

Notes and News

Société d'Études Camerounaises

WE are permitted to quote from a letter received from Madame Dugast, Secretary of the Société d'Études Camerounaises, dated 31 July 1944, from Douala:

' . . . Nous travaillons tous dans de très grandes difficultés. Nous sommes animés de bonne volonté et nous intéressons à ce qui nous entoure dans bien des domaines; mais nous sommes pris dans un tel réseau de travaux professionnels, rendus d'autant plus lourds que les devoirs de la guerre nous ont laissés très peu nombreux sur le territoire, que nous ne pouvons réaliser que très peu de travaux personnels. . . . Le Révérend Père Stoll, de la Mission Catholique, mène le front de vastes enquêtes linguistiques, d'une part, et de musique indigène d'autre part. Il est de très longue date dans le pays et travaille dans une zone très difficile et particulièrement mystérieuse aux Européens, dans le pays dit "Grassfield" occupé par les populations Bam'leke très fermées.

' . . . Au début de la guerre, j'étais seule à être ici en mission de notre Institut d'Ethnologie de Paris. Notre Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Laboratoire de Botanique, avait aussi un chargé de mission, M. Henri Jacques Félix, qui accomplissait un travail immense. Mais il est devenu soldat dès le début de la guerre et a quitté le pays. Il nous a confié, en partant, ses bagages scientifiques: ses caisses de collections botaniques sont maintenant conservées et entretenues dans les laboratoires de l'Institut Français d'Afrique Noire de Dakar. . . .

' . . . Quant à mon travail personnel, tel qu'il est, il est incomplet, car il ne m'est pas possible de terminer des travaux sans pouvoir faire auparavant des lectures de bibliothèque. A côté de mes notes ethnographiques, j'ai une étude de la vie économique de ces familles d'agriculteurs parmi lesquelles je vivais dans cette brousse retirée: vie économique journalière, très simple: travail, production, consommation. J'ai pu rédiger mes notes sur l'agriculture, et je pense que nous allons les imprimer ici. J'ai aussi pu mener à bien l'observation de toutes les techniques matérielles.

' J'ai fait des observations sur une année entière de la nourriture consommée par six familles, toujours les mêmes, qui ont bien voulu travailler avec moi pendant douze mois complets. Ce sont ces familles aussi dont j'ai pu observer tous les travaux agricoles, jour après jour, et dont j'ai pu mesurer les récoltes.

' Enfin, je suis plongée dans mon étude de la langue parlée par cette population Banen. Langue bantu magnifique, d'une richesse extraordinaire. Mais ce dernier travail n'est pas terminé, je le poursuis encore, ici même à Douala, avec des indigènes de cette population. . . . Cette étude linguistique repose sur plusieurs centaines de pages de contés, de récits, de proverbes et de devinettes notés sur place.'

Social Security in the Union of South Africa

A SOCIAL Security Committee was appointed in January 1943, in pursuance of a recommendation of the Social and Economic Planning Council, to consider 'existing social services and social security arrangements and to recommend a scheme for the future involving any necessary extension of the existing measures or the introduction of new measures . . . having due regard to the productive capacity of the Union and its possible increase, to existing facilities for preventive and curative work and to necessary safeguards to preserve individual responsibility, initiative and thrift'.

This Committee has now published its Report.¹ At the outset the Report lays down

¹ Report of the Social Security Committee and Report No. 2 of the Social and Economic Planning Council, entitled *Social Security, Social Services and the*

National Income, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1944. pp. 112. 6s.

certain limitations in regard to its terms of reference, pointing out that social security is not equated with general economic security, but is confined to 'the provision of benefits in cash or kind, at levels to be determined from time to time with due regard to the current economic capacity of the country' to certain groups and individuals who, 'for reasons other than indolence are temporarily or permanently incapable of supporting themselves'.

The Report describes at some length the existing schemes of social assistance and insurance, and analyses the present rates of benefit and the expenditure involved. It is pointed out that 'the existing social security programme is deficient in scope and coverage' and, further, that the rates of benefit are inadequate. The Committee therefore recommends the extension of the existing schemes to cover more risks and to include additional population groups, in particular, coloured persons, Asiatics, and Natives.

It is pointed out that the position of the Native population under any Social Security scheme needs special consideration. Under existing schemes, though financial assistance is given to the blind, Natives are not eligible for other invalidity grants, there is no provision for Natives in old age, Native children are, in effect if not in theory, excluded from maintenance grants, and Native labourers from unemployment benefit. These exclusions have been based on the assumption that native custom and conditions of life in the Reserves provide for the maintenance of dependants and for the care of the old and sick. But nowadays over-crowding, together with primitive methods of farming and low wages, are making this more and more difficult; the Committee takes the view that 'this approach is based on a misconception of the living standards of the Reserve Natives and of the ability of the family group there or in town to provide for the children of absent relatives or for old people and invalids' and that there is a clear case for the provision of benefits for native peasantry and landless Natives in the Reserves in cases of old age and invalidity. With regard to native farm workers on European-owned land, and Natives employed on contracts of service in the Reserves and not possessing land, the Committee considers that changing conditions make it desirable for such Natives to be included in a Social Security scheme. As, however, the present development and circumstances of many such Natives makes a universal compulsory scheme impracticable, the Committee proposes that any such Natives as desire to do so should have the option of participating in a comprehensive social security scheme.

