1. I should like to say, at the outset, how pleased I am to be with you on this important occasion in the history of the Transvaal African Teachers' Association. When I received your letter inviting me to come and perform the opening ceremony of your Jubilee Conference, I found myself unable to resist the temptation to accept, in spite of other urgent demands upon the limited vacation time at my disposal. Being a teacher myself and a firm believer in the value of teachers' associations I decided that, if at all possible, I should come.

2. As I have said before I am particularly happy to be with you on this occasion when you are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of your Association. Fifty years is a long time in the life of anybody or of any organisation, and when that milestone is reached in the life of any association, there are three things which one almost invariably does. One is to look back over the ground that has been covered, another is to look around and to see what is happening at the present time and another is to look forward and to endeavour to speculate about the future.

3. Anyone who looks back over the past fifty years in African education would be a dull person indeed if he were not to be profoundly moved by what has happened. 1906 - what was the position in African education at that time?
I find that the total number of African children receiving education at that time was less than 80,000 and the total expenditure of the different Colonies, as they then were, on the education of African children was less than £50,000. In the Transvaal the number of African children who were receiving education in 1906 was less than 10,000 and the expenditure less than £8,000, whereas in 1951, when the Eiselen Commission reported, the number of African children in school in the Transvaal alone was over a quarter of a million (250,000) and the expenditure on African education was nearly 2 million pounds. That is the position as far as primary education is concerned. In 1906 post-primary education for Africans was practically non-existent. Lovedale was virtually the only educational institution which catered for Africans in the post-primary field, and those who desired to take advantage of the existing facilities for post primary education had to travel long distances from their homes in order to get that education.

Higher education for Africans was still out of the question in those days. The Report of the famous Commission known as the Inter-Colonial Native Affairs Commission of 1903-05 had just been published. Among other things that Commission had recommended "That a central Native College or similar institution be established and aided by the various States, for training Native teachers and in order to afford opportunities for higher education to Native students", and it was in 1906 that a great...
Convention of Africans from all the States of South Africa was held at Lovedale to consider the steps that should be taken to give effect to the recommendation of the Inter-Colonial Native Affairs Commission. Ten years of intensive work by Europeans and Africans drawn from all parts of the country — speaking, raising funds, interviewing government officials to interest them in the Inter-State Native College scheme followed, and it was only in 1916 that the present University College of Fort Hare was finally opened by the Prime Minister of the Union, General Louis Botha.

4. What has happened since 1906?

Education has been accepted by the African to such an extent that the problem today is not so much to get the African child to school as to keep him out of it. In 1906, as many a missionary knew, it was not easy to convince the African parent about the necessity for sending his children to school. Today without any compulsory education and all that education entails by way of expenditure, no sooner is a school opened than it is filled to capacity by eager pupils who regard going to school as a natural part of growing up in the modern world. Education authorities are so busy having to provide facilities for those who willingly come to school, that they do not consider compulsory education for Africans a matter of urgency.

But not only have the African people embraced western education but even the State has come to regard the education of African...
children as an essential part of its national services however half-hearted or misguided its policy in this regard may be. In 1906 the education of African children was looked upon as a private enterprise which concerned primarily the churches and the African people themselves, with the State rather like the churchman who considers that he has discharged his responsibility towards his fellowmen if he drops an occasional shilling into the collection plate on Mission Sunday in his Church. The grants-in-aid of African education were meagre and it was with a great deal of reluctance that so-called public funds were spent on what was regarded as essentially a private affair. That was the position at Union in 1910. The provinces took over this service almost by accident as it were. It was not until 1925 that the Union Government itself took a hand in the matter of financing African education. By 1945 in terms of the Native Education Finance Act it looked as if African education was well on the way to qualifying as an essential national service for which the State would ultimately accept full responsibility. The Bantu Education Act of 1951 makes it clear that the day of full State responsibility for African education has not yet arrived, but at any rate we have reached the remarkable position today where it is practically a criminal offence for any body or any agency other than the State to wish to spend any money on African education. In other words the African child must receive his education under the auspices of the State or not at all.
Perhaps there is a certain sense in which this may be said to represent progress, although not every educationist would agree that the total elimination of voluntary agencies from this field is a step in the right direction.

