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THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION FELLOWSHIP

CONFERENCE. July 16th to 27th

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From the 16th to the 27th of July 1934 the above Conference was held in Johannesburg at the Witwatersrand University.

Over 1500 people attended. Of these only about 15 were Africans, the rest were Europeans.

The delegates that attended this Conference came from all parts of the world and they were here busy exchanging ideas on the ways and means of educating the modern child.

The most outstanding delegates from overseas were, amongst others, Professor B. Malinowski, Professor Pierre Bovet, Dr Dewey, Mrs Ensor, and Miss Carney.

The Programme embraced many topics on different subjects, so that it was found necessary to divide the Conference into sections each ~~subject~~ dealing with one particular aspect of the educational problems.

The following were the Subjects:-

- 1 Curriculum problem
- 2 Rural education
- 3 New Methods
- 4 Examinations
- 5 Bilingualism and language teaching
- 6 Teacher training
- 7 Vocational Guidance
- 8 Art Education
- 9 Religious education
- 10 Psychological Problems of Home & School
- 11 Child welfare & the pre-school child
- 12 Social work
- 13 Native Education.

I have not been able to attend all the sections, but most of my time was spent at the Native Section lectures. At this section we did not hear many overseas speakers. Most of the lecturers were from this country.

However, Professor B. Malinowski, Professor Bovet and Miss Carney all three from overseas spoke at one time or another.

The Conference opened by a Mass meeting in one of the University Halls which was soon packed to capacity and we had to remove to the largest hall available, which also soon got full. The subject was a Symposium on 'African Indig enous Life' given by Professor B. Malinowski and followed by Professor and Mrs Hoernle.

Professor Malinowski among other things pointed out that an attempt to give the Native a separate type of Education was nothing but Humbug further he said that he could not understand why it was that the Black man, the owner of the soil, was made to suffer in his own country. It was strange to him to find that the owner of the country was given no status at all but was treated as if he were not belonging to this country.

Dealing with the question of Native customs Mrs Hoernle observed that it was unjustifiable to condemn all Bantu customs as unchristian, e.g. lobola, circumcision schools and initiation schools, that there was something good in these schools, some of these things could be modified.

Professor Hoernle on his part said that to him there was no difference in kind between the mentality of the Black and the white races. If there was any difference at all it was perhaps in degree owing to environmental background, but nobody had yet proved to the world that one man was inferior to another as far as mental capabilities were concerned.

After a discussion this part of the conference subjects closed. On the evening of that day we met at the Town Hall to listen to an opening Address delivered by General Smuts in the place of the Governor General who was unwell. The Mayor and two overseas speakers spoke. The two overseas speakers were Mrs Ensor, who explained the functions of the Fellowship and how it began, she said that it began in 1919. The other speaker was Dr J. J. Van der Leeuw from Holland.

On the following day, papers were read on the "Changes in indigenous Society" by Drs Eislén, Mina Hunter, and Schapera. Each one of these tried to give a description of the Native tribe that was most familiar to him or her. Naturally the papers could not all please the African specially that of Dr Schapera who dwelt much on the immorality part of the Bakatla tribe. He said that these people practised sexual intercourse very freely. This statement was, however, questioned later on by Mr K.T. Motsete of Bechuanaland.

On the following day we heard papers on the 'Health of the Native' read by Drs Xuma and Squires. Among other things Dr Xuma pointed out the fact that at present the black man's diet was such as is not nourishing as compared with that of pre-European era. Long ago the black man had plenty of milk, plenty of meat, and plenty of hard foods. Diet was changeable whereas today maize maize and maize is the only food that the native gets. The food is not nourishing. Milk is scarce, to say nothing of meat.

Malnutrition is common amongst Native Children, with the result that they cannot learn properly with a hungry stomach. The beer that is cooked in Urban areas contains very very little nourishment owing to hasty cooking for fear of arrest. Home beer was more nourishing. Long ago the Blacks lived an open-air life with the result that they were strong and virile and healthy. Today the bodies of the Bantu were not as strong as those of the pre-European Bantu. Today women found it difficult to bear children owing to the fact that the present woman's activities are not such as enable the body easy labour in birth. Growing poverty among the people cause them to have no means to buy good food. Vital statistics were lacking amongst blacks so that it was impossible to tell the state of the health of the blacks. The training of African medical Doctors was a necessity.

The question on "Education as an integrating agency" was treated by Professor B. Malinowski, Mr Jowitt, Prof. V. Murray and Dr P.W.W. Cook.

The papers showed that in order to raise the mass of the Black man it was necessary to encourage African leadership. Today no difference is shown between the educated and the uneducated black man. The educated black does not know where he is. There is no "adequate provision made for him in the Social circle" so that he, finding himself without any society seeks happiness in towns. "We educate the native, we raise him to our level, but we do not give him the place for which we have fitted him," says professor Malonowski.

Then came a very interesting paper by Dr. Fick who showed that the intelligence of the black man was proved by the tests that he gave was inferior to that of a white man, that only 4 or 5 % natives can complete matriculation as compared with the 50 % European. That 75 % of native children cannot go through European standard VI Course and that the native children in towns were more superior in intelligence than the country lot.

It was found that this was drawing too strong the conclusions. The discussion that followed showed that it was not fair to judge the mentality of the Bantu from the tests that are drawn for Europeans.

Mr Kuschke and Mr Franz read papers on Differential treatment they both condemned the creation of native affairs Department. Up till 1910 European and native affairs Education had the same Department. But after that the native affairs department was started.

Entire separation in Education was not justified. European Education was compulsory and free. European children have books free. They have beautiful buildings and everything is up-to-date. The Government is looking well after European Education but the Natives have to pay for their Primary Education, their school buildings are shanties, it is very difficult to them. Some children learn under the shades of trees, others at the end school in the churches. The Government does not provide the Buildings they leave everything to missions. Native Education is voluntary.

Mr Franz criticised the distributed

Mr Frantz criticised the detribalised Natives and the qualified natives saying that they did not want to go back to their own people.

Mr Welsch pointed out that swell heads amongst the natives were caused by the fact that their education was not adequate or high enough, because the higher the native goes the more he likes to go back to his own people. Swellheadism is a proof of bad education.

Then on Saturday the 21st July 1934 there came the most interesting question - the Medium question - The Rev. K.T. Motsete M.A. B.D., Lond. read a paper on this question. His first words were "I stand here before you as a specimen of a spoilt native, and if this is true, then you Missionaries and teachers have smeared yourselves with own Tar. - Spoily because he has come out of the place (his own place) where you wanted him to stay".

The European language, says Mr Motsete, is a paying acquisition. It fosters mutual understanding between the European employer and his Native employees. As Government languages, their knowledge by Natives promotes understanding between ruler and ruled.

Secondly, the European language has a premium on the commercial market". (a) The educated native finds a ready and wide market if he writes in a European language, like English or French.

(b) the Cattle owner can deal directly with the market eliminating the middleman, if he can read and write English.

Thirdly, a potent factor in Socialisation, because by means of a European language, black and white have intercourse, resulting in a better appreciation of each other's point of view, and a more harmonious living together. Also by means of it, too, natives of different tribes and languages communicate, thereby awakening their sense of brotherliness and unity, hence the existence of the African National Congress, the Bantu Trade exhibition or the Bantu Music Eisteddfod.

Fourthly, the European language has an importance also in developing modern culture. It facilitates higher education. European languages are at present the open "sesame" to all higher education and professions for Natives. It is also a humanising factor in that when a Native stated his case in a European language the European makes the discovery that he is a truly human with thoughts, feelings and aspirations very much similar to his own, consequently he is disposed to be more sympathetic.