

General Education Seminar.

HIGHER EDUCATION FOR THE BANTU IN SOUTH AFRICA. [1940s?]

I. One of the most important questions which the South African has to face at the present time is that of the place which ought to be given to higher education in the development of the African Native. Although there is a certain percentage of the dominant white population which is either definitely opposed or perhaps indifferent to the education of the Native, the balance of responsible opinion is definitely in favour of raising the level of the Bantu economically, socially and otherwise, and it is being increasingly realised that education ~~will~~ be one of the main instruments in bringing about this desired state of affairs. The Wages and Economic Commission of 1925, the Poor White Commission conducted under the auspices of the Carnegie Foundation, and the Native Economic Commission whose report was published in 1932 have all stressed the interdependence of white and black in South Africa and have recognised the fact that the education of the Native will benefit the country as a whole <sup>no less</sup> than it will benefit the Native himself.

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See Report of Native Economic Commission, paragraph, 655, p. 95.

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2. But while the necessity for the education of the Native is generally conceded in responsible quarters, we do not find such a consensus of opinion regarding the advisability of giving the Bantu higher education. The reasons for this position are not far to seek. The mass of the Bantu population is still in a state of ignorance, and if the people are to make their contribution to the progress of the country as a whole, the educational level of the vast majority must be raised. It has been estimated that of the Bantu who are at school in any one year 77 % are below Standard II.

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See Native Economic Commission Report, para. 621, p. 90

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It is therefore fairly obvious that <sup>2</sup>the education of a small portion of the remaining 23 %, as those who are ready for higher education will undoubtedly be, is likely to suffer eclipse in the general consideration of the people as a whole. According to the present method of financing Native education, there is only a limited supply of money to be spent on the development of the Bantu and it seems only reasonable that the bulk of this money should be spent on elementary education. This is the position taken up by the Native Affairs Commission, a statutory body created for the purpose of advising the Minister of Native Affairs on Native matters. One of the duties of this Commission is to apportion the Native Development Fund created under <sup>the</sup> Native Taxation And Development Act of 1925, and one of the chief charges against which is the cost of Native Education. In entering upon this task of apportionment the Commission laid down the following policy: "The main object should be to provide Elementary education for Native children, to extend facilities for such to as large a number of pupils as possible with the funds available and to bring about uniformity and improvement in the salaries of teachers. (i) the system of education should emphasise character training, habits of industry, use and appreciation of the vernacular, the official languages, health and hygiene, agriculture and other practical subjects. (ii) to provide teachers for these schools, a limited number of students should be trained at approved centres or training institutions. These institutions should be selected on a regional rather than on a denominational basis. (iv) There should be established in certain areas (on a regional rather than on a denominational basis) a limited number of Native High schools designed (a) to train men as farm demonstrators; (b) to train women as home demonstrators; (c) to offer vocational training to a limited number of natives; and (d) to prepare students for admission to the South African Native College.

The South African Native College is the only institution in the Native system of education which is primarily intended for the higher <sup>education</sup> of the Native. It seems quite clear from this statement of policy that higher education for the Bantu

is regarded as of secondary importance.

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For statement of Commission's Policy see Rogers "Native Administration in the Union of South Africa" p.257.

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It ought to be pointed<sup>out</sup> in passing that higher education in South Africa does not come within the province of the Native Affairs Department of the Native Affairs Commission, but directly under the Union Department of Education. Therefore the Commission may have felt that it was not under any obligation to make direct reference to higher education in outlining its policy.

But apart from the attitude ~~of~~ the Commission which may be regarded as the official government attitude, a number of Europeans in the Union do not favour higher education for the Native, being under the erroneous assumption belief that Native progress is inimical to white interests or that "the Native is incapable of progress and must always remain backward". "This belief makes many Europeans unwilling to teach new methods to Natives or to encourage them to make use of their abilities" (Native Economic Commission Report, p.175). Undoubtedly many believe that the Native can be a hewer of wood and drawer of water, but nothing more.

