

NEWSLETTER

July 1965

Centre for Applied Social Scien.
University of Natal
King George V Avenue
Durban 4001
South Africa

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INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

*** NEWSLETTER ***

Newsletter No. 1; June, 1965.

Not for publication

INTRODUCTION OF AN INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

At its Third Meeting, the Committee of Control of the Institute accepted the idea of the introduction of a more or less regular newsletter. At present, the position is that it is only once a year that all members get together for the Annual General Meeting, and in the intervening period, communication between members is restricted. Consequently, many do not know what is going on. The newsletter will provide some opportunity to spread items of information and interest, and to link together members in various departments, and in Durban and Pietermaritzburg.

The Scope and Interest of the Newsletter will Depend on the Members:

If the newsletter is to be interesting, and become a regular, useful feature in the Institute, then it must have support from the members. It can be as dry as dust, or something which will at least get a quick glance before landing in the wastepaper basket - or (and this is what is hoped), it can be an interesting and perhaps stimulating newsletter. Members of the Institute are invited to support this venture, and submit items of interest, news, and if they wish, short letters or articles to the Secretary, Mrs. Pratt.

Send in your ideas, your news, your articles (not long scientific papers). If this newsletter is to thrive it must be a joint venture - not a one-man show! Are there any volunteers as "reporters" or columnists" in Durban and Pietermaritzburg? Don't be shy.

New Director:

The new Director of the Institute, Hilstan Watts, joined us at the beginning of January. Lawrence Schlemmer who acted as Director after Professor Badenhorst left, is now at last able to relax a bit and get on with his other research activities.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you so much for the very warm welcome you have given my family and me, and we are really enjoying meeting and getting to know you all. While there are many of you whom I have not yet managed to meet in person, I am looking forward to getting to know you all.

The Institute is a fine organisation, and I am finding it most stimulating being here. There is a good deal of research being undertaken, with the promise of even more in the future.

I hope that you will all feel that I am here to help, and if in any way I can assist with your research, or manage to smooth out some of the inevitable difficulties that seem to beset all research, you will approach me. As I see it, one of the first commitments of the Institute must be to serve the research needs of the University - we all know how difficult it is to cram research into a full teaching programme - so if I can help in any way, I will be very happy to do so.

Hilstan Watts.

Congratulations to Margaret Young - now Mrs. Sugden - both on the occasion of her recent marriage, and also on her appointment as junior lecturer in the Department of Geography.

Congratulations to Dr. and Mrs. R. Davies on the birth of a daughter.

Congratulations to Brian McKendrick on becoming the first winner of the Hansi Pollak Prize awarded to the most outstanding graduate in social work.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Dear Members,

It gives me great pleasure to support this, the first newsletter of the Institute. The newsletter, to my mind, is a valuable innovation which should serve to promote a better understanding of the Institute's activities among the members, and facilitate a mutually beneficial interchange of ideas.

The Institute is very well established at present, and there is every promise that it will continue to grow and to widen the scope of its activities. We are very fortunate in having Professor Hilstan Watts as Director. He has impressed us all as a man of considerable ability and wide experience in the broad field of social research. I am sure that, under his guidance, the Institute will develop into a body of international standing.



HANSI POLLAK
Chairman.

