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SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS : Natal Region.

Report by

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on

THE TENTH CONFERENCE, INSTITUTE OF ADMINISTRATORS  
OF NON-EUROPEAN AFFAIRS,  
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## THE LOTUS EATERS.

"Let us swear an oath, and keep it with an equal mind,  
In the hollow Lotus-land to live and lie reclined  
On the hills like Gods together, careless of mankind".

This was the tenth Conference of the Institute, but only the third I have attended, the last one being the conference at Muizenberg which Dr. Holleman so aptly described in his paper "The Tight Rope Dancers".

1. The Conference was opened on Tuesday, August 29th by the Hon. W.A. Maree, Minister of Bantu Education and Asiatic Affairs. The mists of unreality which all too often have shrouded past conferences, were somewhat agitated by the Minister's speech. The Minister said the Government realized that the Bantu could not become decent members of a community if they lived in appalling squalor, so the first task it faced when it came to power, had been to house the Bantu decently. But the Bantu were essentially a communally orientated people. When they came to the towns they lost their bearings and became an up-rooted and dis-orientated horde, a prey to agitators and to the guidance of self-appointed leaders, who taught them to destroy everything the White Man had built up for them. That is why the Government had decided it was necessary to build up the urban Bantu into a stable community by grouping them in ethnic tribal units, because only among their own people could they feel happy and contented. The solution was thus, through the reconstruction of tribal society, adapted to modern needs, through mother-tongue education, ethnic grouping, the appointment of tribal ambassadors and the establishment of Urban Bantu Councils as provided for in the new Act. These councils would give the urban Bantu an opportunity of ruling themselves and developing along their own lines in accordance with their own abilities. He concluded with a plea for determined efforts by all concerned to increase the income of urban Bantu as an increase in their purchasing power could provide South African industries with a wonderful market.

It is ironical that Mr. S.B. Bourquin, Head of the Municipal Bantu Affairs Department in Durban, was severely reprimanded by the Bantu Administration Department for broaching the subject of African wages at previous conferences.

The Minister was thanked by Mr. W.J. Seymour, a Pretoria City Councillor, who added, that all urban Bantu should be compelled to spend at least two weeks a year in their own homelands to refresh their knowledge of their own tribal traditions and allow their chiefs to get to know their subjects in the towns.

The opening session concluded with an address by the retiring President of the Institute, Mr. I.P. Ferreira, Director of Non-European Affairs, Vereeniging. Mr. Ferreira made it quite clear that he was not going to be guilty of any deviationism. In his speech he congratulated the Republic on not having had any "Coalbrook" or "Sharpeville" so far, saying he was sure that "the average Non-European has refused to be intimidated to take part in strikes and disturbances and it is quite obvious that the agitators and so-called 'political leaders' are no longer influencing the Non-European worker". He went on to mention that foreign Bantu were flocking into the Republic; that the Press has played a major part in the slanderous campaign being waged against South Africa. He concluded with the following sentence: "I would like to reiterate that the State could make our task easier by taking a stronger stand against agitators and instigators".

### Comment:

Though the Minister's speech, as I have tried to show, contained its fair share of platitudes, I seemed to detect in its undertones a greater awareness than in the past, of the urgent need to improve living conditions and wages for Africans in the country's urban areas. There also appeared to be a tacit admission on the part of the Government that the African in the cities can no longer be regarded as 'a temporary sojourner in the White Man's Kraal', to paraphrase/....



paraphrase that immortal statement of the Stallard Commission. Was this a sign that there was a change of heart, or a greater perception of reality by the authorities? It was too early to say at this stage. The next morning would show whether the Minister's speech had produced an impact on conference delegates.

2. On Wednesday morning the first paper was given by Professor F.C. Van Niekerk Fourie, Head of the Department of Economics, University of the Orange Free State. It was on 'The Socio-Economic Position of the Bantu Areas in South Africa'. Professor Fourie's paper was a summary of the summary of the Tomlinson Report and contained nothing new. What was interesting, however, was the way he had selected his facts in order to paint as grim a picture of social conditions in the Reserves as possible, together with his extempore remarks at the end of his address, when he pleaded for the full implementation of the Tomlinson Report's recommendations by the Government.

