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3rd August, 1956.

CONFIDENTIAL.

Mr. Quintin Whyte,
S.A.I. Race Relations,
P.O. Box 97,
JOHANNESBURG.

Dear Mr. Whyte,

re Proposed African Universities

Thank you for your letter of July 30,1956 on the subject of the proposed African universities.

As far as we know here the position with regard to this matter is as follows:

1. Towards the end of last year the Government appointed an Inter-Departmental Committee consisting of the Secretary for Education, Arts & Science as Chairman, the Secretary for Native Affairs, the Secretary for Finance and the Commissioner for Coloured Affairs as members, to investigate and report upon the Financial Implications of the Provision of Separate University facilities for non-Europeans.

2. The announcement in the Press indicated that it was the intention of the Union Government to proceed with the establishment of several university colleges for non-Europeans on an ethnic basis. The scheme appeared to envisage the setting up of five university colleges, viz.:

(i) one for Coloureds to be set up presumably in the Western Cape,
(ii) one for Indians " " " in Natal,
(iii) three for Africans viz (i) for the Sotho and related tribes in the Transvaal,
(ii) for the Zulu and related tribes in Natal or Zululand,
(iii) for the Xhosa and related tribes in the Cape.

The Press reports went on to suggest that Fort Hare might be converted into the University College for the Xhosa and related tribes, and that coupled with the whole scheme would be the idea of the removal of non-European students from the so-called "open" universities e.g. Cape Town and Witwatersrand.

3. As far as we here at Fort Hare are concerned we learnt soon after the Committee was appointed that it would not be hearing any public evidence. We have, however, from time to time been asked for information about various aspects of the structure and organisation of Fort Hare. The first inquiry dealt with our enrolment, the number

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and types of degrees conferred since the inception of the College, the ethnic composition of our students and the occupations into which our former students have gone. The second inquiry dealt with the date of erection, the size and the cost of our tuition and administrative buildings and our residence for both men and women students and the staffing requirements of our academic departments. The third inquiry dealt with the staffing of our men's and women's residences of our Dining Halls. No questions were asked regarding the desirability or otherwise of establishing separate university institutions for non-Europeans or the siting of such institutions.

The appointment of this Committee, the apparently secret character of its operations, doubts as to whether its Report is likely to be published and the whole question of what is likely to follow the submission of that Report has given rise to a great deal of speculation and uneasiness among non-Europeans generally and in particular among the staff and students of Fort Hare. We are already faced with resignations by those who, among our Staff, do not relish the prospect of non-European higher education being brought under the Department of Native Affairs and so being divorced from the rest of the university institutions of the country. We are unable to proceed with the appointment of a Principal at Fort Hare until the position has been clarified.

In the light of these facts the Governing Council of Fort Hare at a Special meeting held on August 1st, 1956, resolved to approach the Government with a request that before any action is taken on the recommendations of the Committee, it be afforded an opportunity to express its view on such recommendations in so far as they affect Fort Hare.

I feel that something than this is required. This is a matter which affects not only Fort Hare, but also the "open" universities of Wits and Cape Town and indeed the whole question of university autonomy. I am inclined to think that something might be achieved by a joint approach through a deputation to the Government by all the universities interested on the lines of the resolution adopted by the Fort Hare Council. The question is who is going to contact these bodies and endeavour to interest them in such joint action. Could the Institute perhaps act in this capacity?

As far as the questions raised in your letter, they presuppose that the Committee is going to take evidence, whereas as far as we know the Committee's Report is about to be tabled, and all we can do now is to press for consultation before final decisions are taken.

I shall be glad to hear of any action or advice the Institute is prepared to take or give in this matter.

Yours faithfully,