On the other hand some of the Bantu themselves are rather sceptical as to the value of higher education for them. Among the Natives who gave evidence before the Native Economic Commission one is reported to have said:- "I would like to say that education is an exceedingly helpful thing, but although we may ask for a much further advanced education than is available for us now, I wonder what would be the value of it to us. To which country would we go to live and make use of our ~~our~~ education? Education is an affliction to us at present; if I am educated I want to be decently dressed; I want to keep my body clean; I want to have better food, or more varied diet...and generally my tastes are more difficult to please than the tastes of the uneducated Native. I am at a loss to understand how advanced <sup>education</sup> could be of much value to

us here, although we realize that education as education is a valuable asset to any person". Undoubtedly the witness in giving evidence had in mind the lack of vocational opportunities for educated Natives in South Africa. In this connection it may be of interest to quote the opinion of Dr A.W. Roberts, one of the members of the Native Affairs Commission, in an address he delivered at the first Graduation Ceremony held at the South African Native College in 1924. Dealing with the question of availability of posts for educated Natives, the speaker said, "Well, is it the men who create the posts or the posts the men? I do aver that it is the men who call into being the posts they fill. Let there be among your people a select body of cultured, educated men and no posts for which they are fitted by education and by ability will be closed to them. Slowly as the level of education rises among your people this barrier and that barrier will be broken down; this way and that way opened up. But the men must be there: men fitted and equipped for this wider field. I have on several occasions urged the idea of having Native assistant magistrates in distinctly Native areas; but I have been met by the question: Where are the men? The same is true of many another possible avenue". This reminds <sup>me</sup> of the attitude of the scholar in Browning's "Grammarians' Funeral"---"Earn the means first". The Principal of the South African Native College in his evidence before the Commission also pointed out that there was a greater demand than could be satisfied at present <sup>Native</sup> for teachers possessing fairly high qualifications and also that posts in the Civil Service were available <sup>for them</sup> which not at present be filled. He drew ~~to the~~ attention to the need for Native doctors and other professional men. He considered that there was nothing to prevent any Native student who had received education from entering upon any course of professional study open to the youths of any other colour. (See Report of Native Economic Commission, p.218).

3. In view of this diversity of opinion regarding the value and the necessity of the higher education of the Bantu, it would be well for us to discuss the ques-

-tion of its importance more directly. In our preoccupation with the elementary education of the Native--admittedly the most important phase of his education--we may tend to minimise other aspects of it, which may in the last analysis have a bad effect even on the elementary education. As Prof. Loram in his "Education of the South African Native" has so well remarked, "No system of education can be satisfactory either to the Europeans or the Natives of South Africa which does not hold out to the Native boy or girl in the infant class the opportunity of progressing through the various stages up to the institution of collegiate rank at which he may be prepared for the professions or for the higher forms of industrial and technical work".

The Native rightly or wrongly is very suspicious of all the actions of the white man, and any attempt to set up a system of education which did not make provision for the complete education of the future teachers and leaders of the Native peoples--showing thereby that there is a genuine plan to equip them with one of the principal requisites for national advance, namely an adequate supply of well educated men and women capable of fulfilling their natural task of leading people on the upward march--would be interpreted by them as a sinister attempt to keep them down<sup>I</sup>

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I See Report : Native Economic Commission, p.93.

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The Native wants higher education and seems determined to get it either in South Africa or abroad. Several Natives have left the shores of their country and sought elsewhere the university education which until recently was denied them in their own country. This meant for many of them staying away from their people for long periods of time during which time they became accustomed to social and other conditions which it has been feared, quite unjustifiably in the opinion of the writer, might have a disturbing effect on the relations between black and white in South Africa. This fear of native contamination through contact with overseas countries

has led to the general opinion that the Bantu ought to receive all their education in South Africa. All those who incline to this view should support the movement for the creation and extension of higher education facilities for the Bantu.

Moreover the Native is living in a constantly changing environment in which he is called upon to adjust himself to the conditions of a more highly complicated state than that to which he was accustomed prior to the coming of the white man. It is ~~diffix~~ perhaps unfair to expect him to pull his proper in the development of the country without extending to him the means to acquire the wherewithal.