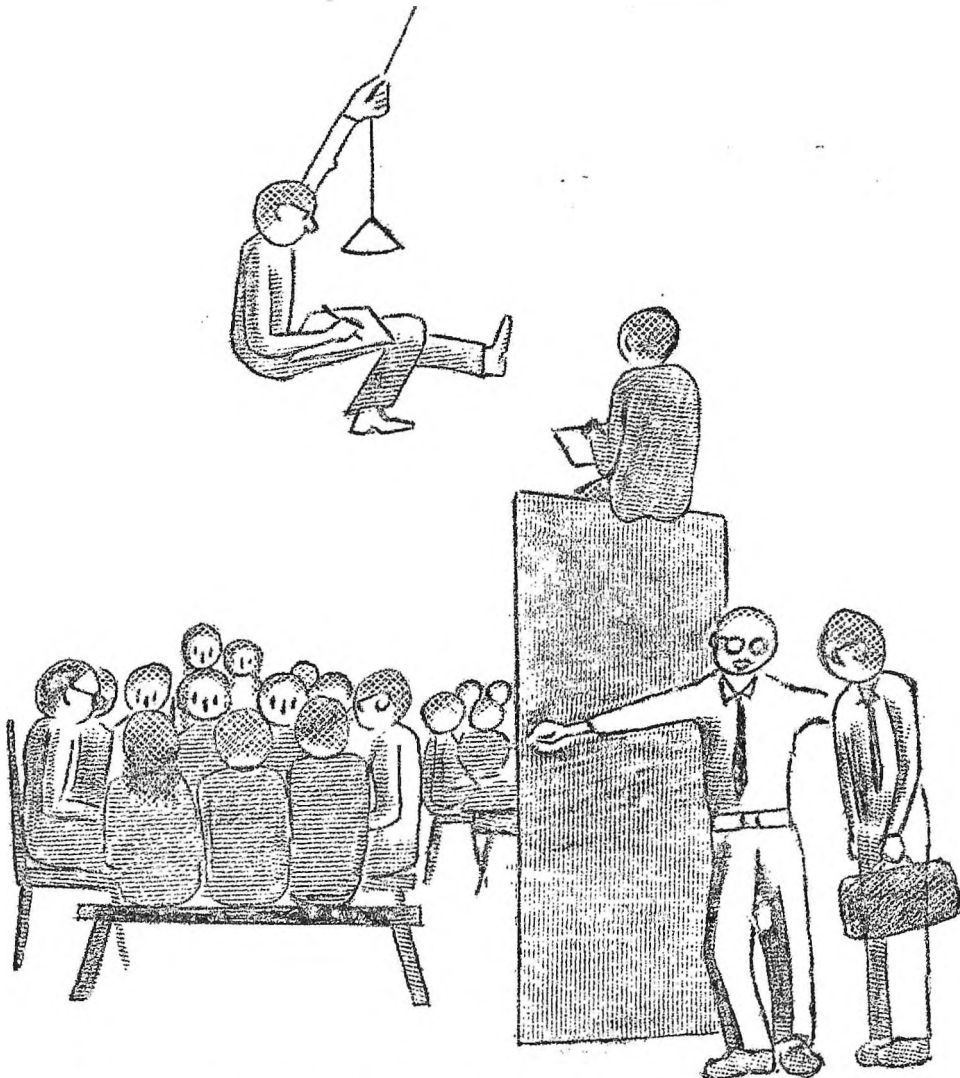
Condolences to Professor Hansi Pollak on the tragic loss of her nephew.

NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

American Social Anthropologist to Visit Institute:

An American Social Anthropologist, Professor Fernandez, is to visit Durban from July to December of this year.

Professor Fernandez is an Associate Professor at Dartmouth College, and has received a grant to make a study of Separatist Religious Movements in this region. He met Professor Eileen Krige last year at the Anthropological Conference in Moscow, and it is through her that he has made contact with the Institute. He will be provided with office accommodation by the Institute (if we can find somewhere better than our store-room). Professor Fernandez has written that he will gladly take part in some seminars which we hope to organise later in the year.



Is there room for a new member of staff in here?

Accommodation Shortage:

Like all departments within the University, the Institute has been experiencing an acute accommodation shortage. With now a total of 13 workers who are not housed in academic departments, it has become necessary to find extra space. We are expanding vertically, by being given first the small lab. behind L1 in the Memorial Tower Building, and then the one behind L2. However, this has not solved all our needs - does anyone know of some more space, apart from the roof?

Welcome to new Research Workers in the Institute:

We would like to welcome Misses Ann Perry, and also Lorna Geils and Lynette Weber to the Institute as workers on The African School Girls Study and the Occupational Prestige project, respectively. We would also like to welcome Rosalind Bithrey, who has come up from the Institute for Social and Economic Research at Rhodes University, to continue as a Research Assistant on the East London investigations. Welcome also to Cliff Shearing who is engaged on the study of "Attitudes of Bantu Blood Donors", and to Ulla Buldeel who is helping Lawrence Schlemmer to 'sort out' his sugar tables.

Ex-Fellow receives Doctorate:

At the recent graduation ceremony of the University, Hamish Dickie-Clark received his Ph.D. for a study of "The Marginal Situation - A Sociological Study of a Coloured Group". He was one of the original research fellows of the Institute during its earliest years, and his thesis resulted from one of the first projects commenced by the Institute. We extend our heartiest congratulations to him, and are delighted to hear his study is to be published in book form by Routledge, Kegan and Paul.

Did you Know..?

That the Department of Geography has certain facilities which they are willing to make available for use by other departments.

1. An extensive map collection
2. Duplicating of larger diagrams, maps, etc., provided that these are prepared on transparent paper.
3. Photo-duplication of material.

Planned Excursions -

Firstly, there is the joint excursion on the urban ecology of Durban held by the Department of Sociology and Geography. This is to be held in August, and anyone who may be interested on going on this excursion is welcome, depending on availability of space in the bus.