In his vote of thanks, Dr. F.J. Language, Professor of Anthropology of the Orange Free State University, went further, and said that the Bantu Areas were completely under-developed while the White areas were, economically, very highly developed. As a result, the Bantu could not build up a decent socio-economic environment in the Reserves and had perforce to seek work outside their own areas in the towns and the White rural areas. No purpose was served by compelling people to go back to the Reserves who were being forced out of them by sheer economic necessity. Thus, the only solution was to tackle the development of the Bantu homelands, because the more development took place, the easier it would be for the urban administrators to deal with the irresistible pressure of people trying desperately to get a foothold in the towns. He concluded by saying he was pleased to see that Dr. Pepler, who had recently been placed in charge of the Development of the Bantu Areas under the Bantu Administration Department, was present, and he called upon him to inform the delegates about the Government's plans and achievements so far.

At this stage Professor Fourie said he would like to point out that the development of the Bantu areas would affect the migration of Bantu to the towns because by the end of the 20th Century it had been estimated by the Tomlinson Commission that the Bantu population would increase by a further ten million. If the Reserves were not developed sufficiently by then, the towns would have to absorb these people. If they were developed, then the increase could be accommodated in the Reserves which represented an area slightly larger than the area of England, Wales and Northern Ireland combined, whose population was between forty-five and fifty million people.

Dr. L. Pepler began by saying that Professor Fourie was no longer in touch with what had been happening since the Tomlinson Report had been published. This was not a criticism of Professor Fourie, and he welcomed this opportunity of informing the Conference of the great progress of recent years. Bantu Education had been placed under the control of the Bantu Administration Department and the development of the people was proceeding well. Many new schools had been built as well as two new Universities, Ngoya and Turfloop. He mentioned that 150,000 morgen were being developed as forest lands as well as 15,000 morgen of irrigated lands. An Economic Advisory Board with a permanent Committee had been set up to encourage the establishment of border industries, and 160 settlements had been established which would provide focal points of economic growth for the future. The rate of development, however, would have to depend on the capabilities and the initiative of the Bantu themselves. They could get help from the Bantu Development Corporation and, in Kingwilliamstown, Dr. Pepler said, he had seen the books of a Bantu trader who was doing very well. Finally, Bantu Authorities were being encouraged to expand their activities: some of them had built their own courthouses and employed their own prosecutors. All this was aiding the Bantu to strengthen their confidence in themselves and a great deal could be expected in the near future.

Dr. Pepler's assurances that all was for the best in the best of all possible Bantustans was not shared by a large number of the delegates. There was an immediate reaction from Mr. A.J. van Schalkwyk, of Walvis Bay, who referred to a recent article by Mr. I.K. Allan of the University of Natal on "Urbanization, Industrialization and Wages". He quoted the sentence: "Towns and cities cannot be created out of the blue and live by taking in each/....



each other's washing ...." He ended by asking if any purpose would be served by following a policy which was thought to be morally right, when it was obviously economically unsound and doomed to destruction. One of the delegates pretended he did not understand the question, and Dr. Mathewson of Benoni, as well as Mr. Bourquin of Durban, asked a few more pertinent questions, such as: when would the Bantu Areas be able to support forty million inhabitants; when would cities as large as Durban and Pretoria be created in the Reserves; when would enough Bantu engineers, chemists, doctors and technicians be trained to cope with the needs of a town of forty thousand persons? Dr. Mathewson said he could find immediate employment for at least four Bantu Town Engineers if they were available. Mr. Bourquin asked how much had been spent on the Reserves during the last five years. He said that as the Bantu areas depended for more than half of their income from cash wages earned by migrant workers in the towns, if these areas were not developed, the urban areas would have to try to accommodate and employ seventeen million Bantu by the end of the Century, which, at the present rate of development, simply could not be done.

It is hardly necessary to point out that these questions have been asked ever since the Tomlinson Report was published and, so far, no satisfactory answer has ever been given to any one of them. Mr. W.J. Seymour, the rather grim 'comedian' of the Conference, explained at length how the Afrikaner and the Bantu were essentially rural peoples who were caught up by the process of industrialization which was brought about in South Africa by immigrants from Europe. The Afrikaner was rapidly becoming more urbanised. An American professor had said only the White and Yellow races had the initiative to build an industrialized society. How could the Bantu be expected to make greater progress in this field than the Afrikaner? He quoted Liberia as an example of Bantu incapacity and concluded by saying that there could be no question of rapid development in the next thirty or forty years but of centuries .....