Furthermore the Bantu make their contribution to the finances of the country in the form of both direct and indirect taxation. In direct taxation they contribute annually  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions pounds, roughly 7 million dollars. In indirect taxation they contribute something in excess of 2 million pounds roughly 10 million dollars. It seems reasonable for them to demand that some of this money should be spent on their higher education.

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For Native contribution to State funds see Native Econ. Commission Report, p. 160

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Of this contribution it is interesting to note while £800,000 was in the financial year 1929-1930 spent on Police, and £528,468 on Prisons and Reformatories, only £8,261 was spent on the higher education of the Bantu.

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For allocation of Native share of taxation or revenue, see op. cit. p. 165

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Again students of Native life and thought are convinced that the Native has a peculiar contribution to make to the culture of South Africa as a whole. Prior to the arrival of the white man the Native had evolved a system of social organisation which was admirable in many respects and had developed a system of law which has thrown interesting sidelights on questions of general jurisprudence. It seems desirable to many that Bantu culture should be preserved and developed so as to add to the variety of life in complex South Africa. It is only when the Bantu is granted the benefit of higher education

which will make for his fullest development that he will be able to make his own peculiar contribution to the civilisation of the world in general or South Africa in particular. The less educated the Bantu is, the more he will be inclined that Bantu culture is a myth which exists only in the mind of the European who wants to exploit the Bantu for his own benefit. In fact this peculiar contribution cannot be revealed to its fullest extent before the people have received higher education.

In view of the peculiar racial problems of South Africa, that balance and sanity which can only come from a sound study of the situation are at a premium, and it should be one of the aims of Native higher education to produce Native leaders who will lead their people intelligently, especially when because of the undoubted disabilities from which they suffer in the land of their birth, they might easily provide fruitful soil for the cultivation of the seeds of sedition and race hatred by communistic and other agitators.

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For the danger of agitators see Phillips, R.J. "The Bantu are Coming", pp 46 ff.

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But not only in the political sphere do the Bantu need educated leaders but in the fields of Medicine, Ministry, Education, Social Work, Business, Agriculture and others the South African situation calls for the best that the Bantu have in them. At this time when the development of the Native Reserves is a question occupying the attention of the government, as the Report of the Native Economic Commission abundantly proves it ought to, the importance of Native leadership in that development needs no emphasis.

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For an interesting discussion of "Native Higher Education" see article in the "South African Outlook" by Prof. A. Kerr, July 1932.

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2. Is the Native capable of higher education? This is a very practical question for common prudence would suggest that if the Native is not able to cope with the higher education we desire to give him, it would be sheer waste of time, effort and money to proceed with the impossible task. Only those who are

unacquainted with the achievements of the Bantu in the field of higher education would still maintain that they are incapable of it. As has already been pointed out, many have been to European universities abroad and have gained very high distinctions there. This has always been regarded as being rather in the nature of an exception. But since the establishment of the South African Native College, the exceptions have been increasing to such an extent that they may soon have a disturbing effect on the rule. The Principal of the above mentioned College, than whom few are more qualified to express an opinion on this matter, in an article published in the "South African Outlook", July 1932, said

"My experience leads me to assert that any defects which have appeared in Native ability in the past have been due to lack of congenial environment and not to any inherent mental ~~stixity~~ disability. We are now teaching at Fort Hare in 26 different branches of study and I have yet to discover for which of these the Native displays no aptitude. I hold that the Native population of this country is a reservoir of unexplored and untapped talent that it is the duty of the State to develop its possibilities; that education is one main instrument at our command for doing this; that no upward limit can be set to such education; and that the result of such a policy can only make for the increased well-being of the State as a whole". Since its inception in 1916 the Native College at Fort Hare has already turned out about 200 matriculated students, including several First and Second Class passes, over a dozen B.A.'s, 2 M.A.'s, 1 LL.B., one qualified attorney, several Agricultural demonstrators, highly trained ministers of religion who are holding responsible positions in their churches as well as many others who are demonstrating that higher education is not a field which ought to be closed to the Bantu.

