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Comments on the Letter by Dr Wolheim on the appointment of Africans as Principals of Native Secondary Schools. [1941?]

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1. Dr O. D. Wolheim, Principal of the Native ~~Secon~~ High School at East London has, in his capacity as Regional Representative of the Institute of Race Relations, called ~~#~~ the attention of that body to ~~a~~ an urgent problem in which he considers "graver issues are involved", namely, the appointment of Africans as Principals of Native Secondary and High Schools, and has suggested that ~~the~~ the Institute, after investigation into the question of the shortage of qualified African teachers, "make strong representations to the Native Affairs Department (from whom I suspect that pressure is being applied) and to the Education Departments to modify the policy for the time being until the supply is able to meet the demand".

2. The proximate cause of this ~~brade~~ loquacious document which purports to be directed against "politicians and interested bodies who may have very good motives, but who are not in possession of the true facts and circumstances" and to be designed to get the Institute "to take steps to prevent any foolish ~~institute~~ insistence upon an ideal policy which has no relation to the practical difficulties" is the recent ~~[illegible] intervention~~ refusal of the Cape Education Department ~~in~~ to sanction the appointment of a European Principal for the Queenstown Native Secondary School to be opened in July next. ~~Since~~ As Dr Wolheim ~~does not~~ can lay no claim ~~hold~~ to a monopoly of "the true facts and circumstances" it is intended here to examine in some detail the points raised in his statement.

3. Dr Wolheim begins his statement by setting out the alleged reasons which ~~actuated~~ led the Queenstown School Board ~~to seek~~ to depart from the declared policy of the Education Department that in staffing these schools which are financed almost entirely by means of funds derived from native sources preference should, as far as possible, be given to African teachers. In our view these reasons cannot bear close scrutiny.

Dealing with them seriatim

(a) In the first place it seems idle to suggest that the administration of a Native secondary school is so fundamentally different from that of European secondary schools that a body which has conducted the latter type of school cannot draw upon that experience for the administration of the former. This mania for seeing differences ~~between~~ which do not exist between Native Education and European education is one to which one would hardly have suspected the Queenstown School Board, and still less Dr Wolheim to succumb. In any event there is nothing to suggest that the contemplated difficulties would automatically be solved by the appointment of a European Principal.

(b) The Cape Education Department has by regulation laid down the minimum qualifications demanded from teachers applying for "positions of such responsibility and difficulty" and to our knowledge Native teachers who more than fulfil these requirements applied for the Queenstown post, thus disproving the contention that there is an acute shortage of suitably qualified persons to fill such positions. The fact that "Board-controlled day school are a new departure in the Cape Province" has no logical connection with the alleged acute shortage of Native teachers.

(c) In an expanding service such as Native Education, especially in the post-primary field, it would not be surprising if there were a shortage of qualified Native assistant teachers and the new secondary schools are intended to help to meet that need by increasing the number of Native students qualified to enter University. On the other hand this alleged shortage of teachers is aggravated by "a ~~offering in Native secondary~~ foolish insistence", to use Dr Wolheim's phrase, upon including in the curricula of these schools subjects for which no training facilities are available in the Native educational system. ~~The Native~~ Native public opinion regards this new craze for subjects such subjects as Domestic Science, Woodwork, Gardening etc. not only as attempts

to ~~dangle~~ create a special kind of education good enough for Natives and to look for soft options in the secondary school curriculum, but also as a ~~by which ingenious~~ but poorly disguised method of working ~~into~~ European assistants, and through them, European principals, into Native secondary schools. As the learned doctor avers, "it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find Europeans willing to serve under Native Principals". This conception implied in this statement that ~~a~~ every European must always be a "boss" ~~if he comes where he is~~ among Natives is particularly offensive ~~to~~ Africans when applied ~~to~~ in Native schools and its repercussions on race relations in these schools are better imagined than described. It is worthy of note also that in the old established Native institutions where European principals are firmly entrenched the demand for the inclusion of these new subjects in the curriculum is not as insistent as in the new schools where the impression is being created that the Bantu will become extinct in another year unless these subjects are introduced at once. We dare to prophesy that after 1945 when Domestic Science will become available, we shall hear less about that subject but more about some other subject for which no sufficient training facilities are provided in the Native educational facilities system. Already we can see in the horizon the demand for teachers of Mathematics, Latin subjects which have been for years deliberately discouraged in Native schools! We wish those who insist upon the inclusion of certain subjects in Native schools would spend as much effort upon fighting for the establishment of training facilities for African teachers.

(d) Regarding the shortage of Domestic Science teachers the same cause is at work - the lack of facilities for their training and for that reason we contend that it is premature to insist upon this optional subject before the new training course established at Healdtown has begun to turn out the necessary teachers. Furthermore for many years Domestic Science teachers

with the training above which Dr Wolhuter speaks so disparagingly have been and still are used in our Training & Secondary Schools. Why they can be used without disastrous results in the old established institutions, but must not tread upon the holy ground of the new native secondary schools even temporarily passes our comprehension.

(c) By "African opinion in the location" Dr Wolhuter undoubtedly means the Native Advising Board which, according to our information, is the only body in Queenstown which favoured a European Principal. What Dr Wolhuter does not appear to know as the reason which actuated the Board to take up this attitude, namely the fear, - justifiably or unjustifiably we do not know - of victimisation by the local Inspector of Schools who was known to favour a European Principal. But even if a large body of African opinion in Queenstown, we should still contend that deprecate a departure for purely local reasons from a general policy approved by accredited Native educational organisations, official bodies like the Native Representative Council and the Central Government itself as being in conformity with the long-range interests of the Native people as a whole.