Professor Fourie was stung by these remarks to point out rather sharply to Mr. Seymour that development in these days did not have to be a long process. With existing modern training techniques, it was possible to take a man from the bush (uit die bos uit) and in fifteen years make him into a skilled technician. He quite agreed that towns could not be established by simply making crosses on a map, and the Tomlinson Commission had not done this. He disagreed with Mr. Allan when he said it was not economic to establish industries close to labour supplies. He fully agreed that Bantu engineers, chemists and technologists should be being trained at the new Universities instead of philosophers and historians. Traditionally, Universities had begun with Arts courses. People asked where the money was coming from. The money was there. South Africa was forming capital at the rate of 250-Million Pounds, not Rands, per year. The only problem was how to divert this money so it should be invested in the Bantu Areas.

At the end of the discussion, as a parting shot, Dr. Pepler said that in the past when the Bantu were allowed to study where they liked "they never took a liking to engineering. Why, I don't know (sic)".

#### Comment.

At the end of the first day's discussions it was quite obvious that delegates were divided into two camps. One, a tiny minority consisting of the two delegates from the University of the Free State, Mathewson of Benoni and Bourquin of Durban, plus van Schalkwyk of Walvis Bay, were inclined to be critical of some aspects of government policy, while the other group, which embraced the vast majority of the remaining delegates, were prepared to toe the party line and swallow any statement, however childish, as long as it came from 'a higher authority'. A good example was Dr. Pepler's fatuous announcement that he did not know why 'Bantu' did not take to engineering in the past. The facts are too well known to need any further elaboration.

3. On Thursday morning Dr. C.J. Jooste, Senior Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Natal, read his paper on "The Functions and Responsibilities of Local Authorities in the Administration of Non-European Affairs".

Shorn of all its frills, that is, the learned sociological analysis of/....



of heterogeneous populations in urban environments, which was way above the heads of the majority of delegates, his paper contained two main points. The first was that the Europeans would eventually become small minorities in all the country's urban areas, and thus the Non-Europeans would continue to become urbanized. The second was that the central government would have to play an increasing part in municipal affairs.

"Due to the rapid population growth of the Non-Europeans and the fact that in future they will in an increasing degree dominate in the process of urbanization it will be progressively difficult for local authorities to fulfil all their functions, and the growing participation of the central government in local affairs will become inevitable. The Europeans will, within the next few decades, form with far reaching social, economic and political implications, insignificant minorities in all our cities".

These heretical statements were pounced upon by the delegates and some of the most lively discussion took place that morning. Mr. W.J. Carr, Director of Non-European Affairs in Johannesburg, who thanked Dr. Jooste for his paper, pointed out that his suggestion that the cities would eventually belong to the Non-Europeans was directly contrary to Government policy. He, Mr. Carr, believed in influx control, otherwise the cities would rapidly be swamped. He was quite prepared to accept the principle that the Non-European should have self-government in the urban areas, but how was it to be achieved? By a slow process of evolution, or by rapid panic measures such as had occurred in the Congo? How could Non-European cities become completely independent? Some of the Government's legislation was not favoured by Africans; in fact, they were violently opposed to a great deal of it. If these cities were to be given full independence, was it likely that the African Urban Authorities would be able or willing to implement such legislation? Mr. Carr said he also rejected Dr. Jooste's suggestion that the central government would have to take a greater share in municipal government in the future, as this implied that the local authorities were incompetent and unable to carry out government policy.

Mr. J.P. Smit of Virginia, who was being carefully primed by Mr. van As of the University of South Africa, while Mr. Carr was speaking, tried to draw a red herring across the trail. He suggested that if the Bantu Areas were developed to keep pace with developments in the High Commission Territories, the latter could be expected to join up with the Bantustans. The trouble was, as Professor Fourie had pointed out, that the Reserves were split up into 100 little pieces which would have to be consolidated first, as had been suggested by the Tomlinson Commission. As regards the Urban Bantu Councils which Dr. Jooste referred to as "the beginning of a new and more positive phase in our responsibility regarding Non-European administration", Mr. Smit said they were likely to strengthen the permanency of the Bantu in the towns, and he wondered whether they were such a good idea.