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See Catalogue of South African Native College, 1932, for successes of students.

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5. The control and support of the higher education of the Bantu. Under the South Africa Act of 1909 the control of all higher education is vested in the Union of South Africa and not in the provinces which form the Union.

On the other hand elementary and secondary education are under the control of the separate provinces or states of the Union. Thus the South African Native College, being a higher educational institution, comes under the control of the Union Department of Education. According to Dr Loram, all Native Education ought to be under the control of the Union Government which is the only body empowered to tax the Natives person, habitations or lands.

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See Loram "A National System of Native Education in South Africa" Journal of Association for the Advancement of Science"--1929; also Criticism of the same by W.G. Bennie, Chief Inspector of Native Education in the Cape Province.

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The South African Native College, under the Higher Education Act, receives from the Union Government which in 1930 amounted to £5,704. This works out at a little more than £40 per student. It is interesting to compare this figure with that of Huguenot University College, a College of about the same importance as the South African Native College. The per capita grant of Huguenot University College is £134. This has been severely criticised by the Secretary for Education in his report for the Calendar year 1930, p. I. As far as the Native College is concerned, its chief supporter for many years to come will have to be the government. Owing to the low economic position of the Native the fees cannot be raised to a great extent, and it is not in a position to look for endowments and donations from the Natives themselves, although it may be pointed out that about one-third of the students at the college are holders of scholarships provided by the Transkeian Territories Council, a Native Council which gets its funds from the Natives living within its boundaries. The only other source of revenue from which the College might expect support is the Native Development Fund which we have referred to before, and that has already proved inadequate to meet Native needs. (See Native Econ. Commission, p. 88) The only way out of the difficulty at the present time is for the government to increase its subsidy to the Native College.

B. Relation to other Colleges and Universities in South Africa. The Universities of South Africa are as follows:- Cape Town University, Stellenbosch

University, Witwatersrand University, Pretoria University and the University of South Africa. The last mentioned consists of a number of constituent colleges situated in different parts of the country. These colleges are Rhodes University College, Grahamstown; Huguenot University, Wellington; Natal University College; Pietermaritzburg and Durban; Grey University College, Bloemfontein; Potchefstroom University College, Potchefstroom. The Native College has not got the status of a University College, but its students prepare for the examinations of the University of South Africa which is empowered to grant degrees to external students, i.e. students not resident in any one of the constituent colleges. This somewhat independent status of the Native College has been a disadvantage to its students in some respects. It has meant that the College was not represented in the Councils of the University of South Africa, so that the interests of its students were not catered for. In examinations its students have been denied the advantage of their College record in the determination of results. The Principal of the College in dealing with this question in his report to the Governing Council in 1925 said, "But our students have to be treated as external students of that university (University of South Africa) and some of the advantages that accrue to internal students (of the university colleges) of the University have to be sacrificed. The relation that we have established while moderately successful, is not altogether so, and will become less so as time goes on, because it will involve the courses of the majority of our students being determined by an external body which has not mainly the needs of our students in view. Three possibilities lie open to us: (i) to make application to be received as a constituent college of the University of South Africa so that our students may be internal students of that University; (ii) to ask for affiliation with a non-federal University; (iii) to ask for a separate charter as a non-European University. These are not necessarily exclusive alternatives but might be regarded in the order given as stages of progress. The

first two would not be a great advance upon our present position and would introduce fresh complications for others as well as for ourselves. The bold course of working for the third alternative at once would be the simplest in the long run, and, provided guarantees could be given that certain standards would be maintained, the most satisfactory from the point of view of non-European population. The problem is not yet an urgent one but will become increasingly so in the next few years and in any case our minds should be clear as to the line along which we wish ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ development to take place".

