

THE TIGHTROPE DANCERS

**(Report on the 7th Annual Conference,
Institute of Administrators of
Non-European Affairs,
Muizenberg, 30th Sep - 3rd Oct, 1958)**

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1. As an institution this Institute of Administrators of Non-European Affairs is a mere youngster, being barely seven years old. But it is responsible for a man-sized task: its membership of over 300 comprises the key personnel in the administration of 2½ million Africans in the urban centres - large and small - of the Union, South West Africa and the Federation. Its official field of operation therefore lies in the most sensitive contact areas of a generally tense inter-racial situation. This fact alone thrusts upon the shoulders of the Institute's members a responsibility grave enough to fill all but the very strong (or the woefully ignorant) with apprehension.

From its inception the Institute has made strenuous efforts to improve the qualifications of its members, and the standards it aims at are high. It was the Local Authorities rather than the State's Native Affairs Department, who first accepted the principle of appointing, whenever possible, specially trained and academically qualified people to handle their non-European affairs. The result is a municipal corps of administrators with a very fair percentage of well qualified (and some highly qualified) experts. In fact, the short and peculiar history of African urbanization has made these municipal officials virtually the sole custodians of the practical knowledge of dealing with the bewildering complexity of urban African administration. This is a point to remember, for while it is the State and its central Department of Native Affairs, which must of necessity prescribe uniform principles of local urban government as regards Africans, the knowledge of this central authority (here, as elsewhere in colonial Africa) is essentially based on and conditioned by, its experience of rural (tribal) affairs. Moreover, in the practice of rural administration, the State's authority was never required to minister so closely, or in such multiple ways, to the needs of the individual as the urban administrator is called upon to do.

What one would therefore expect at an annual conference of this vitally important, young, prestigious and self-respecting Institute of urban administrators, is an atmosphere of sober confidence in their ability to handle the task entrusted to them.

One would expect, in a field of action still too young and too lively to allow the adventure of local government to have become a stale routine, that these comparatively young executives (the majority of them is in their thirties and early forties) would eagerly grasp the opportunity of candidly imparting to their colleagues, to the Government of State, and to the ignorant public at large, the fruits of their personal experience, stewardship and hard thinking in the face of many challenges. And out of their outspoken deliberations, so one would expect, would come forth the constructive recommendations which would reflect the hard-boiled realism of the practical administrator, framed in the imaginative philosophy of the academically trained man.

But of these proud expectations few if any were realized. Only two or three members spoke with something that approached candour, and real outspokenness on debatable issues was heard only from one or two outsiders stung into speech after provocation.

The key-note at the Conference was one of caution: not the self-willed caution of the intellectual who refuses to commit himself until he has completed his analysis of a problem; but the caution of the man who dare not speak his mind for fear of jeopardizing his position, or that of his employer. (And of course there were those who saw no reason to speak, being by nature or conviction satisfied merely to obey directives, the more explicit and detailed the better).

2. What could have caused this disappointing performance by a justifiably proud body of highly responsible and capable officials? One reason is reflected in the opening address by the new Administrator of the Cape, Dr. Otto du Plessis.

Paying the customary courtesies to the Institute and mentioning its achievement, he left it no room for self-congratulation. The Institute's success, he declared, was undoubtedly largely due to the fact that, since its inception it had had the 'good fortune' of a double blessing: the 'brilliant (skitterende) leadership' of the (present) Government; and the 'outstanding and penetrating study' (puik en insiggewende referaat) by the Secretary of Native Affairs, Dr. Eiselen, which had guided urban administrators the past six or seven years.

And if there could possibly have been any doubt that this Provincial chieftain considered it unnecessary and even unwise to question the infallibility of these Architects of Native policy, his next remark, that the Institute should feel honoured that the ex-Minister of Native Affairs was now the Prime Minister of the country, with a 'firm hand at the helm', made his meaning abundantly clear.

3. It was now the task of the Institute's capable, retiring President Viljoen (Bloemfontein), to outline in sober terms the position in which the present-day urban administrator of Non-European Affairs in this country finds himself. Fundamentally, Viljoen said, their task is 'to carry out the policy that is prescribed for them, and to apply the laws and regulations that are presented to them'.

On the face of it this presents the position of the urban administrator as one of self-effacing subordination, but without complications. It is in a sense an ideal master and servant relationship, in which the sole task of the servant is to carry out the explicit instructions of the master. Three factors, however, turn this situation for the administrator into a breeding ground of conflicting loyalties:

- a) the urban administrator of Non-European Affairs is a municipal employee and as such the servant of his municipal council (the latter the representatives of the dominant interests of the white urban public); but he can exercise his administrator's responsibilities only under a personal and revocable licence issued to him by the Minister of Native Affairs. He therefore has to serve two masters, who may not, and often do not, see eye to eye with regard to urban policy or tactics;
- b) the legislation which the administrator has to apply, though voluminous and often detailed, is neither a complete vademecum for every conceivable national, local or human problem, nor so rigid as to exclude all discretion on the part of the urban administrator in some important respects. Such discretionary powers concern, for instance, the vital issue of influx control through a permit system (§ 10(1)(d) of Act 25/45). The fact that this power is given to the licenced administrator and not to the local authority which employs him, creates the peculiar and potentially invidious situation in which the administrator, a servant of two sta-

tutory masters (Government and Municipality) need in his discretion pay attention to the wishes of either or neither, while being under constant pressure from both. I shall return to this point later;

- c) thirdly, the administrator is the link, officially and personally, between the urban African population on the one side, and the European public and the strange modern world-at-large on the other side. In the words of the retiring President: "The comparative backwardness of the large majority under our administration implies, especially in the complex modern life of the urban areas, that they are unable properly to manage their own personal domestic and social affairs. This sometimes compels the administrative officer to become involved in the social relations between neighbours and such groups as sports organizations, church societies and other bodies".

Then there is the people's ignorance of rules of behaviour, of what can and cannot be done by the Administrators. Effective means of mass communication are absent and mere publication of rules and regulations is certainly no guarantee of their compliance. 'Everything has to be explained and clarified at length and repeatedly so'. Moreover, the multiplicity of the prescriptions of urban African behaviour is apt to provoke irritation. In Viljoen's words: "There is no field of public administration in which such intensive control is exercised over the individual".

There are also the vast differences in cultural and economic levels, giving rise to a wide variety of legitimate hopes and ambitions, posing one of the most difficult and frustrating problems for the conscientious administrator, who is expected by his superiors to apply a uniform policy, but who knows that variation of standards and aims is the birthright of the human species.

Finally, the administrator has to give satisfaction to all the sections of the European public, from big industrialists to homely housewives, who go labour shopping in this vast human warehouse where they expect the administrator (often in person) to satisfy their widely divergent needs, by the unit, dozen or gross, at a moment's notice, and preferably with a 'satisfaction-or-money-back-guarantee'. Here, too, in this imperious body of Ratepayers (magic title!), much ignorance of what can or cannot

be done for employers, or what should and should not be done for employees: a whole parcel of problems often presented to the administrator in the wrappings of hypocrisy, bigotry and intolerance.

In short, the urban administrator lives in a hornet's nest of potential and actual conflicts; and he who is most consciously and conscientiously aware of these conflicting interests is apt to be stung most frequently.

4. For a practical illustration of this prickly situation the Institute could not have done better than make the following two topics the subjects of their annual deliberation:

the Native Advisory Board;
the Provision of Labour.

There is a nice balance in this choice: the discussion of the Native Advisory Boards could be expected to have a considerable African bias, and the labour topic would probably be viewed primarily from the administrative and employers' angle. The administrators, to whom both problems present routine worries, would interpret the realities of life as they could observe them from their harassed but officially neutral position.

The topic of the Advisory Boards was opened by Meyer of Kimberley who traced the historic background of urban African administration from pre-Union days when, with a few exceptions (Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, West Griqualand) it was largely left to the municipalities to decide how they wished to control Africans within the territory of their jurisdiction, to the confusion upon Union (with the Provincial Authority over Local Authorities; but Native Affairs generally entrusted to the Governor-General-in-Council), further aggravated by the industrial expansion and 'flu epidemic after the first World War, leading via the recommendations of the Stallard Commission (1922) to the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923, with its provisions of stricter State control over municipal management of African Affairs, especially with regard to accommodation, registration of labour, and some form of urban Native advisory body.

This Act became the basis of the present urban legislation. It is interesting to know that the 1923 Act had already been amended (rather, augmented) six times, before it was re-

placed by the 'bible of the urban administrator', the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act No. 25 of 1945, itself a ponderous document of such fallible inspiration that it needed a further six legislative efforts between 1945 and 1957 (with more to come) to turn it into the cumbersome administrative manual of the present-day. This fast footwork by our usually slow-moving Legislator is a good indication of the pressure and growing complexity of the urban problem.

5. The problem of the Native Advisory Board has two broad issues: the question of representation and the question of function.

The Act of 1923 (§ 10) did, with regard to the first issue, little more than provide for the creation of advisory committees of at least three members plus a chairman who may be (but invariably is) a European. Except for providing that Coloureds are also eligible for election, it left the manner of election and form of representation to the local authorities, which were empowered to make the necessary regulations to this effect.

With regard to the Advisory Board's functions, this early Act only stipulated that no regulation concerning a location or Native village under municipal jurisdiction should be made or withdrawn except after consultation with the Advisory Board. The local authority itself was to prescribe whatever other functions it wished the Board to fulfil. (But in a Government Notice of 1924, the Native Affairs Department published a set of regulations for townships and advisory boards for the guidance of local authorities).