The Department of Geography is planning an excursion to Johannesburg and the Witwatersrand for its Honours class to undertake short projects on the urban ecology of the area. This is an annual excursion, and will take place during the July vacation.

Preparation of Flannelgraph Propaganda -

Mrs. Kay Wolfson of the Geography Department has been preparing flannelgraph material for various organisations interested in the field of health education and community rehabilitation, e.g. The Valley Trust and the Department of Agriculture. Flannelgraphs are to be used in an attempt to develop a means for the rapid dissemination of knowledge in relation to matters such as nutrition, soil conservation, etc. amongst both the rural and urban African populations.

Research Activities:

At present members of the staff and senior students of the department are actively engaged on a number of projects in connection with which the Institute for Social Research is providing consultative services.

Mr. R. Preston-Whyte is undertaking a study of local air circulation and movement over the Durban Bay area. This investigation is part of a study of the smog problem in Durban currently being undertaken by the C.S.I.R. Mr. Preston-Whyte's section of the project is concerned with the area of Durban where most of the smog impurities accumulate as the result of topographical and atmospheric conditions.

At present the department has eight M.A. students undertaking various research projects, six of which concern urban geography. Two of the students are making studies of the urban geography of the north coast of Natal, while another study concerns the social and physical morphology of the Indian centre business district of Durban. This particular business district presents extremely interesting social and geographical features, so that the final report is likely to be of interest to a variety of social scientists.

There is one Ph.D. student working on the Pattern of Indian Land Ownership and Land Occupation on the North Coast of Natal. This survey is being undertaken under the auspices of the Natal Town and Regional Planning Commission, and a grant of R5,000 has been made for the study. The information gained by the project will be basic for the planning of Indian agriculture in the north coast region. The patterns which are emerging are proving to be extremely complicated, and reveal the effects of both sociological and topographical influences on land utilisation and occupation.

An interesting Honours project which is being planned concerns an investigation of the effect of the new Western Freeway upon the existing business ribbon along Jan Smuts Highway.

Research in Progress:

At the Annual General Meeting held towards the end of last year members had an opportunity of hearing something about research in progress at that time. Since then, several new projects - both applied and basic research - have been commenced:

A study of the attitudes and motivation of the African towards blood donation has been sponsored by the Natal Blood Transfusion Service. The problem of securing African blood donors is one of very long standing, but as far as we know the present investigation is the first systematic social research into the problem. The pilot study has been completed, and the final plans for the large-scale study are being finalised. The research will be restricted to adult urban Africans living within the Durban region. It is anticipated that a report will be available early next year.

A study of certain values, attitudes and aspirations among selected groups of African School Girls in secondary schools in the Durban area was commenced in March. Fieldwork is in progress.

Existing research which is being continued with further grants from the N.C.S.R. consists of the Cognition Study under the direction of Professor Albino, the Tongaland Project under the direction of Professor Krige and Dr. Argyle, and the study of Occupational Prestige under Mr. Schlemmer (the latter is now going "full-blast" and is responsible for a 25% increase in the number of temporary research workers in the Institute - don't ask for the size of N!)

Projects for which no further grants have been received and which will conclude this year, are the study sponsored by the Durban Non-European Children's Fund, the studies of the Indian Industrial Worker, and also of the African Domestic Servant, as well as the Image Study of the Sugar Industry.

The Chairman of the Committee of Control, Professor Pollak, has given the Director, Professor Watts, permission to continue with his study of the White population of East London, which he commenced at Rhodes University through a sister institute - the Institute for Social and Economic Research at Rhodes. The project is mainly concentrating on an analysis of migratory behaviour, and will form part of the Border Regional Survey undertaken by Rhodes University.

Preparation of a Tabulating Programme for the I.B.M. 1620:

Professor Watts' study of East London has involved the problem of preparing weighted tabulations for approximately half a million items of data. The tables are nearly all two-dimensional cross tabulations with some three-dimensional tables. Mr. Webb, Computer Officer of the University, and Mrs. Sugden of the Institute, have been working on the programming problem, which has now been very satisfactorily solved. Mr. Webb has prepared a master programme for data tabulation, which is likely to be of the greatest value to members of the Institute in the future, as it can tackle all except the largest and most complicated tables. It is anticipated that this programme will find use again and again in future,

New Committee of Control:

Senate has approved the new Committee of Control for the Institute for 1965. The members are Professor Pollak (Chairman), Professor Theron (Vice-Chairman), Professors Albino, Horwood and Krige, Dr. Davies, and the Director ex officio.



IS ALL WELL WITHIN THE IVORY TOWER?

