

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Due to my impending departure for research on the 1984 Botswana Elections (on which I shall have something to say in a future issue) and pressing administrative tasks having to do with the 1985 budget, I was unable to spend as much time as I would have liked at the 1984 Annual Meeting in Melbourne. However, I note in the Minutes of the AGM (printed in this issue) that there were several suggestions for the Newsletter, including a "letters to the editor section" and a listing of current research by graduate students on African topics. I would be delighted to include both of these on a regular basis. All that is needed is for members who have something to say to write and for supervisors of African research to provide the information. I would also like to see contributions similar to Penelope Hetherington's very useful survey of African Studies in Western Australia which appeared in an earlier issue and John Omer-Cooper's interim report on African Studies in New Zealand in the present issue.

I would welcome other suggestions and contributions. The Newsletter has grown considerably since the early days of the Association, largely due to the support it has received from the membership. I would like to see it grow further and can envision the day when it becomes, or is supplemented by, something more like a journal.

In the meantime, I would like to see individual issues become weightier and occasionally to produce issues which are particularly devoted to a single theme, while not excluding the usual features. At some point during 1985 I would like to have an issue which concentrates on the region's reaction to the current drought crises in Africa, which I think underscores the appropriateness of the Association's response to the Jackson Committee Report. I extend a particular invitation to those involved with voluntary and government organisations active in drought relief in Africa to provide information on what their agencies are doing. I also invite suggestions from any member who would be interested in serving as "guest editor" for other theme issues.

Perhaps these proposals will at least provoke some "letters to the editor".

Finally, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to those members of the Association who have made possible the continued growth of the Newsletter through either their own contributions or the influence they have brought to bear on others. I commend their example to the rest of the membership.

Jim Polhemus

EIGHTH ANNUAL AFSAAP CONFERENCE, CANBERRA, 1985

The 1984 AFSAAP conference at Trinity College hardly seems to have passed and already preliminary planning is in progress for the eighth annual AFSAAP conference to be held at Burgmann College, the Australian National University, Canberra. Having consulted the various university calendars for 1985, airline flight schedules, and juggled to avoid clashes with the other major academic gatherings, such as APSA, it has been decided to hold the AFSAAP conference from noon on Saturday, the 24th August, to the evening of Monday, 26th August. The Annual General Meeting will be on the Sunday evening and our Conference Dinner on the Monday evening. Dr. David Dorward (History Department, La Trobe University) will be serving as conference organizer, working in conjunction with the Centre for Continuing Education, ANU. Trans Australian Airlines (TAA) have agreed to serve as Official Airlines for the Conference.

There is a proposal for a panel on 'Disease Factors and Public Health in Africa' and Dr. Dorward would welcome any offers of papers and/or panels;

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1984 AFSAAP PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

AFSAAP occasions are traditionally informal and this is not the time for long speeches. I would however like to say just a few words. First, I would like to welcome everyone, and especially our visitors from New Zealand, Canada, Zambia, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Your participation is important to us, and we hope that the contacts thus created between Africanists in Australia and elsewhere will continue to grow. We are also grateful to those members of the African Diplomatic Community in Canberra who have been able to come down for the occasion, for they also help us maintain communication with Africa itself.

We are equally delighted to welcome members of the Department of Foreign Affairs, of ADAB, of CSIRO, the voluntary agencies and the business community.

I would also like on your behalf to thank those who have made the Conference possible. We are grateful to Melbourne University and Trinity College for permission to meet there. Professor Wright, now Chancellor of Melbourne University, gave us a good deal of encouragement in the Association's early days, and we are very glad that the link with him continues. David Dorward, AFSAAP's Treasurer and Conference Convenor, has done the same superb job of organisation that he has performed in the past, and for which we must be very grateful. Other Melbourne Committee members have also contributed a great deal.

This is the seventh African Studies meeting and it augurs well for the Association, that the Conference continues to draw not just old stalwarts but new people as well, particularly a small but very encouraging group of students. I think we all value this meeting for the opportunity to see fellow Africanists, talk about our work, and find out what is going on in the field, and on this level I think all of us would agree that we have made progress since that first small workshop at La Trobe in 1978. We have learned quite a lot about what we can properly expect to achieve. Focusing on one specific Conference theme for example, has helped us draw in a lot of good material. I think we have learned also that we can profit most by encouraging people to use the Conference to present their own work.

