

African Studies

22-10-59

Rt.Rev.Ambrose Reeves,
Crescent Drive,
Westcliff,
JOHANNESBURG.

My Lord,

I have decided to write to you about the position here at Fort Hare, especially in so far as it affects me personally.

As you know the Government is proposing to take over Fort Hare as from January, 1960. In terms of the powers vested in him by the Fort Hare Transfer Act the Minister of Bantu Education has arbitrarily terminated the services of several of the English-speaking members of our Staff. As far as the African members of Staff, including myself, are concerned, they have been offered a continuation of employment under new conditions which will make them into civil servants governed by regulations which make mere membership of a political organisation an offence or 'misconduct' as it is described in the regulations. In terms of the Act we are given 90 days in which to decide whether we are to stay on or exercise our option to resign. I have been on the staff of the College since January 1936, and in the ordinary course of events would have reached retirement age in December 1961 and would thus have qualified for fairly substantial pension rights. I gather that if I resign now I shall not be entitled to such benefits.

After giving the matter careful consideration I have come to the conclusion that I shall not be able to fit into the new set-up. I feel therefore that I shall have to exercise my option to resign. I have not yet made my decision known to the Minister but will do so in due course. Already the Minister has made unfounded statements about me which strengthen in my belief that it is right for me to go, although this will involve in very heavy financial loss at a time when it is not so easy for me to start out on a new career, but my conscience will be clear and that I feel is the main thing. I thought I ought to let you know how my mind is working in the crisis with which we are confronted at Fort Hare. Those of us who have been associated for so long with the old Fort Hare dread to think of what is going to happen to what was once a reputable university institution.

We have been following the news about the Treason Trial and those of us who know something about it sympathise very deeply with those who are going through this ordeal. I suppose our turn is coming. I do not know how we can ever thank you sufficiently for what you have done for us in this regard. I must close, with kind regards,

Yours sincerely,