Although the Act of 1923 did not prescribe more than a consultative function for these Boards, it did mean their advice to be taken seriously, and it therefore made it obligatory for local authorities to seek such consultations. The Act's instructions were, however, not explicit enough to compel local authorities also to consider such advice, let alone act upon it. Subsequent legislation tried to stop this loophole, and the 1945 Act therefore demands that local authorities report to the Minister of Native Affairs on all such consultations.

Also the functions of the Board are a little more specified in the latter Act, and in addition to commenting on pro-

posed township regulations (which now require ministerial or provincial approval), the Board can now give its opinion on (a) any matter referred to it by the local authority or by the Minister through the local authority, and (b) any matter especially affecting African urban interests which the Board itself wishes to bring to the attention of the authorities. The Act again makes certain that the Minister is kept informed of the views expressed by the Board.

Meyer correctly emphasized that the Legislator gave only advisory functions to these Boards, and that administrative or executive functions had never been contemplated. 'The idea was to establish cordial co-operation between Natives and local authorities with the intention that the Native view would receive serious consideration'.

One is easily inclined to underestimate the words 'only advisory functions'. As Johannesburg's Deputy Manager Koller (a jurist) correctly pointed out in a subsequent paper, the fact alone that the Boards are expected by law to give advice on a wide variety of matters, imposes an obligation on the local authority actually to refer such matters to their Boards for consideration, and this confers a corresponding right upon the Boards, which they could enforce upon the local authority, if necessary by legal action.

This, as Bulawayo's Ashton was quick to point out, constitutes a potentially formidable power in the hands of an Advisory Board which feels that its local authority is not playing the game. It is indeed surprising that in their often frustrating existence, the Boards have not made more liberal use of this power. And apart from this there is the statutory provision that the Boards can actually initiate constructive proposals on any local matter concerning their welfare and interests, and that local authorities must take note of their views. This, together with the Boards' right to consider the annual estimates of expenditure under the Native Revenue Account, does confer considerable responsibilities upon the Boards.

It also became clear from the discussions that in centres where the administrator and local authority acted with sincerity in the spirit of legislation, advisory boards had responded as co-operative and responsible bodies, because they felt that their views did carry weight with the administration.

6. Nevertheless the majority opinion of the administrators appeared to be that, as presently constituted, the advisory boards were not a success, and that Boards were prone to be preoccupied with the thorny issues of national politics, instead of showing some sense of responsibility in matters of strictly local interest.

What to do about them?

Meyer cautiously refrained from suggesting a solution. He merely culled from the Fagan Report (1948) the opinion that 'the door can be opened for the transfer of certain responsibilities with regard to the administration of these townships and the maintenance of law and order by the Natives themselves'. But he also quoted from the stiff letter written by the Secretary for Native Affairs in 1955 to the Annual Congress of Advisory Boards in which, as a reaction against the mounting criticism from African side and their clamouring for a greater say in the administration of their own affairs, his Department refused to co-operate with the Boards.

It was Johannesburg's Koller who, after a sober juristic appraisal of the Advisory Boards functions and powers, was the first speaker to suggest that, in order to achieve the responsible co-operation between Africans and local authority, attention should be given to the question of representation. In his opinion, 'the first essential' should be 'that the Board should be elected in such a way that they properly represent Natives in the location'. This, he argued, could be arranged by the local authorities themselves under their present powers to frame regulations. He did not state, however, what he considered a proper representation.

With regard to the proposed functions of the Board he made two apparently contradictory statements. He first argued that, since the executive administration of urban Native affairs had been delegated by Parliament to local authorities, the latter must perform their mandate themselves and could not again delegate any of these executive powers to an Advisory Board. They could only confer advisory functions upon the Board which the Act specifically authorized them to do. But a little later, speaking of local authority regulations, he suggested that the usefulness of the Boards could be 'enhanced by means of prescribing various administrative functions for them'. If his first argument is correct, his second sug-

gestion would imply a change in legislation. And this is probably what he had in mind, because he subsequently remarked 'that it would be wise if a system could be devised whereby local authorities could, while still retaining some control, hand over a large measure of executive responsibility for the administration of their affairs in their own areas to the Native people themselves'. And this, he suggested might be done 'along the lines contemplated in the Urban Bantu Authorities Bill which was drawn up and published some years ago'.

7. This, however, was not exactly the view of the next speaker on the programme, Kingsley of Pretoria, who had evidently read his newspapers and therefore knew that the Government was giving renewed attention to the idea of tribal 'ambassadors' in the urban areas - a scheme mentioned by the Minister of Native Affairs as far back as 1954 when he addressed a gathering of tribal dignitaries at Sibasa.