Lawrence Schlemmer
Loet Douwes Dekker

Social scientists, most of them university based, have taken it upon themselves to dissect and analyse all types of organisations and establishments. Going concerns of all brands of specialisation have been transformed overnight into human relations laboratories, with senior and junior personnel, managers and sweepers alike, reduced to the equal and helpless status of guinea-pigs. Men and women, whose only outward distinguishing feature is the use of very long and incomprehensive words, have invaded hospitals, factories, religious sects, armies, political parties, schools, and even lonely-hearts clubs, jazz bands and in one British study, have even turned their attention to municipal toilets and the unknown artists that adorn them!

Perhaps because of their commonly accepted claims to all knowledge, universities themselves have thus far been largely spared this humiliation. True, much attention has been given to academic standards, university expansion, and the changing function of universities in society, but these considerations all revolve around the relation of a university to its environment, and only indirectly question its internal organisation.

Few have dared, thusfar, to bring questionnaires, tests, tape-recorders and suggestive little projective pictures into the hallowed precincts of the academic department or lecture theatre. In the United States of America, university students have been probed and preyed upon by social scientists

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to the point of exhaustion, but their exalted tutors' privacy has been meticulously observed,

Perhaps the social organisation of the University is best left alone, but, one cannot help wondering whether people who continually put other peoples houses in order, might not be neglecting their own. In times past, when higher education was the privilege of the select few, and universities were small places with very broad and embracing functions, the human elements in universities were perhaps best left to their leisurely and sometimes eccentric devices. Nobody doubts that today, universities have a crucial job to perform in society, and have had to become increasingly sensitive to the demands of outside technology. These developments have brought strange echo's to the formerly hushed corridors of learning.

With this increased secularisation of universities, so ably described by Sir Eric Ashby^{1]}, A.H. Halsey^{4]} and others, the danger exists that the old order within universities has been disturbed; that the new demands of society and the economy have introduced some of the problems typical of 20th century bureaucratic structures onto the academic scene. These problems can often be reduced to a rather all embracing phenomenon that the cyberneticist would call "noise" in communication.

A primary function of a university is to communicate knowledge to students. Undoubtedly the knowledge is there to communicate, but we may well ask how well the knowledge, in its broadest and most meaningful form, is transmitted.

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School teachers, who in the eyes of most university staff have a far humbler task to perform in this respect, are required to make a special study of teaching methods. How often have we not heard a sibilant undergraduate whisper dismiss a scientific expert as a "lousy lecturer"? Some academics can today be heard talking about "programmed instruction" before having mastered the rudiments of "plain" instruction. Again, how often have we not heard a colleague complain that the only thing he dislikes about his job is lecturing?

Obviously, university staff cannot be expected to pass diploma courses in education, but might they not benefit from general orientation and guidance on how best to communicate their hard earned knowledge to unwilling and restless subjects?

On the other hand, might it not be useful to find out why so many lecturers find their task so trying. Some rather fundamental questions would have to be asked about the lecturers' perceptions of his own role and his image of students, as well as efforts made to gauge the effect of the lecturers' dual obligation to both research and teaching. Today, the fate of the lecturer is to publish or become the also-ran in the rat race. Caplow and McGee are prepared to state that: "it is only a slight exaggeration to say that academic success is likely to come to the man who has learned to neglect his assigned duties in order to have more time and energy to pursue his private professional interests"^{2]}.

On another point, A.H. Halsey talks of the lecturer in Britain "yielding to discouragement in the face of a student body which he sees as uncultured in its background and materialistically vocational in its aspirations"^{5]}.

The cynicism of the arts lecturer in South Africa who, in addition to the type of students mentioned above, also faces bevies of female glamour and "bouffant" hairstyles, artlessly enjoying their new-found finishing schools while absorbing future party conversation, must be proportionately greater. As regards lecturing itself, perhaps equally fundamental questions should be asked about the basis of lecturing and note-taking. Might not the basic material in some courses be more effectively transmitted by reproduced notes with lecturers freed to discuss round the topics and to drag the students more forcefully into some sort of genuine participation.

What of the inter-departmental communication in universities? The word "inter-disciplinary" is often bandied around in a variety of contexts but too often notably absent in practice. Many university departments find themselves teaching or conducting research in fields where there is considerable overlap with work done in other departments, albeit with differences in emphasis and approach. The social sciences are a particularly good example. The domain of the sociologist impinges on that of the economist, the psychologist, the anthropologist, the geographer, the town planner, the medical man and the mathematician. This points to the need for easy and effective communication between departments with shared interests. This communication must perhaps not be fostered too much by formal means or else the highly-prized autonomy of university departments might be affected,

Research in industry has shown that informal processes of communication are even more effective, provided a climate of attitudes exist where this can take place. How effectively do we communicate with our doctrinal cousins, or does family rivalry or jealously guarded academic territory (or guilt) turn our departments into isolationist encampments.

