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Note to Mr Masemola - \$

Nigeria Project

Greetings from the snowy wastes ! You will see from the enclosed copy of the note to Mr Tekie that we have problems. He made a number of comments to Arun that I will give in note form.

- Skomolo's report, of which he has a copy, merely, he feels, goes over old ground and a proper report is needed. Reading it myself, it seems a list of problems for others to resolve.

- He found Skomolo's answers to specific questions . unsatisfactory. Some of these covers the split of students.

- On the question of student payments, the Australian Ambassador considered these in many cases to be higher than is warranted. MMV

- A proper split of costs between Austcare and UNESCO is required. He accepts that was our intention in the aborted visit last October.

- On the question of travel allowances, these should be applied selectively. Some students in the North receive too little, others too much.

- On a visit to Kano to see the Counsellor and a student, he counsellor present and the student had graduated. An example of lack of management.

- . - He found George Nene very evasive.

- The Ambassador was annoyed at your not being present at what he understood was an arranged meeting. You may wish to comment to Mr Ellem.

Other items

Can you let me have a copy of your visit report before we go. Skomolo will expect us to be informed.

I will be rarely at the office in the next two weeks as I have some urgent other business well overdue for attention.

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Philip

LUTHULI MEMORIAL TRUST (NIGERIA PROGRAMME)
CO'ORDINATOR'S REPORT (JULY - DECEMBER, 1993).

INTRODUCTION:

The political climate in Nigeria during this period did not make the running of the programme easy. Apart from creating an atmosphere full of uncertainties and anxiety for students and staff, it was fraught with economic and social problems that are consequent to a political turbulence. The education crisis which started in November of 1992 continued through the better part of the first half of this period. Tertiary Institutions did not re-open until September, 1993. It is for this reason that, up till now (January, 1994) the 1992/93 academic year, which should have been completed in June/July 1993, is still yet to be completed.

A. STUDENTS:

1. Students' Academic Progress:

Students have made a commendable progress. 102 students have completed their studies. Out of these, 45 are AUSTCARE Sponsored Students, 39 of whom have already left while 6 are awaiting repatriation. Most of the students who have completed are those who were in Technical Colleges. All those whose results have been obtained, performed well. More results are still expected.

2. Students Population In 1994:

It is important to note that the Nigerian academic calendar is nine months behind schedule due to the prolonged closure of Institutions during 1993. Although Tertiary Institutions hope to reduce this time lag by compressing semesters, it may take two to three academic years to normalise the calendar, assuming that there will be further closure of Institutions. The anticipated student population in the programme is as follows:-

JANUARY, 1994:

Total student population - 167 students.

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AUSTCARE: UNESCO:

75 Students 92 Students.

Students completing June/July, 1994: .

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AUSTCARE: UNESCO:

37 Students 43 Students.

It is important for the donors and the Luthuli Memorial Trust to be aware of the obvious possibility that, these students, who under normal circumstances would have been expected to complete their studies in June/July 1994 will not have finished the 1993/94 academic year by December 1994. The 1993/94 academic year will most likely extend to the early part of 1995. This is a problem that should be addressed in good time, and its financial implications considered - bearing in mind the fact that the AIDAB/AUSTCARE present contract expires in December 1994.

Also, to be addressed is the issue of students whose courses of study continue beyond the 1993/94 academic year. Their statistics are as follows:- Students due to complete their courses in June/July 1995:

AUSTCARE: UNESCO:

23 Students 31 Students.

This issue is of particular importance, considering the fact that the funding of the programme's administrative structures in Nigeria has been a sole responsibility of AUSTCARE.

3. Secondarz School Students:

Amongst our students, there are 14 Secondary School Students all of whom are under AUSTCARE Sponsorship and have been included in the figures quoted. These students are not keen to go back home at the completion of their secondary education, but wish to enter Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria. We have informed the Luthuli Memorial Trust Director about their request and have appealed to him to seek a solution to their sponsorship problem.

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4. Students' Problems:

The problems of students in the past 6 (six) Months have centred as usual, around finance. The problem was aggravated by the political crisis consequent to the annulment of the June 12th general election results. The said annulment triggered a chain reaction of social and economic problems which made nonsense of any form of economic planning and personal budgeting. Stipends for students and salaries for workers became more and more inadequate by the day. The situation is better illustrated in our financial records:-

For the months - April, May and June, 1993 students were given 3700.00 3 month for maintenance allowance, based on an increase that was approved in October 1992 at the beginning of the 1992/93 academic year; which was the first review of their stipends since the programme started in January 1991. 3100.00 per month transport allowance was also approved.

For the months July, August and September, 1993 they were given 3900.00 per month maintenance allowance as approved temporarily after they staged a 'sit-in'. The transport allowance was increased to N300 per month.

For the months of October, November and December, 1993 economic conditions compelled us to increase their maintenance allowance to N1,200 per month and transport allowance to N500.00.

For the month of January, February and March, 1994, another increase could not be avoided as the inflation had by then gone completely hay-wire due to the sudden 700% price increase of petrol and petroleum products. We gave them N1,500 for maintenance allowance and N800.00 for transport. Despite these abnormally frequent increases in maintenance allowance, the students still cannot make ends meet. The dispeakable economic situation in Nigeria presently which continues unabated is better illustrated in the attached graph.