In a paper, which for well over half of its meagre contents consisted of fully-quoted statutory provisions and verbatim reports of what Minister Verwoerd had told tribal chieftains (as safe as quoting the Gospel), Kingsley was for scrapping the present Advisory Boards - 'a farce (klug)' - and going all out for 'the development, with responsibility, of a (tribal) "ambassador" system'. The only alternative which he could possibly see, that of 'the integration of the Natives in the municipal administration', would never be tolerated by the European electorate. Kingsley finally gave his colleagues some free advice: 'If we note the lead and indications given by the Government it becomes clear that the most obvious future development will be in the direction of Bantu authorities connected with the various regional and territorial authorities, particularly the latter, which will be applicable to the cities'. While this may have sounded a bit obscure, the following is not: 'Local authorities should take note of this development, so that when the requisite legislation is placed on the Statute book they could apply and implement it to the best of their ability'.

8. What is this 'ambassador' system, and on what assumptions is it based? The underlying idea is to provide a direct link between the tribal authorities in the rural areas and their subjects in the urban areas for the dual purpose of keep-

ing up the flow of tribal cultural nourishment to the tribe's stray children, and of establishing an effective extension of 'home authority' outside the tribal homeland. The theory is that only this type of authority, sanctioned by the tribe and invested with the Chief's powers, is a 'natural' type of authority to which Bantu people, including urban dwellers, will not fail to respond. Even some academic people, like Pretoria University's Professor P.J. Coertze (ethnologist), are convinced that this kind of authority, 'developed and accepted in the course of hundreds of years', is capable of exerting a disciplinary power in modern city life which the 'modern type' of Bantu leader (such as African National Congress spokesmen) cannot equal - provided this power has the backing of both Government and the tribal authorities.

In the minds of Kingsley and many other urban administrators who appear to believe that the continuation (at least for the foreseeable future) of a cohesive Bantu culture in the urban areas is a realistic proposition, these tribal ambassadors would then presumably - and in some as yet undefined way - become the key figures of a transplanted and vigorous tribal authority in urban areas. Vested with the necessary 'natural' authority they would be the guarantee for the preservation of tribal culture (its ethnic differentiations suitably protected by 'ethnic grouping') until that day in the future (unforeseeable, even by official estimates) when the urban Bantu masses have been reabsorbed in the home provinces of Bantustan.

Now, every unprejudiced observer and student of urban African society must admit that the currents of 'tribalism' (that vague collective into which every vestige of traditional thought or action is thrown) do flow sometimes surprisingly strongly, even in some apparently established quarters of urban society. If, in some urban centres, even such a deeply-traditional and involved institution like a tribal initiation school is successfully organized (no mean feat of organisation even in the original environment) it is foolish to deny the existence and resilience of powerful elements of traditional Bantu culture; and where their urge is clearly capable of organized expression I can see no reason why this should not receive official recognition and support.

The trouble is that so many of those who are fascinated by this evidence of the viability of some traditional institutions (lobola is another example) are tempted to think that

'therefore' the complete pattern of Bantu culture, or at least large cohesive sections of it, can be indefinitely kept alive or resuscitated in an urban environment. In other words, they are inclined to give no or insufficient weight to equally strong evidence of new, and likewise viable, forms of institutional development. Let me immediately point out that their lack of realistic appraisal of the urban situation is not greater than that of their opponents on the other side of the ideological fence who, on the visible evidence of a changed African way of living, are only too prone to assume that therefore all matters traditional have disappeared, or all but disappeared, from the urban scene.

9. Up to this stage the Conference had merely nibbled at the edges of the problem, and without apparent appetite. It was University of South Africa's lecturer van As, who exposed it fully. It was not that his appetite was greater, but that his bite was much deeper. In an ably constructed and well documented paper he revealed the Native Advisory Board as merely one hot potato in a big stew of conflicting realities, the chief ingredients of which are: the permanence of an African urban population as a fact of physical observation; and their impermanence in terms of a dominant and official political philosophy.

Van As argued that, broadly speaking, the country's legislation from 1913 onwards recognized only two types of areas: Native areas and non-Native areas. The present urban locations and townships fall, in terms of the legislation, outside the concept of 'Native area', or in Dr. Verwoerd's words, are in 'European South Africa'.

Having created the opportunity for Africans to live their own lives and vest their permanent rights in the Native area (where European rights are restricted) the legislation of 1913, 1936 and 1945 restricted the rights of Africans in the non-Native areas, including the present urban areas. Van As therefore concluded that, 'since the Native's real national home is the Native areas the legislator regards the Native as a temporary visitor in the European urban areas and treats him as such'.

With this concept of temporariness the system of migrant labour is fully in accord; not, however, the (authorized) entry

of African women, which means families and 'a measure of permanence'. And permanent settlement, van As rightly points out, 'necessarily gives right to participation in local government and financial matters, and the requisition of established rights to land', in fact, the very principles which the legislator does not grant to urban Africans.

The prospect, so van As thinks, is 'that we shall in the near future find ourselves in an invidious checkmate position' - but, fortunately, 'this state of affairs has for some time past enjoyed the serious consideration of the Government and other institutions'.