These words were written in 1925 and many changes have taken place since then. For one thing Fort Hare Native College has obtained representation in the Senate of the University of South Africa, and its representative has already played an important part in directing attention to Native needs in courses of study. The Native Languages, Social Anthropology, Comparative Philology, Bantu Studies diplomas receive a much greater attention than they did in 1925. The University of South Africa offers an M.A. course in African Linguistics, African Education and African Administration. The Native College has also received recognition as a centre for the training of teachers preparing for the Higher Education Diploma, a certificate for Secondary School teachers. But the position of a full constituent college has not yet been attained. The constituent colleges of the University of South Africa seem to be destined to develop into separate universities. Transvaal University College broke off in 1930 and became the University of Pretoria. Natal University College is working for a separate charter as the University of Natal, Grey University College is clamouring for status as the University of the Free State. If this happens Rhodes University will be only College of importance left within the University of South Africa, for Huguenot and Potchefstroom are small Colleges. If Rhodes breaks off, it does not seem unreasonable to think that Fort Hare may seek affiliation to Rhodes University. This University College is quite close to the Native College, and both its students and staff have always shown the keenest

interest in the Native College. The students have inter-collegiate debates annually and the Chairman of the Governing Council of the Native College is a prominent member of the staff of Rhodes. On the other hand if the Native College affiliates with Rhodes and becomes in effect a Cape College, Universities in other parts of the countries are likely to make a bid for the establishment of associated Native Colleges. This is likely to happen in Natal where the Amanzimtoti Institute of the American Board Mission at Adams Mission Station might quite well form the nucleus of a Native Department of the University of Natal, while Sastri College in Durban could easily develop into the Indian section of the University of Natal. This idea is being favoured by native public of Natal, especially because the present Native College is so far from Natal that it involves Natal students in a lot of travelling expenses. Moreover the Natal Native is more tribal than the Cape Native, and an institution set apart within his own area would be better able to provide for the preservation of his native culture. On the other hand the value of rubbing shoulders with natives from other parts of the country, a necessary thing in a country where people so easily develop provincialism, might be wholesome for the Natal Native. At any rate the Native College at Fort Hare is not likely to obtain independent status in the near future and it will definitely have to consider the possibility of a competitor in the future in Amanzimtoti Institute. Undoubtedly it will have to work for the ultimate status of an independent university. We hope it will become the repository of the best things in Native life, will in time have an all non-European staff of men and women dedicated to the cause of the development of Bantu Culture in all its forms.

3. The Present Courses. There are in active operation at the Native College at the present time three sets of courses:—Preparatory, Post-Matriculation and Diploma Courses. The Preparatory courses are designed to prepare students

(i) for the matriculation of the ~~University~~ Joint Matriculation Board, which is a body consisting of representatives of the Universities of South Africa and the Education Departments of the different states or provinces of the Union.

(ii) for the College matriculation, which is a special variant of the College to meet the needs of students who do not want or do not need to undergo the somewhat narrow university preparatory course of the matriculation of the Joint Matriculation Board. This College matriculation is generally taken by students preparing to join the ministry or by those working for the College Diploma in Business or in Agriculture. The post-matriculation courses are intended for those who desire to enter professions such as Medicine--the College has full equipment for a Pre-Medical Course, those preparing for university degrees. At the present time the B.A. is the only degree which it is possible to take at the College, but a beginning has been made with the B.Sc. degree. With regard to Diploma courses the College offers a Licentiate in Arts, comprising the usual degree subjects with the exception of the classical languages. Some students who have passed the Licentiate in Arts have subsequently qualified for the full university degree by taking the classical languages. The diploma courses in Agriculture and Business have already been mentioned. The Business students prepare for the ~~examinations~~ National ~~and~~ Technical and Commercial Examinations of the Union Department of Education. The College also offers a Lower Diploma and Higher Diploma in Education, the latter being a post-graduate course in Education intended for secondary school teachers. All the courses except the Ministry and Agriculture are open to both men and women, and three women have thus far obtained the B.A. degree.

The short history of the Native College has served to prove that there are great potentialities in the Bantu people for higher education, and this aspect of Native education ought to receive the attention which it deserves.