If Dr Wolhuter is correct, when the Queenstown School Board advertised for a "European or Native" principal, it had already made up its mind to nominate a European principal for the native secondary school. Incidentally ~~this explains~~ one of the reasons why qualified Africans do not apply for positions advertised as open to "European or Native" is because they have come to the conclusion that in the majority of cases such are a mere subterfuge ~~which do not~~ intended to disguise the intention of the authorities concerned to appoint Europeans.

Actually, however, a number of qualified Africans applied for the post in question. To our knowledge the European who nominated by the Board did not possess much longer teaching experience nor higher qualifications than some of the Africans who applied.

We are not surprised that in the circumstances the Education Department intervened and demanded strong reasons for this flagrant departure from its declared policy. Dr Wolheim himself claims to be in favour of this policy in Native schools and is in theory prepared to see it extended to all services catering for the Native people, but he would like to see it put into practice at a rate which will not interfere with the greater entrenchment of European teachers in Native schools and would like the Department (and the Native people) to postpone insistence upon it until there is a glut of qualified African teachers on the market! Comment on that is needless.

But it may interest and console Dr Wolheim to know that the policy is not being applied

① "Rhodus-bolus", because of the seven Native Day Secondary Schools in the Cape, viz., East London, King Williams Town, Kimberley, Grahamstown, Langa, Alwal North and Lady Frere, three have European principals who will probably hold these positions for the next generation!

② "with such suddenness" because for many years accredited Native organisations like the various African Teachers' Associations, the African National Congress etc and official bodies like the Native Councils, Native Advising Boards and the Native Representative Council have been urging the various Education Departments to adopt this policy and it has been applied with the gradualness and the caution which characterises all schemes affecting Native welfare

③ "without any regard for local wishes, circumstances or feeling", because those in the best position to what these "wishes circumstances or feelings" really are have no hesitation in saying that the putting into effect of this policy is regarded as long overdue by the thinking and informed section of Native opinion whose vigilance will alone ensure that there are no unjustifiable departures from this policy.

Nobody is more conscious than the Native people

themselves that these new schools should prove an unqualified success, but "the effectiveness and usefulness of such schools" does not lie in the passing of examinations by their pupils as Dr Wolheim seems to imply. There are African teachers who can produce good examination results as well as any of their European colleagues but not even Dr Wolheim would be prepared to suggest that for that reason they should be employed to teach in European schools. Just as Europeans would find such a situation embarring and incongruous, so Africans have come to feel that it is more fitting that their children should be taught by their own people.

One should like to remind Dr Wolheim that not all the Europeans who teach in Native post-primary schools are graduates with professional training. Their employment temporarily in Native schools does not seem to call for adverse comment from him, but the mere suggestion that an African might be used temporarily in the same way makes him demand the taking of "urgent and drastic steps," the spending of "some money on the investigation" & the holding up of progress "for the next, say, five years"!

~~W~~ Dr Wolheim has done the Grahamstown Native Secondary School an injustice by his ill-informed reference to it. This particular school has so far only twice presented candidates for the Cape Departmental Junior Certificate examination with the following results.

	1940		1941	
No. presented	26		17	
	Entries	Passed	Entries	Passed
Boys	15	11	10	5
Girls	11	5	7	-
Total	26	16	17	5

From 1938 to 1940 Needlework and Domestic Science in this school were taught by a European teacher. 1940 9 girls took Needlework and Domestic Science as examination subjects; of these 8 failed

in Needlework and all passed in Domestic Science. In the second half of 1941 an African female teacher ("qualified to do primary school work") took charge of Needlework & Domestic Science. Of the 6 girls who took these subjects, 4 failed in Needlework and all passed Domestic Science. This does not seem to indicate either that the European teacher did so much better than the less highly qualified African female teacher or that the "dire" results in 1941 were due to failure in these "soft options" which are so popular with European principals of Native Secondary Schools. Perhaps the "dire" results are capable of another explanation. This school suffered from serious changes of staff during 1941 necessitating drastic adjustments in the distribution of subjects. The work of the school suffered in consequence, but there is nothing to suggest that the school has not passed through that phase and will not in future as in 1940 turn out results which compare favourably with those of other schools.

Dr. Wolheim refers to the difficulties which he has had in finding teachers in spite of his repeated consultations with the Principal of Fort Hare. ~~This does not seem to be~~ The normal method of finding teachers is by advertisement and not by consulting the Principal of Fort Hare. Be that as it may, but we know of a European Principal of a Native Secondary School in the Cape in whose school all the African teachers are not qualified to teach in Secondary Schools, not because qualified African teachers have not applied for these posts when advertised, but for reasons best known to himself.

As to the number of African graduates turned out by Fort Hare to date the correct number is considerably more than 100, and this number ~~turned out~~ will increase ~~at a~~ more rapidly in the "next five years". Last year alone over 50 graduates were turned out at Fort Hare and it is confidently expected that this number will be improved upon. Dr. Wolheim's indicates that his source of information about the number of qualified Africans engaged in teaching is his African staff and it is obvious that he got from them the answer which they thought he expected them

to give.

It is a pity that this statement which purports to be written in a spirit of inquiry should be couched in parts in such unfortunate, if not insulting, language. But the "politicians and interested bodies" about which he writes will not be deterred from their work because of malicious insinuations by so-called disinterested persons.