Van As then tried to find effective alternatives to the present Advisory Board system, which he apparently considered out of step and ineffective. He did not succeed - or rather, he called off his search after he had come to the disquieting conclusion that his most promising clues were also the most compromising. But in the process he gave measure and substance to this inadvertent element of permanency of urban African society. With regard to African leadership he referred to an earlier (1957) observation of his Potchefstroom colleague, Professor Coetzee, that there had been a foreseeable change from the traditional hierarchical Bantu leadership in the heterogeneous urban communities, and the new black-white contact situation had begun to demand a general type of African leader who did not represent merely Pedi, Zulu or Xhosa interests. 'The urban Native gradually developed, recognized and accepted local groups of leaders or political groups'. It was this type of leader that was 'fairly generally' elected to the Advisory Boards and such leaders are in a sense opposed to the traditional tribal leader. (Kingley, in fact, had stated that their Advisory Board members 'fought (the tribal authorities) tooth and nail').

But van As' most valuable contribution was his survey of new types of African co-operate groups in the urban areas, spontaneously developed associations, some of them autonomous communities (regsgemeenskappe) representing a variety of common interests, sometimes narrow, sometimes very wide. These communities had their own rules of conduct, certain common material assets (money in the bank) and their own constituted authority, with executive and disciplinary powers. He mentioned the Mahodisana, Stokfel, and regional associations. (Mrs. Brandell, Nuffield Research Fellow working on the Rand,

later gave an impressive account of some well organized and widely influential women's associations).

Van As posed the question whether it would not be in the interest of urban administration to give some form of recognition and civic responsibility to such organisations, and he referred to an experiment along these lines in Wellington (Cape) in 1953, which had 'met with great success'.

But at this stage, when he had proved beyond a doubt the existence of a new permanent urban community with vigorously developing new and non-traditional institutions and concepts, van As found himself face to face with the other reality: the impermanence of this urban Bantu society in most of the cold print of the Union's statute books, and in the passionate conviction of the Government of the day. For to give real responsibility to this new type of leadership would be to recognize the observable reality of urban society, and to admit officially the fact of its permanence. And this would be incompatible with the reality-of-things-to-be, the ultimate State of Apartheid.

Having had a good shrewd look at this hot potato, van As dropped it back into the stew. Perhaps it would be best to cook up something which had both an advisory board, and a few tribal ambassadors in it.

10. The broth now being at least more or less identified, the members of the house closed in to sup.

Language of Brakpan noted that, though van As had set out to find alternatives to the Advisory Board system, he had virtually withdrawn his tentative proposals and therefore left no alternative at all. He (Language) suggested that, since the granting of any 'vested rights' to urban Africans was contrary to Government policy, the possible 'solution' would be to have these tribal ambassadors. "Without granting any powers to them they can be used by the Minister as ethnic representatives to maintain contact between the urban population and the local authorities".

This was too vague for Torres (Natal University) who suggested that the Conference should stop beating about the bush and face the realities of life.

This was done to some extent by Buitendag of Germiston, who pulled out a fairly full proposal which would at least ensure a more realistic representation of urban interests on the Advisory Board by introducing a system of small electoral wards with special and flexible provision for representation of such organized groups as teachers, mutual aid societies (e.g. Mahodisana), sports associations, as well as representation accredited to tribal authorities. Balanced representation could be achieved by applying a multiple vote system. He thought this could be done by local authorities without a change of legislation,

Durban's Bourquin remarked that the element of urban permanence was found not only in the large section of urbanized and detribalized Natives ('and no propaganda or legislation can tribalize them again'), but that migratory labour, too, was a permanent feature of the urban situation. The latter made it impossible as yet to think of the urban population as a completely separate Native element, and Advisory Board representation would have to recognize both detribalized and tribal elements. He thought that, if from Government side itself inroads had been made on the idea of impermanence, such as granting the Native a 30-year right to his urban house, then 'some say in urban affairs' could not be denied to him. Bourquin thought especially of the enforcement of urban regulations, as a suitable field for Africans to assume some administrative responsibility.

But Smit of Virginia felt uneasy about the idea of creating such 'an authority within the local authority', and for the same reason considered the Bantu Urban Authorities Bill 'rather unacceptable' (nogal onaanneemlik). He was rather intrigued with van As' new urban autonomous communities, and urged research into the possibility of their being made part (ingeskakel) of the administrator's apparatus. But he favoured social welfare as a field for African responsibility, 'with a measure of judicial authority applying Bantu law'. How these elements would have to be mixed, he did not say, but it 'would be a useful preparation for the future "Tomlinson Areas".'

Followed a spate of other opinions, some constructive, some negative. But all of them inconclusive, because no one could answer the basic question: to be permanent, or not to be permanent.

A Roodepoort Councillor spoke of the 'unquestionable (onaanvegbare) right of the European', the 'temporary urban Native', and the 'danger of giving more and more rights'. He was 'satisfied with the present Boards' (though his speech created the opposite impression) from whom he 'did not tolerate a negative attitude', only 'die regte gesindheid'.