In support of Mr. Smit, a member of the Peri-Urban Boards, quoted the case of Alexandra Township as an excellent example of the unfitness of the 'Bantu' to govern themselves. At this stage the Institute's Honorary Secretary, Mr. J.C. Taljaard dropped a bombshell by saying that if the Bantu were still to be regarded as temporary sojourners in the towns, then the new Bantu Urban Councils were a fraud and an injustice; but if the Bantu were now to be accepted as permanent inhabitants of the cities, then it was the best piece of legislation which had been passed for a long time. He also asked why it should be necessary to discuss at length means of improving living conditions of people who were only to live temporarily in the towns. He referred to Mr. van As's paper in 1958, where he had stated that there could be no question of ever granting the Bantu political rights in the towns.

It would take too long to give a full account of the discussion, the most animated of the whole Conference, which took place after Dr. Jooste's paper. I can only mention, in passing, some of the more significant statements such as the one made by Mr. A.S. Marais, Director of N.E.A., Boksburg, who spoke after Mr. Bourquin had appealed once again for Urban Administrators to be allowed to keep their discretionary powers so that they could make administrative appointments in their departments without having to refer them to Pretoria. Mr. Marais said that while he agreed that Administrators should have some discretionary powers, the Government could not be expected to place the keys of its Native Policy in the hands of officials/....



officials whose political convictions differed so radically from those of the ruling party. Then there was the City Councillor from Mossel Bay who asked: "Are we not doing too much for the Bantu? Has not the time arrived for them to be more heavily taxed?" This question was raised again in the afternoon.

An interesting insight into the attitude of many of the delegates was given by the statement of one delegate from Pretoria, to the effect that the administration was 'combatting the entry of Bantu into the cities by persuading large employers like Iscor to substantially reduce their labour force'. Two delegates from the University of Pretoria, Professor P.J. Coertze and Mr. C.M. de Villiers, were very upset at the argument that was raging about the permanency or impermanency of the Bantu in the towns. Professor Coertze even accused Dr. Jooste of advocating the establishment of a completely integrated society in the urban areas! Mr. Mathewson of Benoni capped all the arguments by pointing out that the Bantu areas in the cities were permanent, but the Bantu themselves were only there temporarily, so he said: "We can say that they will be permanently temporarily in our towns for ever and ever".

In his reply, Dr. Jooste very ably side-stepped all the awkward questions his paper had aroused. He agreed that the Bantu and the Whites would have to be more heavily taxed in future to finance the development of the Bantu Areas. The urbanization of the Bantu, as Professor Fourie had also stressed, would take place at an ever increasing tempo but not in the White areas - in their own areas! That was what he was suggesting, and in fact the Republic was now entering into a new phase of 'positive apartheid'.

4. In the afternoon, Mr. C. de Coning of the University of South Africa's Bureau of Market Research, read a paper on "Aspects of Urban Bantu Consumer Behaviour".

Once again many Conference delegates reacted strongly to being confronted with unpalatable facts. Mr. de Coning's paper dealt with some of the findings of a survey carried out by the Bureau of Market Research in the townships of Atteridgeville, Saulsville, Vlakvontein West and Vlakvontein East. Mr. de Coning's study of the income and expenditure of African household budgets fully confirmed previous investigations carried out by the South African Institute of Race Relations on the Rand, and in Durban by the Department of Economics at Natal University. His figures showed, as do those of other investigators, that municipalities, educational institutions and government departments such as the Railways pay the lowest wages to African labour in the towns.

Mr. B. Venter, Head of N.E.A. Department, East London, thanked Mr. de Coning and asked how the poverty of the urban Bantu could be reconciled with suggestions made to tax them more heavily in order to promote the development of the Reserves. Would such a policy not result in preventing the Urban Bantu from paying for their basic necessities such as rent and food in the cities?

At this point, the delegate from the Railways, incensed at the slur on his Department, said that Dr. de Coning had obviously been seriously misinformed by the Bantu he interviewed, about the salaries they received from the South African Railways. They received much more than was shown in the tables printed in de Coning's paper.

Similar arguments were put forward by the Councillor for Mossel Bay, and various other municipalities. In his reply, Mr. de Coning asked the Railway's representative to say what the gap was between the highest increment level and the lowest rung on the salary scale, and went on to explain how the survey was carried out. He assured delegates that the Bureau of Market Research consulted official salary scales, etc. They did not stop individual Bantu in the street and ask them what they earned without checking on all available information.

#### Comment.

Thursday was the most important day of the Conference. The underlying tensions came out clearly and it was interesting to see how the University/....



