

Notes and News

Education in East Africa.

THE report,¹ published in September 1937, of the Commission appointed to inquire into the provision for higher education of natives in East Africa, represents the first attempt in British territory to construct a coherent system of educational institutions planned with a view to the needs of the communities which they are to serve, such as has characterized for some time the federation of French colonies in West Africa. The essential problem is defined in terms which recall the famous phrase 'Instruire la masse et dégager l'élite'—'to encourage the able few without rendering the many unsuited to the life that awaits them'. The primary need of East Africa at the present time is stated to be the improvement of health and agriculture, to be achieved 'through the general education of Africans and by training in sufficient numbers qualified African experts'.

Since these two aspects of education are complementary the Commission has found it necessary to review the whole range of educational institutions in the territories under consideration—Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, and Nyasaland. As the most promising type of primary school at present in existence they quote the Native Administration Schools in Tanganyika, which take an active part in the work of health and maternity centres, afforestation and anti-erosion measures, and training in agriculture and animal husbandry. The Commission recommend the extension of these schools in other territories under the auspices of the Native Authorities, as an important means of 'giving reality and responsibility to the system of Indirect Rule'. As the guiding principle to be followed at this stage of education, they state that 'primary education must be in contact with life and must be easily capable of being completed by life: Africa must avoid a primary education which is only capable of being completed by a secondary education'. Education of this type should be universally available.

In secondary education, on the other hand, preparation for a further, specialized training is the predominant aim, and the extent of provision to be made is closely connected with the numbers who are to be admitted to professional courses. In this connexion the Commission fully recognize the desirability of relating supply to demand so as to avoid the creation of an educated unemployed class: they estimate, however, that the various branches of government service could with advantage absorb Africans with professional training in numbers sufficient to justify a considerable expansion

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of the provision for such training. To these must be added the number who could find openings in commercial employment; but the Commission disagree with the French view that higher education should be strictly limited to the actual numbers for whom employment can be guaranteed, and hold that 'it should not be laid down as a principle that educational facilities must be limited by the number of posts available'. They urge also that any expansion in higher education for boys must be accompanied by a development in girls' secondary education which is in universal demand among Africans themselves.

It is proposed to establish in Uganda a Higher College of East Africa, with departments of Arts, Science, Agriculture, Medicine, Education, Veterinary Science, and Engineering, which should be open to students from the whole of East Africa, including Indians and Goans, and which should be able in a few years' time to attain a status that will justify the title of University College of East Africa. The detailed discussion of the various courses of training in these subjects at present given, and proposals for further development, will interest educational specialists in all African territories, as will the proposed constitution of the University College. Where technical training is concerned the adaptation of the syllabus to local needs has never been a matter of controversy; but the assumption that, because an Arts course is non-utilitarian, its content should be determined not by local interests but by the intrinsic cultural value of certain subjects, has resulted in an emphasis on the history, languages, and literature of Europe to the exclusion of anything African, which most modern experts regard as exaggerated. In this connexion the Report urges the importance of establishing a school of African studies at an early stage. These should include African languages, social anthropology with special reference to the changing conditions of the present day, African law, custom and administration, and economics as applied to Africa. This department should provide courses of training for native authorities and present or prospective officials of native administrations.

With the definition here adopted of the aims of education all students of African cultures, who have had an opportunity of seeing how much of the energy put into disseminating the European school curriculum in Africa is wasted effort, must agree. Certain questions, however, give one pause. How much do we at present know of the local needs to which the Committee urge that education must be adapted? Is it true to say that 'former habits of life and conduct have been blurred beyond recognition'? Is it not essential for the authority who seeks to give his educational programme a bearing on local needs to know exactly where this is or is not true, in a sociological as well as a geographical sense? It is true that the African admires and seeks to emulate the European's 'control over the forces of nature and the circumstances of life'. But does he necessarily accept the assumption made by the European that *all* the ways of European life are

better than his own? And in technical questions such as that of agricultural method, has not the European sometimes had to recognize that this is not so?

Again, the courses in African economics and sociology proposed for the new University College represent a key to the understanding of the world around them that would be a boon to many a student of a European University. But where is the material on which such courses are to be given? Of how many tribes in the area which this college is to serve have we enough knowledge to give even a bare outline of the subjects mentioned?

The Commission's recommendations presuppose a knowledge of the existing circumstances of African peoples which at present is simply not there: and if they are implemented on the basis of assumptions rather than of ascertained facts there is a real danger that the result may prove as inadequate to actual needs as the early systems of education whose insufficiency has now been recognized. (*Communicated by* DR. L. P. MAIR.)

History Text-Books for Schools in British Tropical Africa.

AN Editorial Board, of which Professor R. Coupland is chairman, has been formed for the study of problems connected with the teaching of history in African schools in areas under British control and for the production of suitable text-books. A leaflet published by the Board says that although the need for such books is urgent the time has not yet come to plan or write text-books for a completely articulated African school history course, and that at present a large variety of experimental work is required, which should make it possible to determine the lines along which an African history course should proceed.

It will be generally agreed that a fundamental object of instruction in history is to help the pupil to a better understanding of the world in which he lives, by showing him how the present grew out of the past and how the two are interrelated. The world of the African is his own tribe or people, the colony or other political unit in which his people lives, as well as other parts of Africa belonging to the same European Power as his own country, and in a wider sense, the whole continent of Africa, in the political and racial problems of which young Africans take an increasing interest. Since, however, Africa is being reshaped by the white man, African students will also have to understand not only the outward phenomena of European civilization, but also the spiritual forces on which they are based, and this can be learned to a great extent from history.

The first step should be to make the pupil feel at home in his own surroundings and their cultural past. He should not be given the impression that his country and people and what has happened to them in days gone by are not worth serious consideration. Such a preliminary course should start with 'Africa before the White man came'. Practically every tribe or group of tribes has traditions concerning its own past. These should be scientifically