His feelings were echoed by a colleague from Pretoria who described himself as 'a patient man but whose patience had proved insufficient when he had to deal with the Atteridgeville Advisory Board'. He was all for doing away with Advisory Boards, and bringing in the tribal ambassadors - but again 'only in advisory capacity'.

VanderByl Park supported Germiston in the belief that reconstituted Advisory Boards could be made to function.

A Kroonstad Councillor reported nothing but good and co-operation from his centre, thanks to an able administrator. His own advice, simplicity itself: teach the women how to look after their household and children and the men how to handle a pick. White sons and daughters should be told to roll up their sleeves, and 'die Naturel moet op sy plek gehou word'. After that, presumably, all would be well!

Northern Rhodesians spoke of their 'bold experiments' in partially integrated urban administration, and cheerfully hoped for the best. But a veteran of the late Alexandra Health Committee (itself an experiment in African local self-government) had another story: such amiable intelligent people, such faithful attendance at meetings, such interest in even small issues, and yet, no one could ever brief himself to tax his neighbours to wipe out a growing deficit, no one wanted to be responsible for a much needed change! Inefficiency was the order of the day, and 'dit het maar beroerd gegaan!', and Alexandra had to be taken over by white administration.

From Welkom came the opinion that the Advisory Board did not function as intended, perhaps because the Board's every recommendation was being ignored. A Salisbury Councillor shrewdly deduced that four prepared conference papers and a lot of discussion had offered no concrete solution. Yet the African must have some responsibility; and above all, he must have his beer, plentiful good wholesome Native beer (not white liquor, which was a bad thing) from the Municipal brewery,

good for the Native, bad for the shebeens, and the profits were wonderful for welfare work!

From Salisbury's beer, to inadequate Native wages (Odendaalsrus), from wage levels to a study of 'deeper causes of African bitterness', to the possible dispersal of industries in Native areas (Port Elizabeth), to the necessity of closer contact between industry and local authority (Chamber of Industries), and back again to the muddle of the Advisory Boards and the perfect summing up by Boksburg's Marais: 'the Advisory Boards have not failed and they have not succeeded'.

11. But it was also Marais who, in a long, bitter and not always wisely considered paper, unwittingly turned the spotlight back on the harassed urban administrator himself, and on one of the most tricky gadgets produced by the legislative workshop, Section ten of the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act, 1945.

Section ten lays down the stringent qualifications of the chosen few (or is it many?) who are allowed to remain as of right within the formidable urban fortress which the legislator has required the local authorities to build against the onslaught of the Bantu invasion. But like every other fortress, however formidable, this one, too, has a door, 'subsection (d)', and a doorkeeper, the urban administrator. Subsection (d) gives the administrator the discretionary power to admit virtually any African who would otherwise not have the right to come in. It is, in effect, the safety valve of this vast influx control apparatus, and as with most safety valves, the operator can adjust its weight when pressures vary.

The first paragraphs of Section ten contain by implication the legislator's reluctant admission of the existence of a permanent core of urban African population. For it deals not with the (single) migrant labourers, whose movements have other controls; but with the faithful, longtime employee, with the resident of many years urban standing, his wife, daughters and sons, that is, with the very people whose existence suggests family life and the prospect of further procreation in the urban environment. And subsection (d), by implication, is the narrow door through which particularly the otherwise ineligible and separated members of the family, could be joined inside the urban fortress.

The pressures exerted from both sides of this door - and on its keeper - are obviously considerable. The policy of Apartheid demands that the door be kept closed as tightly as possible. But the clamour of wives and children coming from the often exhausted rural homes to seek family union and economic security with husband and father in town, can be so insistent that the keeper cannot help opening the door. The local authorities, knowing that it costs many times more to house a family than to house a working bachelor, would for this reason like to keep the door shut. But they themselves are under pressure from urban employers, industrial, commercial and domestic. They, too, are therefore often not inclined to insist on a too rigid control. And in this situation of pressure and counter-pressure, stands the urban administrator, who is the employee of the local authority, the licensee of the Minister, the servant of the European public and the protector of his Bantu charges. Being the man whom the legislator has given the power of discretion, he is the inevitable scapegoat whenever there is cause for dissatisfaction. And in this inherently conflicting situation, there are always dissatisfied parties.

12. A representative of one of the dissatisfied parties, ex-President of the Federated Chambers of Industries Atkinson, had spoken before Marais, spoke, and given a quietly reasoned account of industry's troubles in the face of a too rigid and far from efficiently organized labour supply policy. Atkinson's main argument was that the economic welfare of the country depended largely on the development of secondary industries and these could not develop without a well-organized and selective labour supply. Atkinson knew that urban administration handles only one end of this aspect and that the major part of this involved mechanism is controlled by the labour branch of the Native Affairs Department. But because the whole mechanism is a source of exasperation to industry, Atkinson apportioned part of the blame to local administration, and strongly pleaded for the closest contact between industry and local authorities in order to iron out at least part of the snags.