Neither should the department itself be sacrosanct. The university department, as a small functioning unit in a larger administrative (an perhaps even bureaucratic) whole, has to have some pattern of authority and some delineation of roles within it. The necessity for intellectual autonomy on the other hand, demands maximal freedom for the individual member of staff. Perhaps we should think seriously about how these problems are resolved. University staff, by virtue of uniquenesses in individual training and their time-honoured role as free-thinking intellectuals, do not take kindly to any bureaucratic impositions on themselves. One might expect that in university departments more friction and barriers to effective co-operation and control exist than in organisations where roles are clearly defined and the individuals are humbly content to occupy a pre-determined status. Surely answers to problems such as these can only be sought along the lines of more clearly defined and greater freedoms within acceptable frameworks of control.

Another question is how "systematic" conflicts within departments affect staff satisfaction and turnover. How truly autonomous do members of staff feel?; and do they feel they are allowed scope for adequate specialisation? Does the lecturer not perhaps exist in a limbo of suspended status or expectations until he too, becomes a head of a department?

Goldschmidt, commenting on universities in Germany says "Academic selection has always been competitive in terms of the chances of being called to a chair, but the growth of the lower and middle ranks in the universities has intensified this competition"^{3]}.

What of heads of departments? With the increasing size of universities, the full professor, although he may still teach and conduct research, has had to become an administrator; a planner and manager, to an ever increasing extent. Have our university departmental heads an adequate framework of norms within which to exercise this power. Caplow and McGee^{2]} feel that the authority of departmental heads is too often personal and arbitrary. If so, nothing could be worse for the morale of the junior members of staff. On the other hand, some professors may find such barriers to communicating downwards within their own departments that they feel their abilities for leadership are best channelled into university "politics". Brian Wilson^{6]} says in this regard: "Professional imperialism is a common phenomenon in academic life,.... in universities it is a form of aggrandisement alien to the values of scholarship and culture."

Lord Snow, Brian Wilson and others have drawn our attention to the unfortunate emergence of "twin-cultures" of arts and science. To what extent is not yet another senseless dichotomy emerging on our campuses: that of the divided cultures of staff and students. Staff, at a university, apart from teaching, should also attempt to salvage the student from the climate of peer-group morality, and materially orientated values, in which too many of our school-leavers languish. If graduates are to fulfil the role of

/'initiators'

'initiators' in society, this is essential. In order to facilitate these changes of attitude, the body of staff must be able to form a positive reference group for students. However, is this salutary function not being hampered by a certain isolationism on the part of staff members? How many of our colleagues comments on students are heavy with sincere disapproval and cynicism? Increased staff participation in student affairs and closer academic contact between students and staff at the personal level would close the rift, but more light needs to be thrown on the impediments both attitudinal and material, which lie in the way of this type of communication. Brian Wilson lays the blame partly at the door of the present day alien youth culture; partly ascribes the rift to the increasing size of Universities; and also indicts the unnecessarily dull routine of studies. He nonetheless affirms that it is the lecturer who must "break into the cycle of dissillusionment - frustration - criticism - diffidence".^{6]}

The aspects discussed above do not comprise an exhaustive list of problems by any means. Many other areas of interest for the social scientist exist in university organisation. The aim here, has merely been to plead for greater awareness of some of the problems that can exist because of our neglect of the very element which allows a university to function adequately - communication.

Only if we are prepared to look honestly at the way we communicate with our fellows in universities, can we effectively assist our institution in adjusting its creaky bones to the present epoch of challenge

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- 1] Sir Eric Ashby, Technology and the Academics: London: MacMillan, St. Martins Press. 1958.
 - 2] Theodore Caplow and Reece McGee, The Academic Marketplace: New York: Basic Books, 1958, page 220.
 - 3] Dietrich Goldschmidt, "Teachers in Institutions of Higher Learning in Germany": reprinted in Halsey, Flound and Anderson (Eds). Education, Economy and Society: Glencoe: Free Press 1961. page 582
 - 4] A.H. Halsey: "The Changing Function of the University in advanced Industrial Societies". Harvard Educational Review, Vol. XXX. Spring, 1960. pages 119 - 127.
 - 5] A.H. Halsey, "British Universities and Intellectual Life" Universities Quarterly, vol. XII, Feb. 1958; reprinted in Halsey, Flound and Anderson, op. cit., page 511
 - 6] Brian Wilson "Threats to University Values" New Society - No. 134, 22 April, 1965. page 7 - 10

COMMENTS ARE INVITED



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