The position of urbanized Natives is also discussed. Hitherto urban Natives have been excluded from old age pensions and virtually excluded from other benefits in view of the difficulty of applying any statutory distinction between urban and rural Natives. The Committee, however, considers that a distinction must be drawn between permanently urbanized Natives, dependent on earnings, and temporary workers from farms and Reserves; it proposes, therefore, that a test should be devised, taking into account length of residence in a town, possession of a rural allotment, habitual domicile of the family, and that permanently urbanized Natives should also participate, if they wish, in a comprehensive scheme.

The specific proposals of the Committee are embodied in two schemes, one (A) to be applied to Europeans, coloured persons, Asiatics, and such permanently urbanized Natives, native farm-workers, and native employees in the Reserves as elect to join; the other (B) to apply to other Natives, comprising the bulk of the Bantu population.

Scheme A includes the extension of old age, blindness, and invalidity pensions to all beneficiaries, the provision of unemployment and sickness benefit to all employees other than farm-workers and domestic servants in private households; the extension of maternity allowances to other groups of female employees than those hitherto entitled to them, excluding however, for the present, farm-workers and domestic workers on farms or in private households; the provision of maternity grants in cash to all women eligible, including

wives of urban Natives, native farm workers, and Natives employed in the Reserves. A limited scheme for children's and dependants' allowances is also included, but the Committee records its opinion that the financial resources of the Union are not at present sufficient for adequate allowances covering all children. A detailed exposition of the scheme describes proposals for benefits to needy mothers of young children, recovery benefits to persons suffering from tuberculosis or leprosy, removal grants to persons directed to work away from their homes, and attendance allowances to old age and invalidity pensioners.

Basic rates of cash benefits are worked out, applicable respectively to Europeans, Asiatics and coloured persons, and Natives, in cities, towns, and rural areas. The rates payable to urban Natives are to be two-thirds of the coloured persons' benefit rates in cities and towns; rural Natives will receive benefits corresponding to the proposed rural rates for coloured persons and Asiatics.

Scheme B, applying to the bulk of the Native population, will provide benefits in cases of old age, blindness, and invalidity, payable partly in cash and partly in rations; maternity benefits to female employees in shops and factories, and recovery benefits in cases of tuberculosis and leprosy, will be maintained, but the relative rates of benefit will be placed on a uniform basis by applying the rural benefit rates applicable to such Natives as may join scheme A. The rates of benefit payable to farm Natives and Natives employed in the Reserves are to be the same as the proposed rural rates for coloured persons and Asiatics, i.e. old age and invalidity pensions of £18 per annum and dependants' allowance of not less than £6 per annum for a child.

The Committee points out that 'unemployment benefits are no substitute for a positive economic policy' and urges that the placement service already existing should be perfected and extended to Natives and that facilities for training should be provided. Finally, the Committee puts on record its conviction that 'in order that the general standard of living may be raised and benefit rates under the scheme lifted to a minimum needs basis, parallel action must be taken to increase the productivity of the Union's population'.

Conditions of Employment of Natives on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines

THE Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission was appointed in February 1943 to inquire into and report on 'the remuneration and conditions of employment for Natives on the Witwatersrand Gold Mines, with special reference to the economic requirements of such Natives . . . having due regard to provision made for them apart from wages; the effect of any modification of Native wage rates on the Mining Industry and the economic position of the country generally, and the effect of any such modification on the extent and conditions of employment of Europeans and non-Europeans in Gold Mining and other industries throughout the Union'.¹ The Report recently published by this Commission begins by pointing out the importance of the Gold Mining industry to the economy of the Union generally, while emphasizing the fact that the gold of the Witwatersrand is a wasting asset, that the number of persons employed in the industry will decrease, and that any increase or decrease of working costs will affect the capacity of the industry to offer employment. After a brief sketch of the organization of the industry, the Report goes on to consider the Native Labour Force of the Gold Mines. The methods of recruiting Native Labour are described and certain allegations made against the recruiting system are examined; the conclusions arrived at by the Commission are that there is no evidence that freedom of contract by the Natives is in any way interfered with, and that there is little possibility of a recruit not being fully informed of the conditions of the contract which he is concluding.

After describing the composition of the Native Labour Force, and setting out the present

¹ *Report of the Witwatersrand Mine Natives' Wages Commission*, Government Printer, Pretoria, 1944, pp. iii + 61. 6s.