Returning to Mr. Marais. He is a veteran administrator and probably a very capable one (he was the Institute's first President), occupying one of the senior positions on the turbulent Rand. He must have had a fair share of the many difficulties I have described. At last year's Conference at any rate, he had bitterly complained about his inability to cope

with the flood of Native women from the rural areas, but received little sympathy from Native Affairs representative van Rensburg (labour chief) who had told him that the answer to the problem was really dead-simple: under Section ten of the Act, Marais could merely refuse to write out any permits to get rid of them. It was the type of answer to fill an administrator with despair.

Marais believes in Apartheid and has little patience with anyone or anything that obstructs the realization of Apartheid's ultimate and complete aim. In this respect he is not alone among his colleagues. The vast majority of the urban administrators at the Conference are probably supporters of the Apartheid principle, although of these again the vast majority seemed to have no idea of how this could be carried out in respect of the urban areas. Nor, probably, did Marais know. But Marais was at least prepared to stage an open fight with the obstructionists of Apartheid. For this purpose he first swept the ring with two none too effective arguments. The first was of an economic nature: the vast cost of African housing which he foresaw would be an intolerable burden on the white taxpayer and a highly risky capital investment.

Secondly, the urban Bantu communities are to Marais but breeding places for crime and immorality, and any further influx means but more crime and more rampant immorality.

Apparently convinced that he had now soundly established his case on both economic and moral grounds, and that the existing legislation (Labour Regulation Act of 1911 with the Regulations of 1952; the Native (Urban Areas) Consolidation Act of 1945) could effectively stop this economic and moral decay, if only their provisions were not being deliberately sabotaged, Marais began to attack the many saboteurs.

He accused the industrialist (the 'largest employer') of pretending to seek a stable labour force but actually preferring fresh labour from the Reserves instead of making use of the established urban labour pool. And if this pool was found to be full of tsotsies, it was the industrial employer's responsibility to help rehabilitate the tsotsies. (Marais' Boksburg is apparently preparing a juvenile employment scheme just for this purpose).

He accused local authorities of 'deficient control' in the past and of sometimes even encouraging urbanization.

He spoke scathingly of those of his colleagues who 'slavishly follow the policy of encouraging every Native employed in their area to become urbanized and to provide him with accommodation',

He blamed by implication the local ratepayer with his 'love of ease' for wanting a domestic servant; the City Councillor for giving assistance in obtaining the necessary licence for such servant; and the servant herself for coming to town in order to 'escape parental control and tribal discipline', and be 'attracted by the dissipation' of urban life, while her licentiousness with 'two to four husbands per month' resulted in children being born and more family houses (costing so much money) being built.

Marais himself may be accused of throwing his punches wildly and often not even in the right direction. (He ignored, for instance, the tragic and compelling reasons why the African had to leave his exhausted homeland for urban employment or family reunion). But he cannot, as so many other professed supporters of the Apartheid idea, be accused of an unwillingness to make sacrifices. In fact, in his ardour to stop this urban influx at all cost, he was perfectly prepared to sacrifice his own position as a responsible administrator. Realizing that it was the urban administrator's powers of discretion under Section ten of the Act, on which the 'success or failure' of influx control largely depended, Marais proposed that these powers be 'completely curtailed'. Not satisfied with even this, he further proposed the establishment, within the State Department of Native Affairs, of an Inspectorate charged with 'conducting inspections', without consulting the local authorities, 'with a view to obtaining that essential information which results from defective administration and which is not reflected in the official returns'. This Gestapo Marais wanted primarily 'in order to save millions of pounds of unnecessary Bantu housing'.

For good measure he also asked for a Commission of Enquiry (assisted by the proposed Inspectorate) to go into the 'rate and methods of urbanization in the larger towns and cities', and its advantages and disadvantages for European, Bantu and national economy.

All this (and Heaven too?), Marais wanted his colleagues to 'brave with the courage of our conviction and without political or other bias'.

13. It is difficult to assess what impression Marais' address made on his colleagues, because only one of them (Bourquin of Durban) really took him to task. But I am inclined to believe Methewson of Benoni, who cautiously ventured that Marais 'perhaps did not speak for the majority'. I have reason to believe that Marais purposely exaggerated in order to provoke reaction, but that he was genuinely surprised and a little upset at the kind of reaction he got.

I'd like to think that Marais' main purpose was merely to illustrate the impossibly difficult and hazardous task of the urban administrator in doing what retiring President Viljoen had defined as the 'carrying out the policy prescribed for him and applying the laws and regulations presented to him', and that he considered the difficulties so unsurmountable and the odds so unfair that he threw out a challenge to Government to try and do the job itself. But this, surely, did not warrant his sweeping and ill-balanced generalizations, and above all, his implied accusation of sabotage and bad faith on the part of industry, local authorities and urban administration. Or did Marais really think that the cause of urban administration could be served by an abject admission of guilt and a slavish (to use his own word) surrender to Government dictates?

