

THE TASK OF THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE NORTH

ABRIDGED REPRODUCTION OF ADDRESS DELIVERED TO THE FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE EASTERN DISTRICT ASSOCIATION OF TUATA BY H. W. E. NTSANWISI, LECTURER IN THE DEPARTMENT OF BANTU LANGUAGES AT THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF THE NORTH

In his address to the Eastern District Association of Tuata on the 16th December last year, the speaker gave a broad, but clear outline of the task of the Univer-



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sity College of the North. Commencing he said:

"On the 2nd of March 1960 the University College of the North was officially proclaimed open as a shrine of learning for the Bantu people of the North. Prior to that date wide publicity was given to the novelty of the buildings which were gradually taking shape. A lot of unbecoming epithets were hurled at them, but after the college had been declared open and after careful scrutiny, much praise was given to the buildings. Mr. John Mosotho was the first student to be enrolled for the B.Sc. course, taking Mathematics, Applied Maths. and Physics as subjects. Right from the start Professor dr. Potgieter, Rector of the College, and his staff took their work seriously. To him and his staff the work constitutes a great challenge and they are dedicating their lives to establishing a university which in course of time will be inferior to none in the world."

Continuing he said:

"I want to state that we are academic men and not politicians as some of you may think. We see our way clearly ahead of us. Ours is a life of intellectual seclusion dedicated as it is to the promotion of the Humanities and Sciences as becomes all University men. No-one has a right to judge us in advance and all we want from our critics is fairness. We know the exacting demands of university disciplines, we know the aspirations of the Rector and the Bantu people in as far as the destiny of this college is concerned, and we as academic men, are prepared to play our rôle towards the attainment of that laudable Eldorado. We shall strive day by day to translate our vision into a living reality.

To my mind the University College of the North was established to satisfy a

real need, i.e. to provide a university education to the young men and women of the North. It must stand as a centre of learning and research amongst the people it intends to serve. The buildings are spacious and modern in all respects. I can state without any fear of contradiction that many a European university would only be too proud to include our buildings within its campus. Because I have visited London, Oxford, Lausanne, Neuchatel, Zurich, Basle and Rome, I know that the crying need of many a European university is lecturing accommodation and an atmosphere conducive to learning which even Oxford lacks today. Let me hasten to emphasize that though buildings are a necessary corollary to successful teaching and research, they are not in themselves the mainstay of university life. Of paramount importance is what takes place behind and within those walls. The great task of the university and the university teacher is to guide, aid, inspire and to provide the student with all the necessary facilities in his search for truth. That is precisely what we are trying to do here.

Furthermore it is our task to prepare our students to occupy their rightful place in the world of learning and in the community to which they belong. An adequate library in which all the important sources of reference can be obtained, is provided. Students are inspired to acquire the spirit of service and co-operation so that they can be able to play their part in the life of the communities to which they belong. We strive to inculcate in our students those qualities which go to make an accomplished and a refined man. Through industry and scholarship we try to cultivate in our students a correct attitude towards life."

Speaking about the academic aspect and objectives of the college, the speaker said:

"It is the declared aim of the College of the North to train and inspire its students to seek for the truth, to create an intelligensia steeped in the great university tradition. We strive to foster men and women who will by research and reason challenge ignorance and the be-



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trayal of truth; who, by their intellectual and spiritual training will be able to extract the particular out of the general and the universal out of the particular in any complex context. The aim we have set ourselves is similar to that of all universities the world over, i.e. the intellectual development of man, and assisting him to bring out the best that he is capable of. Our task, however, does not end there because our ultimate aim is to revitalise, respiritualise and canalise the intellectual potential of the community in which our college is situated.

In order to fulfil these broad and basic principles, our different faculties will specialise in specific research projects in their different fields of work within the community, and thus endeavour to embark on specific projects of service and enlightenment. Social scientists trained in sociological, anthropological and psychological principles and methods will join in solving the social problems within the community. Educationists will be trained to grapple

with ignorance and the attendant educational problems of the community. Economists will be trained to solve the economic problems of their communities and to see how best the economic potential of the region can be tapped and systematised for the good of the people. In order to provide lucrative occupations for young and deserving students, courses in Pharmacology and Broadcasting will be introduced from 1961. It is also our hope to consolidate the work of the Department of Bantu Languages by providing more staff and delving deeper into the problems of Bantu Linguistics and Literature. A well-equipped laboratory and a good library assist our students and staff in their work.

The staff of the University College of the North is composed of men and women steeped in the university tradition — nurtured in the universities here and overseas—and whose proclaimed task is to introduce and consolidate the Humanities and Sciences to the students in their charge and to synchronise these with the best that there is in the great pool of human culture to which every human being has a right of access. Our curriculum proves that conclusively. Our staff is composed of both White and Bantu. Here Bantu and White meet on an intellectual plane. This augurs well for the future of this country. At the head of this establishment is the Rector, Prof. E. F. Potgieter, a man with a mission as well as a vision and a man who has a keen insight into our problems."