5. The expansion of African education in the last fifty years has been phenomenal. This applies to practically every aspect of African education. The enrolment in African schools is approaching if it has not already exceeded the million mark. There has been expansion not only in the number but in the types of schools. Pre-school educational facilities in the form of nursery schools and creches, though few and far between, nevertheless exist and represent an effort to extend the sphere of education so as to bring about a closer link between home and school. Primary schools for Africans are to be found in nearly every part of the country. Secondary education which used to be a monopoly of the more prosperous Africans who could afford to send their children to boarding schools is gradually getting to be within reach of more and more pupils as a result of the spread of day secondary schools in both rural and urban areas. Facilities for higher education have advanced more slowly owing, among other things, to the great cost involved, but even in this field significant progress has been made, not only at the University College of Fort Hare but also at the few Universities whose doors are open to non-whites. According
to reports the Government is contemplating entering this field too. The idea of universities sponsored by the State is foreign to this country. Although our universities are subdivided by the State, they are autonomous institutions established and governed by the people themselves through Councils recognised but not set up by the State. For that reason the contemplated establishment of ethnic universities by the Government is viewed with a great deal of trepidation in African circles.

There are many aspects of African education which have not yet received attention. In a country in which we can produce a 17-volume report on the socio-economic development of the Reserves there is as yet no place where an African who wishes to do so can get a B.Sc. degree in Agriculture or qualify as a Veterinary surgeon or as a Civil engineer or a surveyor. Facilities for proper training in art and music for which Africans have undeniable talent are non-existent. Technical and vocational education for the people who are the principal workers of the country remain to be developed. It will be many years before educational facilities for Africans will be anything like adequate for the needs and aspirations of the African people, but looking over the past fifty years I think we can be justly proud of what our people have been able to achieve and grateful to those who have made this progress possible.

This brings me to a point which I think needs to be emphasised on an occasion like this. Whenever the progress that has taken place in African education is under consideration, it is common to
find that credit for this development is given to everybody except the African teacher who does the actual work of teaching in the school. The Government is given credit because it subsidises the schools; the parents are given credit for sending the children to school; the Missions are given credit for having started so many schools. But the teacher is seldom mentioned. He is like the private in the army who is seldom mentioned when the victories of Generals and Field Marshals are celebrated, but I submit that we owe an incalculable debt to the African teachers who during the past fifty years have given of their best to serve the African child, the African community and the South African nation. The responsibility which devolves upon the teachers in the matter of passing on to the African child the knowledge, the techniques and the values of the changed and changing society in which he must live and in moulding his character and personality is a serious one indeed and my submission is that the African teacher can in the main be justly proud of the manner in which he has discharged his duties. One knows that there are circles in which the contribution of the African teacher to the development of African society is not appreciated and in such circles it is thought that rules and regulations, threats of expulsion and of the withholding of increments and such like measures are needed to keep the teacher up to the mark. Admittedly every profession has got its black sheep and I suppose the African teachers are no exception in this respect. But I am satisfied that the average African teacher does not need those extraneous...
extraneous measures to teach him his duty to the African child and the African community. These will be achieved by self-discipline within the profession, rather than by disciplinary measures imposed from without, and that is where the importance of professional associations such as the Teachers' Associations lies. The teachers' association exists not only for the narrow objective of protecting and promoting the interests of the teacher in matters such as terms and conditions of service, but also for the purpose of widening the outlook of the teacher and deepening his grasp of the essential principles underlying the educative process. No community can be properly served by a body of men and women who, whatever their academic and professional qualifications are, are cowed because they live in fear of being browbeaten either by Government officials or by parents or school committees or school boards. It is a sad mistake to suppose that the silent teacher, the man who never opens his mouth about his work and the conditions under which he is compelled to do it, is necessarily the most loyal teacher. On the other hand we also pray to be saved from the teacher who is a loquacious authority on everything except the job he is supposed to do in the school. It is by rubbing shoulders with his fellow-teachers in an organisation such as this that the teacher can gradually come to find his proper place in the profession and in the community. The Transvaal African Teachers' Association has during the last fifty years endeavoured to perform this service for the African teacher in the Transvaal. The TATA has a proud history of service...
service. It has conducted many a battle on behalf of the African teacher in the past. It has a record of achievement and success. It has had its ups and downs. It has made its mistakes. Like every live organisation it has had to contend with regrettable internal strifes of one kind or another, but the great thing is that it has stuck to its guns and has kept its banner flying for fifty years. For that reason it need not hang its head in shame and can look forward to the future with confidence.

There is a great deal of concern in many quarters about the future of African education. The changes in the aim, the content, the control and administration and the financing of African education that have been brought about by the Bantu Education Act, have given rise to serious misgivings in some quarters, to downright despondency in others and to an open break between the supporters of the new era and the supporters of the old order. All this is understandable. No one can be expected to stand by and see what he has built up with self-sacrifice and devotion for generations, destroyed overnight, as he believes, without doing or saying something about. People with varying points of view ought to display more charitableness towards one another than has been apparent in recent discussions on African education, especially having regard to the fact that no one can lay claim to a monopoly of wisdom on such a controversial matter as the theory and practice of education.

In all these matters the role of the teacher is of incalculable importance.