An unhappy little incident, just after he had spoken, seems to support this dismal impression. On his feet to propose a vote of thanks to the speaker, Ferreira of Vereeniging formally requested that the Conference 'withdraw the use of the term African' in the English speeches and translations during the Conference, because 'Parliament had made a ruling on this point'.

His request at first appeared to be no more than a discourtesy to his colleagues from over the Limpopo who, Ferreira suggested, should 'do in the land of the Romans as the Romans do'. But when President Rogers (Cape Town) refused to allow discussion on this point, Ferreira revealed the real reason for his request. Mentioning the presence of the 'four senior officials of the Native Affairs Department' in the hall (who

had been taking copious notes of everything without saying a word themselves), he expressed the fear that the use of this taboo-word 'would seriously strain their relations' with this Department of State. This was the lowest ebb to which morale had yet slunk at this Conference.

It took an outsider, industrialist Wakely Smith, to turn the tide. Pointedly addressing himself to the Native Affairs Department representatives, he lambasted them for their 'utterly inadequate and utterly inefficient' labour supply apparatus; then he angrily took Marais to task.

But it was Durban's Bourquin who retrieved the moral issues which Marais had been prepared to sacrifice. Indignantly rejecting Marais' 'shocking proposals' regarding the restrictions of the administrator's discretionary powers and the state 'Inspectorate', which would turn the urban administrators' Institute into 'an Institute of rubber stamp' and its senior officials into a collection of mere 'automatons and clerks', Bourquin resented that local authorities should be blamed for the swollen urban situation when Government itself had not sufficiently played its part.

He regarded the exercise of discretionary powers under Section ten one of the most important responsibilities of the urban administrator; and since the Legislator had shown this confidence in local authorities and their principal administrative officers, they should proudly protect these powers, and guard against their being taken away.

If there were instances of abuse of these powers, or of slackness or sabotage (Bourquin said) the officers concerned should be removed, but not the powers pertaining to their office. And for these safeguards there was already ample provision in the existing legislation.

Bourquin said he welcomed inspectors (for which statutory provision likewise already exists) but not as an admission of the local authority's failure to do a competent job.

To a Conference, which had sadly drifted into a spiritless search for appeasement on all fronts, Bourquin's challenging speech brought back a much-needed sense of proportion, of high responsibility and of proud self-respect.

It was left to Mathewson of Benoni, patiently to tick off the many points on which Marais could improve his judgment. One of these was that Bantu urbanization was not per se the evil thing Marais had made it out to be, and at any rate a natural development in all industrializing countries. And with regard to Marais' concern about the growing volume of this process, Mathewson thought he remembered that the Minister of Native Affairs himself had admitted that the urban flow would probably increase for another 20 years before it could be contained as a stable labour source.

Summary:

I have found it difficult to summarize this Conference. Unlike the S.A.B.R.A. Conference earlier this year (attended by many members of this Institute of Administration) where there emerged a limited but clear line of purposeful thought and action, the present occasion did little more than expose a tangle of conflicting or confused ideas, which all but a very few were unable (and afraid) to tackle with the imagination and vigour it required.

Perhaps the most paralysing single factor obstructing incisive thought is the maddening uncertainty about the future of the present urban Bantu society. Should the administrator accept the permanence which the observable reality indicates; or the temporariness which Government policy professes to dictate?

Even the many who ardently believe in the ideal of ultimate Apartheid cannot deny that the immediate and foreseeable reality demands measures of a more than temporary character. And those who are inclined to believe that a temporariness which - by Government admission, and as implied in the first paragraphs of Section ten of the current Act, and the vast housing schemes, extends beyond the foreseeable future - has become a fetish, dare not yet accept permanence as a working hypothesis for their constructive plans. For is not a fetish a thing of mystical power, something one dare not question for fear of possible retribution?

And so the paralysis continues, for one cannot seriously build up a framework for a growing and maturing urban Bantu society, unless one has a reasonable certainty of not having to pull it down again.

But then, one may finally ask, is it not possible that the conflict of permanence versus impermanence is itself a bit unreal, or at least not very relevant? Is it not true that, also in the remote future of Bantustan, there are planned towns and villages nourished by industry and trade, and governed by Bantu local authorities? And should not these, essentially non-rural, authorities have some prior experience of the management of urban affairs?

And if the answer is 'yes' to all these questions, of what relevance, indeed, is this nagging uncertainty about permanence? Is not the real problem to teach an urbanizing Bantu population the elements of civic responsibility and urban administration, regardless of whether they continue to live in the towns and cities of 'European South Africa' under white supervision, or in the towns and villages of Bantustan under tribal supervision?

As far as I know, the Conference passed no resolutions. This is not surprising. There can be little opportunity for constructive thought in a house divided in which every member is preoccupied with his footwork on the tightrope.

J.F. HOLLEMAN

DIRECTOR
INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL RESEARCH

I.S.R.
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DURBAN.



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