Speaking about the many criticisms hurled at the address of the college, the speaker declared emphatically:

"I want to make it abundantly clear that we accept fair comment and criticism and we shall always place all criticisms under the intellectual microscope of the University man and sift the destructive from the constructive."

An appeal was made to the audience for their assistance, co-operation, spiritual and goodwill.

"It is your university college. It needs your support. It is your duty to provide it with matriculated students, well

grounded in the basic principles and applications of the arts and sciences. It is your task and duty to create the necessary climatic conditions for its well being. Assured of this we can go forward to success in the knowledge that the people who matter most to us are one with us in the great work that we have been charged to provide for them."

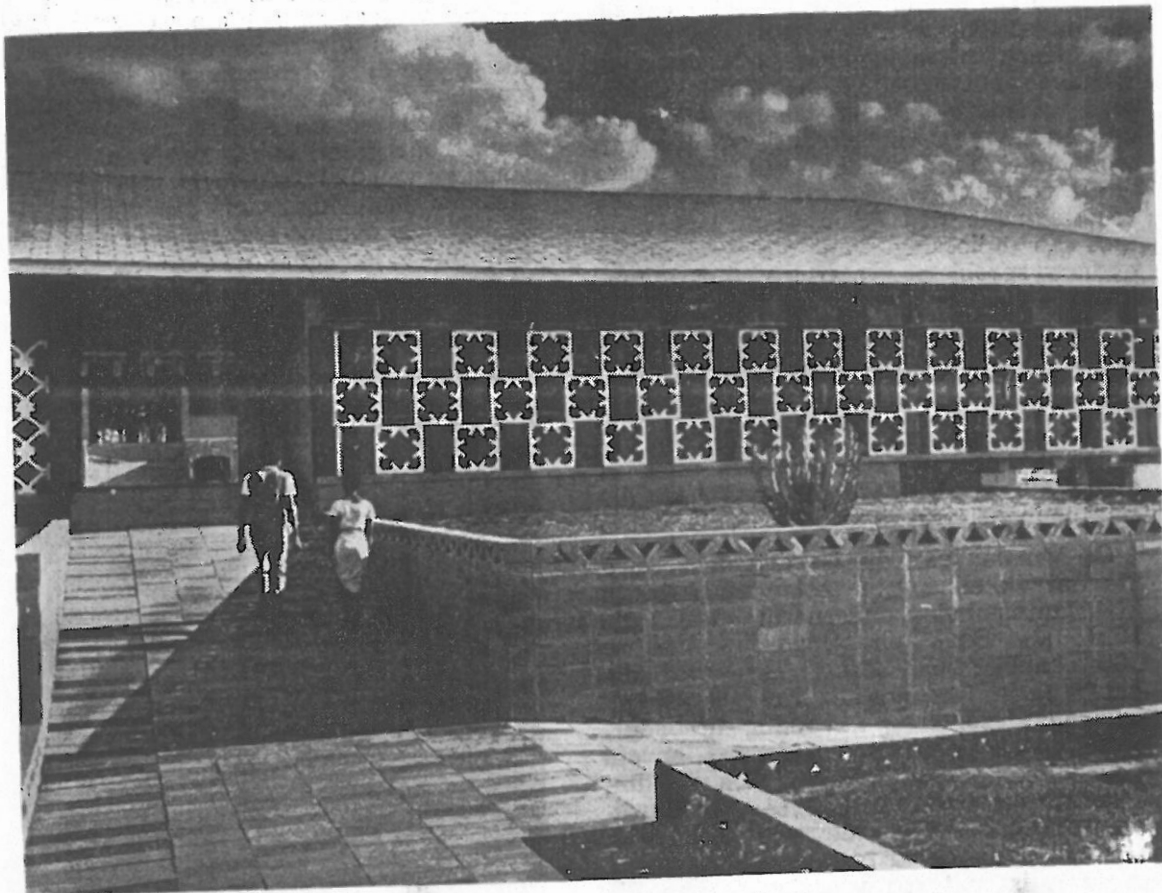
Teachers were urged to prepare themselves academically for yet greater and higher responsibilities. He believes in them because the Bantu has always proved himself capable of achieving anything to which he devotes his time and energy. He quoted Milton: "Tomorrow to fresh woods and pastures new."

Concluding, he said:

"We have an ambitious programme. We do not aim at producing academic idealists only, but we also want to produce men and women who will be worthy of their country. Men who, with the aid of their learning will strive to improve the lot of their fellowmen. We aim at producing men and women with a sound philosophy of life capable of applying their philosophy and learning to solve the many baffling problems which face the world today. Men who will make a contribution to the common pool of knowledge instead of always drinking from it without any worthwhile returns. We aim at producing men who, to borrow from the poet, will leave 'foot prints on the sands of time.'

We live in Africa at a critical and fascinating time. Africa is brimful of unsolved questions. It has natural problems as well as man-made problems. It has controversial policies, hardships, tragedy and huge potentials of natural resources. All these need to be solved and tapped. They need to be placed under the scrutiny of the untarnished intellectual search-light. What an incentive for young South Africa! The very first item in any programme for a happy, virile and healthy people is Education. The University College of the North has been built to fill that need."

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