We have also been encouraged that the Conference in most years has been able to provide an occasion for discussion of Australian relations with Africa.

This is because members of the Association saw it from the start not simply as a group of academics but as a body that should provide a focus for a much wider range of people, in public as well as academic life, non-specialist as well as specialist with a common concern for Africa and African affairs. Hence the function of the Association is not only to promote research and teaching in African Studies in Australia and the Pacific, but also to contribute towards an understanding of Africa in the community at large.

AfSAAP's capacity to perform this function depends on its members and their expertise and for this reason it is good to see how the Association has grown.

The first Directory of Africanists produced by AfSAAP in 1979 listed some 80 people interested in African Studies, most of them with first hand African experience. The second edition, which has just appeared, lists some 120 people in Australia, Papua New Guinea and New Zealand, a great many of them, as before, with first hand experience in Africa. They include not only academics, but also teachers, librarians, research workers, diplomats and aid officials.

Between them, even though the total number may still be small, they provide a considerable range of expertise and experience that can be drawn upon by all of us.

We hope that the Directory will facilitate contact not only between Africanists but also with both official and unofficial bodies, and the media. We see it as a resource to be put at the service of those who are seeking greater information on Africa not only in the conduct of Public Affairs but also for wider public understanding. I think we must be grateful to David Goldsworthy for the work he has done in making this resource available, and to all those who responded to our inquiry.

Over the past eighteen months or so the Association's public role has also grown. As members are aware, last year the executive submitted evidence to the Jackson Committee set up to review Australia's overseas assistance programme, and David Goldsworthy was able to meet the Committee when they visited Melbourne. More recently as you also know, we have responded to the Committee's Report, published in June, with comments submitted to the Minister, and to both Parliamentary Committees

who are considering the Report, and in this connection I would like to say that we are very pleased that Senator Sibraa and Mr. Wiber, from the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence have been able to be present at this Conference. Last year we were able also to contribute to that Committee's work on the Horn of Africa.

The Association has also been invited to attend a number of meetings concerned with different African issues. For instance, in April we were invited to send a representative to the preparatory workshop held prior to ICARA II. Last May David Goldsworthy was asked to arrange a meeting for Bishop Tutu during the latter's visit to Melbourne, and most recently David Dorward was invited to attend a dinner hosted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs for the visiting Somali Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Recognition of the Association in this way indicates that there is a role for us to play both in providing expertise and articulating African issues. The increased political and other links that Australia has developed with Africa over the past decade call for increased access to information about African affairs; and issues which is not always, as the sub-committee reporting on the Horn of Africa pointed out, easily obtained. Media coverage is a good deal better than it was some years ago, but it still tends to highlight crisis and miss out on good background information. The African Studies Association can assist in filling this gap. I think we have to give a good deal more thought to how this may be best done, and to improving networks of communication. Jim Polhemus has done an excellent job in building up the Newsletter, for example, but it would be good to see much more input from a larger number of members, about their work, their students, the availability of information in their area. The better the networks of communication, the more all of us will be able to respond to requests for information and analysis.

I think this is particularly important at the present time because there is now a debate about the relationship between Australia and Africa in which we have a clear responsibility to participate. This is not the occasion on which to embark on a discussion of Australian Foreign Policy. It is nevertheless important to recognise the existence of this debate about Australia's relations with Africa and what her role on that continent might or should be. Australia's links with Africa in fact go back a long way, but it is really only in the last few years that they have become a question of public comment. The most salient political issue remains as it was earlier that of South Africa. Other issues, however, such as Australian participation in the Commonwealth Military Training Team to Uganda reflect a closer involvement in a wider range of African affairs and with the independent African States.

Moreover, Australian development assistance, although still very small, has gone up from 2% to 10% of the Australian programme - roughly - over the last ten years. In addition, ACIAR's activity in relation to Africa since its inception in 1982 reflects a belief that the Australian involvement in African Agricultural Research can be to our mutual benefit.