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STUDENTS BASIC MAINTENANCE ALLOWANEE FROM JANUARY 1991

- MARCH, 1994.

MONTH/YEAR TOTAL

N N N

JAN - MARCH, 1991 600 0 600

APRIL - JUNE 1991 600 0 600

JULY - SEPTEMBER, 1991 600 0 600

OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 1991 600 0 600

JANUARY - MARCH, 1992 600 0 600

APRIL - JUNE 1992, 600 100 700

JULY - SEPTEMBER, 1992 600 100 700

OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 1992 700 100 800

JANUARY - MARCH, 1993 700 100 800

APRIL - JUNE, 1993 700 100 800

JULY - SEPTEMBER, 1993 ' 900 300 1,200

OCTOBER - DECEMBER, 1993 1,000 500 1,500

JANUARY - MARCH, 1994 1,500 800 2,300

The graph attached has been plotted using the figures above.

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2,500
2,400
2,200
2,100
2,000
1,900
1,800
1,700
1,400
1,300
1,200
1,100
1,000
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O
O
M
O
0
2,300'
900
300
700
JAN - MARCH '91
APRIL - JUNE1'91 '
JULY - SEPT '91
OCT - DEC '91
JAN - MARCH '92
APRIL -JUNE '92 -
JULY - SEPT '92 1
1 OCT - DEC '92
JAN - man '93 w
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JULY - Sm '93 '
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JAN - H1363

The 'sit-in' embarked upon by the students in May 1993, though it emanated from mischief and could have been avoided if the students involved were better disciplined, their mischief was motivated by the economic vagaries which had started to have a strong grip on the society. As a matter of fact, the 'sit-in' was an indication to us that the programme cannot be successfully administered under the present economic climate if interim decisions as regards students' financial needs cannot be taken by us when the needs arise. The Nigerian economy has gone so berserk that if normal procedures such as making recommendations to far away bodies and waiting for approvals before implementation, are to be strictly followed, the programme will collapse. The students presently, though the amount they receive, may never be very adequate for them, realise that it is not wise to embark on mindless protest actions. Besides, they are now fully occupied with their academic activities. There has, as such been calm in this respect.

Besides finance, students do not have serious problems. Their quest to study and continue with their education here in Nigeria is not dampened even by the prevailing economic crisis. Their realisation of the fact that there is no good place for them in a new South Africa without education takes precedence in their minds over their present economic problems.

5. Students' Health:

The cost of their health care remains high. One would have expected that, with the decrease in student population, their health care cost would decrease as well. However, inflation produces the opposite effect.

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6. Students' Information And Communication:

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Up till the end of 1993, Luthuli Memorial Trust (London) provided South African Newspapers for students' use in both Lagos and Kano offices regularly. The students therefore have been very much in touch with happenings in South Africa. Also, the postal communication arrangement (Lagos - London - South Africa and back) continues smoothly and has made it easy for the students to communicate with their relatives in South Africa as much as they like.

7. Students' Holiday Camps:

The usual long vacation camps (August and September) for students did not hold due to the education crisis. The academic year was disrupted such that the long vacation period fell at a time institutions were preparing to re-open after almost nine months of closure.

B. ADMINISTRATION:

The political and economic factors in Nigeria have not allowed this programme to maintain equilibrium. Administering it has refused to transcend the crisis management level since it commenced in January, 1991. The financial problems that face the students, also face the staff. Although salaries of service staff have been reviewed twice, salaries of the management staff and counsellors have remained static. It will be appreciated if this matter is addressed by the donors.

1. Staff:

Staff strength remains the same (7 senior staff and 9 service staff in Lagos, 1 senior staff and 2 service staff in Kano). With the decrease in student population, the staff strength may seem to be more than it should be required, especially the number of counsellors. In this regard, it is pertinent to point out that, though the number of students has decreased, their geographical spread in Nigeria remains the same. As such, counsellors still undertake the same journeys and visit the same towns and villages as they have been doing before.

No staff development programme was embarked upon during these six months. The turbulent political climate did not encourage such arrangements. Besides, the staff of the University of Lagos, who were our resource persons, were fully occupied with the backlog of their academic work as the institution had just re-opened after a long period of closure.

3. Funding:

The funding of the programme was very poor in these six months. Funds from AUSTCARE were received at the tail end of the six months period. Up till now (January 1994) UNESCO has not provided any funds for the programme. The last payment made by UNESCO was for the period up to June, 1993.

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4. Kano Office:

The Kano Office has continued to serve a very useful purpose. It particularly eased the pressure on our Lagos Office at the time the Technical Colleges students were completing their courses, as the majority of them were in schools in the Northern part of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION:

Despite all the difficulties the programme has encountered, it can be rated as a success, and South Africa is grateful to the Australian government and the United Nations for their contribution to the training of these students.

A financial report for the six months period reported here is being forwarded together with this report. Presently, the auditors have not completed auditing the accounts for 1993. Their report will be forwarded shortly.