own people? By the way, the recent publication of the Zulu Dictionary in which Professor Doke and Dr. Vilakazi collaborated is surely a brilliant object lesson in the benefits to both races of inter-racial association and cultural co-operation.

(5) There seems to me nothing incompatible between membership of an organization which includes all races and leadership of one's own race. The wider the contacts Non-Europeans have outside their own racial group the better they will be able to serve their own people. It is quite wrong to assume that educated Non-Europeans are estranged from their own people by association with Europeans. Even in the remotest Native reserve I find that, generally speaking, the Chiefs and people turn to educated men for enlightenment and advice, and the latter's influence is very great.

On the other hand, there are signs that growing restrictions on the ground of Colour are causing Africans to try to pass as Coloured men and Coloured men to pass as Europeans. The more restrictions that are placed on account of race or colour the more will the victims seek to escape from the group affected.

(6). This argument is a fallacy, when applied to the present issue. Association restricts no one on the ground of race, colour or creed, but does require certain qualifications which it is open to the members of any race to acquire. These qualifications are demanded in the interests of the individual as well as of the Association and of the public it seeks to serve.



where, as in the case of the masses, there is no common ground in language, culture and the pattern of social life, separate institutions are necessary; but librarians of whatever race, have more in common than otherwise and can best be helped by the "attrition of mind upon mind".

If it is feared that in course of time Non-Europeans will enter in large numbers and their entry will gravely injure the best interests of the Association, this fear can be overcome by acting courageously in the faith that in the freedom of the Association Non-Europeans will not act as racial groups but will differ among themselves as much as Europeans do. Even if the worst came to the worst Europeans could secede and form a separate organization.

(7). The term "Trusteeship" is now being used by many who would have scorned to use it a few years ago, and it is being given odd meanings. Is it necessary to exclude the ward from the advantages of association with the trustee in order to develop the ward's capabilities? Separation from the influence of the trustee would only be necessary where that influence was evil or deleterious. I believe that I have shown that the ward needs all the help that association with a good trustee can secure.

Let me put forward one or two other considerations.

There is every indication that for a long time to come - so long a time as to be removed from practical speculation - residential separation of the races will be a fact, whether enforced by law, and that Non-European librarians will live among and serve their own racial groups. For this reason, their admission as members of the S.A. Library Association has little if any relevance to residential separation. *or not*

There is no reason to set up either a membership qualification or examination requirements of a lower standard for Non-Europeans. They have proved abundantly their ability to measure up to the ordinary scholastic and academic standards. Non-Europeans are always emphatic in their opposition to lower qualifications being required of them for academic or professional standing.

*could* If this problem is viewed in the light of international relations, we must see how the course of action suggested would, if applied to international affairs, be regarded as a retrograde step. However much Europeans may regret that the Non-white peoples outnumber the whites in the world, we have to accept the fact that they all live in one world, and that there can be no peace in the world unless the nations learn to associate and work with each other. It is inconceivable that membership of UNESCO *could* be confined to whites. While only those in every country who are regarded by their governments as qualified to represent their countries are sent to UNESCO they are recognized as competent to speak for and to act in the interests of their own peoples, of whatever race.



Similarly, Europeans and Non-Europeans have to live in this our country and unless and until the country is divided into separate racial territories - there must be opportunities for the leaders of all races to associate and work together for the common good.

To expel educated Non-Europeans from actual or potential membership of the Association would be unjust and unwise. Unjust because there are not enough of them to provide an adequate membership, well qualified to provide a stimulating atmosphere and they would not have the cultural and other facilities to maintain a good standard of leadership. It would be unwise because, however specious the argument that it is being done in their interests, the effect of exclusion would be to increase racial bitterness among them and their people. They would be compelled to turn to other countries for help in their cultural advancement and become increasingly hostile to the Europeans of the Union. In the end the loyalty of the Non-Europeans to the State would be estranged. In this direction, the path of South Africa leads to ruin.

For all the foregoing reasons I hope the Association will continue to allow Non-Europeans to become full members of the Association.

Yours truly,

J.D. RHEINALLT JONES



THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NON-EUROPEAN SECTION OF THE SOUTH  
AFRICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

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(1). Like Mr. G.H. Franz, Mr. J.R. Brent and Dr. W.W.M. Eiselen, I am opposed to a Union-wide Non-European section of the South African Library Association.

(2) I am equally opposed to an entirely separate Non-European Library Association which the above gentlemen feel is the only feasible organization which could promote the interests of the Non-European library workers.

CRITICISMS OF 1 and 2.

(a) Besides the friction not known to me, the main objection to a mixed association seems to be that Non-Europeans find it difficult to follow some lectures at conferences intended for European Librarians of large libraries. This is not a sound reason because some Europeans also find the same difficulty as they do not all work in large libraries. Secondly, the difficulty can be surmounted when Non-European librarians attain high library qualifications or even become qualified librarians, which is what should be pressed for.

(b) The other objection is that Non-European library services require a special treatment, because books intended for Europeans are entirely unsuited for Non-Europeans. This does not warrant the formation of a Non-European Section of the S.A. Library Association nor a separate organization. I definitely believe that requirements for reading material for both sections should be the same by educating the Non-Europeans.

I suggest that in the final section of the diploma in Librarianship, provisions be made for specialist training for those who would work among Non-Europeans. The specialized training would take the form of say the study of anthropology and the literature of a particular Non-European language. This could even be followed by European workers.

I feel that discriminatory action should be on academic qualifications and not on race. This would encourage more Non-European librarians to study for the diploma.

Sectional interest would in the long run undermine fundamental principles. It is through contact that both sections would benefit from each other's experiences and understand the country's needs with regard to the extension of library services for all.

A totally separate organization would be unworkable in my opinion because (1) Non-Europeans are not a homogeneous group. Africans would eventually want to form their own



organizations separate from Coloured and Indian or it may start from the Coloured and Indian. This would be a legitimate claim, because of languages and custom. Similarly the same would happen between Coloured and Indian.

Secondly, such a separate organization would be deprived of the expert advice of European library specialists in library technique, administration etc., which is highly desirable if extension of library services for Non-Europeans is to reach an appreciable stage.

It is also undesirable because there are no qualified Non-European librarians as yet who would give their fellowmen the desired knowledge and improve Non-European libraries to the advantage of their people.

The only solution, in my opinion, is admitting Non-Europeans to the S.A. Library Association as full members and on an equal footing with their European fellow workers, and to sit for the same examinations.



The establishment of a Non-European section of the South African Library Association.

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