Nor, I believe, should we underestimate the degree of public interest in the African situation. Media attention to the continuing crisis of drought, food shortage and famine, refugees, has made many more people aware of the needs of Africa as one of the major poverty belts in the contemporary world. Increased NGO activity in the Horn of Africa and

their exploratory activity in Southern Africa reflect a public concern for human suffering and human need. The increased number of African students in Australian Tertiary Education Institutions has also increased public awareness.

There are clearly very opposing views on questions about Australia in Africa, in both official circles and the public mind. In 1982, the special issue of the Foreign Affairs Record devoted to Africa says - "we have made a clear commitment to Africa". Not everyone however is agreed, either on the commitment, or on the manner in which it should be honoured. Hence the disagreement over South Africa, and about Australian Aid. Australian policy on both is the subject of debate.

Whereas in the late 1970s, Australia was keen to increase project aid to Africa, now the Jackson Report recommends it be discontinued. What seems to me, important, however, for those of us concerned with Africa, is that there is indeed a debate, as probably would not have been the case twenty years ago. Hence the reaction to the Jackson Report - to ensure not only that the commitment to Africa remains, but that it is given real meaning.

Cherry Gertzell
Flinders University

1984 AFSAAP AGM

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Trinity College, University of Melbourne, on 1 September 1984. Attendance: 35.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Richard Higgott, Paul Nursey-Bray and John Ravenhill.

2. Minutes of Last AGM

These were taken as read.

3. Business Arising

There was no business arising.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, David Dorward, submitted the following report:

The Association has a modest but growing reserve, thanks largely to the minimal costs incurred during the past year. Excluding 1984 conference funds and 1985 advance subscription payments, we have a balance of \$2,089.36, of which \$1,000 is in a 30-day deposit higher interest account. This surplus is derived primarily from membership subscriptions, interest and the generosity of Mr. Paul Morawetz. A full, post-conference, statement of accounts will appear in the November issue of the AFSAAP Newsletter, by which time those members who have not attended the conference and whose 1984 subscriptions are in arrears will have received a reminder notice.

He reported that Mr. Paul Morawetz has promised a further substantial gift to the Association. The President, Cherry Gertzell, undertook to write a letter of thanks to Mr. Morawetz.

Motion (Gale/Omer-Cooper): that the Treasurer's report be accepted and the Treasurer thanked. Carried.

5. Subscriptions

David Dorward explained that subscriptions were payable by the calendar year, and that subscriptions paid at the annual conference would cover the following calendar year. Reminder notices would be sent out with the November Newsletter.

6. Response to the Jackson Report on Australia's Overseas Aid Program

Cherry Gertzell explained that AFSAAP's formal response to the Jackson Report had already been drafted and sent to relevant individuals (e.g. the Minister for Foreign Affairs) and organisations (e.g. ADAB and the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence). It was proposed that the AFSAAP should send a deputation to see the Minister and ADAB (separately), to discuss issues raised by the Jackson Report in connection with Australian aid to Africa. In particular, the deputation would present the case against the Report's recommendation that Australia's aid involvement in Africa be scaled down. A draft position paper, outlining the major issues which the deputation would seek to discuss, was read to the meeting by the Secretary, David Goldsworthy.

Motion (Omer-Cooper/Gale): that AFSAAP authorise the executive to go ahead with the proposed deputation. Carried.

7. Mukaru Ng'ang'a

David Goldsworthy described the situation of Mr. Ng'ang'a, as it had been reported to him. Members of the Association agreed to look into possible ways of assisting Mr. Ng'ang'a.

8. South Africa

Motion (Gale/Robi): that AFSAAP discourage its members from engaging in any cross-cultural exchange with organisations or groups based in South Africa or elsewhere, that may be seen to be promoting the cause of apartheid. Carried.

Motion (Chanock/Dorward): that AFSAAP advise its members to refrain, where possible, from seeking formal affiliation with institutions in South Africa. Carried.

9. Directory

David Goldsworthy explained that the AFSAAP Directory had been produced on a word processor and could therefore be kept up to date without difficulty. He called for emendations and new material, and reported that a supplement to the Directory would be issued shortly.