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Director: Phyllis S. Lean

11th June, 1964.

12 JUN 1964

Councillor Patrick Lewis, M.P.C.,
C/o. Mr. J. Malan,
Public Relations Department,
City of Johannesburg,
Room 110, City Hall,
JOHANNESBURG.

Dear Mr. Lewis,

I must apologise for the long delay in considering the speech material you submitted to me via Mr. Malan, and even now have only found time to comment on two of your speeches, viz. -

1. An address to the Parktown Girls' High School, and
2. An address to the Thirty-fifth Annual General Meeting of the Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accounts.

The latter I found extremely funny. However, let us deal first with the Parktown Girls' High School.

Para. 1 : It is never considered very good to say that you are glad to receive an invitation in your opening sentence. It is better policy to leave this type of remark until the very end and then to conclude with some such phrase as -

"It is part of my duty to know as much as I can about the schools in the Parktown constituency, and therefore, Madam Chairman, I am most grateful to you for having given me an opportunity to address your School today".

Para. 2 : It is never a good thing to say that you wonder what you are going to talk about or to seek advice. This is always in bad taste, and gives your audience a wobbly feeling, even to the extent of their feeling that

they/

Exhibitions, campaigns and conferences arranged · Meetings organised · Speakers trained · Speech drafting

they cannot place complete reliance on what you are going to say. The sort of joke that is incorporated in your 2nd and 3rd paragraphs, with a very gentle suggestion of sex, should never be used in any circumstances in a girls' school. In fact, it is the cardinal rule of good public speaking that only a great orator can get away with a joke near the beginning of a speech, and sex jokes should never be used except possibly at a stag party.

Para. 5 : You will observe that I have underlined "this area" which occurs twice in the same sentence and once in the sentence immediately before. The whole sentence could be better expressed thus :-

"About a year ago I was looking at an old map of Johannesburg, compiled about 1900 ; one suburb bore the strange name of 'Kaffir Town', near where Newtown Market now stands and extending to Vrededorp. It was a dreadful slum and in 1904 plague broke out in this area. The Bantu were moved out and settled on the Klipspruit Sewage Farm, which is beyond Baragwanath Hospital, although this famous hospital had not yet been built. The new district was called Pimville..."

At this point I would have told the children why Pimville is so called, and recalled the wonderful contribution made to the welfare of Africans in our city by the late Howard Pim.

Para. 6 : In this paragraph we run into the very difficult problem of the presentation of statistics. It is doubtful if schoolgirls would take in the figures unless you could reinforce your words by writing them on a blackboard or presenting them diagrammatically. You will see that I have put a ring around the words "Why was this", because this is a rhetorical question and no longer used in modern public speaking. The statistics would have more impact if they were contrasted with the present-day Bantu population of the city.

This whole question of the presentation of statistics is something that I must discuss with you, because obviously a man who plays so prominent a part in public life as you do must frequently meet the difficulty, and indeed you run headfirst into it in Para. 7 on Page 3, which looks like a breakfast menu for a computer !

Para. 8 opens with a rhetorical question again. Why not express it as a plain statement of fact :-

"These/

"These Bantu people came to Johannesburg first and foremost to work in the mines, homes, offices and factories. They came because there was not sufficient food or work to enable them to live in their own reserves".

Para. 10 again has problems of statistics, and the second half of the paragraph which refers to the War is again awkwardly expressed through the constant repetition of the word "War". It could be re-worded as follows :-

"By 1940 building materials were scarce and expensive, and all our efforts were concentrated on our responsibilities to Great Britain and our Allies. Industries had expanded very rapidly, and so the Bantu crowded to the cities seeking employment, which was eagerly offered to them".

Para. 12 : Again the rhetorical question, and the repetition of "rent" and "rental". This might be re-written as follows :-

"Many of these people were poor, most living in misery. They could not afford to pay adequate rent for houses, and Municipalities could not afford to provide the housing at low cost within the means of these ~~poor~~ African people, because, when a Municipality builds houses, it must also provide water, lighting, roads, sanitation and health services".

Paras. 15 and 16 might be embroidered a little, for these present a truly proud record of the activities of the Johannesburg Municipality.

Para. 20 : The opening sentence is archaic, and again in a rhetorical form though it is not a question. For young people I would have said :-

"They found things very different when they came to the cities ; the man found the house had already been built for him, and there were no cattle for him to tend".

Towards the end of this paragraph we have the same problem :-

"The women had no fields to cultivate, no wide open spaces, and for the first time in their lives the need to go away from home to work for other women and in strange circumstances".

Para. 21 might be re-written as follows :-

"The weekly wage packet presents many problems to an African, for he has to plan how to spend his money and how to make it last the week. In rural areas his problem was how to plan the food of himself and his family and his cattle by the fair allocation of the crops he grew".

Para. 22 : We never use the phrase "all sorts" either in speech or writing. It is a rather ungainly slang-expression, in these circumstances better replaced by the word "many".

Para. 23 : Here you have a phrase written as a sentence, which is perfectly permissible in speech but not in writing, namely "Their marriage customs, for instance". This is not a sentence because it does not contain a verb, but it would be only the purist who would delete it from a speech. Leave it alone - it gives vitality to the speech.

The whole of the rest of this paragraph that explains lobola, however, is very confused. Perhaps it would be better to say :-

"At one time, before the true meaning of lobola was understood, it was thought that the gift of cattle to the bride's parents represented the purchase price of the bride. Lobola, in fact, was instituted to establish a kinship between clans. The system protected the bride as well as the bridegroom. In one family the boys learned to respect their sisters. They knew that when their sisters grew old enough to marry, the cattle wealth of the tribe would be increased, for every girl meant more and more cattle. From this fact it was easy to see that, with all the cattle that was given for their sisters, they themselves would have enough to find their own brides from other tribes".

I would delete altogether the phrase about "your brother thinking you were useful". Modern schoolgirls do not appreciate this sort of joke.

I would also delete altogether the paragraph about the baby's feeding bottle (Para. 25). It is out of context here and would only be suitable as part of a completely different speech on medical and health services for natives.

Para. 26 : It is considered bad form to make reference to the amount of time placed at the disposal of a speaker. Presumably you have been given as much time as the organisers can spare, and the wise speaker always cuts his coat according to that cloth. This paragraph might be re-written as follows :-

"This/

"This is a period of extremely difficult adjustment for the Bantu ; a change from a simple life in the country to a life in an industrial community which is often unfriendly. We must try to understand the bewilderment and confusion resulting from the break with tribal customs and surroundings. The Bantu need all the help we can give them during their period of re-adjustment and while they find something to replace the old order".

Para. 27 : The whole concept of your conclusion, this unusual definition of "ladies and gentlemen", is so good that it should not be weakened by the introduction of the sentence "That sounds funny, doesn't it ?"

Comment on your speech "Councillors and Officials as seen by Parkinson" will follow.

Yours sincerely,

Parkinson

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