University of Pretoria on the one hand, together with the vast majority of delegates, were most concerned not to allow discussion which might reflect on basic principles to arouse any doubts as to the validity of the basic principles of apartheid in the minds of the delegates. On the other hand, the University of the Orange Free State, as represented by Professors Fourie and Language, as well as Mr. de Coning, together with Messrs. Mathewson, Bourquin, Venter, Taljaard and van Schalkwyk, seemed more anxious to face unpleasant facts and discuss their implications, even if they did seem to question some aspects of Nationalist ideology.

5. The last paper given on Friday morning was "The Welfare of the Urban Bantu", by Mr. L.T. de Jager, D.N.E.A., Springs. The first part of the paper contained a good description of the African family in tribal conditions; the second part dealt with the same group in the urban areas, and the third section dealt with "The development of Social Services in South Africa". The third part was the least satisfactory one because it contained all the usual half-truths, such as the opening sentence: "From the time of his first settlement in Southern Africa, the European had made it his object to promote the welfare of the aborigines to the best of his ability. How easy it would have been to destroy these people with the more modern weapons, alcohol and dangerous drugs, at his disposal ....."

It was with an almost audible sigh of relief that delegates to the Conference listened to Mr. de Jager. There was hardly any discussion, and after only an hour of thanks and messages from various delegates to the Conference, the resolutions were put to the vote.

I shall only mention the most important which were :

- a) That the Institute be asked to give attention to the adoption of practical steps to assure the stability of Bantu family life.
- b) That Department of Education Arts and Science be asked to encourage the study of Non-European Affairs and Bantu Languages in the schools.  
This motion was put to the vote and only passed by a narrow majority, as some delegates felt this course might turn White children into Negrophilists !
- c) That the Government be approached and asked to increase the general tax on Bantu to be spent on Bantu Education.
- d) That faculties of engineering and other technical training facilities should be established at the Bantu Universities.
- e) As conditions in the Reserves were affecting conditions in the urban areas, the Government should be asked to implement in full the recommendations of the Tomlinson Commission. Urban Administrators should be given a chance to study conditions in the Bantu Areas, and more publicity should be given to the achievements of the Bantu Affairs Department in promoting the development of the Bantu Areas.
- f) In view of the long time it would take to develop the Bantu Areas, the Government should be asked to increase employment opportunities for the Bantu in the Urban areas.

#### CONCLUSIONS.

The absence of any delegates from SABRA at this Conference was significant because of the prominent part played by such delegates in the discussion at previous ones. The very poor coverage given by the English and Afrikaans Press to the Conference reflects, I think, not only on the efficiency of the Press but also on the very low status that this type of Conference enjoys today. In other words, members of this Institute are not likely to play an important role in determining future government policy. The fact that none of the Rhodesian delegates took part in the discussions, and that the whole Conference was the battlefield of an essentially internal

quarrel/.....



quarrel between two very unevenly matched groups, as far as numbers are concerned, who were interested mainly in implementing the policy of separate development, gave the whole proceedings an incredibly parochial air.

My own impressions were that the majority of government partisans are still as reluctant as ever to face unpleasant facts. A few are beginning to wonder when all these wonderful plans for separate development are going to manifest themselves in some concrete fashion. The Government is trying now to push the idea of 'positive apartheid' but the snag is they must ask their supporters to dig deep into their own pockets to finance some of their plans. It was interesting to see how all references to Mr. Ian Allan's article on "Urbanisation, Industrialisation and Wages" which were given to the 14th Annual Conference of Town Clerks of Southern Africa and which contains a very clear exposure of all the most glaring inconsistencies of the Tomlinson Report, were quickly stifled. I particularly noticed how embarrassed Professor Fourie was when he was asked to comment on some of the statements made by Mr. Allan.

It was depressing to realise how little contact there can be in the future, as regards Native Policy, between Nationalists and Non-Nationalists. It was even more depressing to listen to some of the incredibly naive statements made about the future in view of what is happening in the world today. That is why the Conference reminded me irresistibly of Tennyson's poem, "The Lotus Eaters", and I would like to conclude by quoting the following lines which I think sum up very well the net achievements in the intellectual field of this Conference :

"Blight and famine, plague and earthquake, roaring deeps and  
fiery sands,  
Clanging fights, and flaming towns, and sinking ships, and praying  
hands.  
But they smile, they find a music centred in a doleful song  
Steaming up a lamentation and an ancient tale of wrong,  
Like a tale of little meaning tho' the words are strong."

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