

UNITED NATIONS
TRUSTEESHIP
COUNCIL



Distr.
GENERAL

T/OBS.4/11
13 July 1953

ORIGINAL: ENGLIS

PETITIONS CONCERNING THE CAMEROONS UNDER BRITISH ADMINISTRATION

Observations of the United Kingdom Government
as Administering Authority

Note by the Secretariat: These observations refer to the following petitions:

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1. Petition from Mr. S. M. Efesoa (T/PET.4/91)

The petitioner's contention is that he has been wrongly graded as a Native Administration "Sanitary Overseer" and should enjoy the higher salary scale of a "Sanitary Inspector".

The facts are as follows.

A Native Administration Health Service, complementary to the Government Health Service, was brought into existence in 1938. Its personnel, who were to be less highly qualified than Government Sanitary Inspectors, were known as "Native Administration Sanitary Inspectors" and entered the service on a salary of £24 per annum after a one year course of instruction. The petitioner was thus appointed on the 13th of April, 1939.

By 1941 the Health Authorities had begun to refer to the Native Administration Health Service personnel as "Sanitary Overseers" in order to avoid confusion between them and the qualified Inspectors of the Government Service.

The Native Administration Health Service continued to develop and in 1942 a joint memorandum was issued by the Chief Commissioners of the Eastern, Northern and Western Regions of Nigeria regularizing the grades, qualifications and points of entry as follows:

"Sanitary Inspectors, Grade III - E80-8-128.

" IV - E48, E48-6-72.

" V - E36-3-48.

Sanitary Overseers, " V - E24-3-30; E36-3-48.

Sub-scale

E15-1½-2½.

(b) A Sanitary Inspector must have passed the two years course at the Sanitary School in Lagos. Candidates undergoing the course may enter at E36 and receive the normal increments, subject to favourable reports, during the course.

(c) A Sanitary Overseer, Grade V, must have passed the nine months Sanitary Course held at Ibadan or (when the school is opened) at Aba."

It will be observed that the salary scale adopted for Sanitary Overseers had the same starting point as that to which personnel had formerly been appointed under the name of Sanitary Inspectors. These conditions (subject to subsequent increases in rates of salary) continue to apply in the Eastern Region, where petitioner is employed, and any departures from them made in the Western Region are irrelevant.

It will be noted that the petitioner, having undergone the year's course of instruction instituted in 1939, is qualified for the grade of Sanitary Overseers, but, since he has not taken the two years' course at the Lagos Sanitary School, is not qualified for the grade of Sanitary Inspector.

Mr. Efesca, with others appointed with the same qualifications and training, maintained that they should be paid as Inspectors, not Overseers. They petitioned accordingly in 1945 and 1946 and were informed that, since they had not undergone the stipulated two years' course of the Lagos Sanitary School, they were correctly graded as Sanitary Overseers and not as Sanitary Inspectors.

2. Petition from the Bakweri Youth Association (T/PET.4/95)

This petition concerns the incident involving the death, while climbing the Cameroon Mountain, of two students of the Man o'War Bay training centre, referred to in the Report of the Visiting Mission of 1952.

In order to complete the record of the investigations made into this tragic incident a copy is attached of the proceedings of the Coroner's Inquest held on the death of the other victim. It will be observed that the Rider referred to by the Coroner in the case of Francis Ekema read as follows:

"In both the cases of these unfortunate fatalities, the Coroner wishes to express his appreciation of the gallantry shown by the superior staff African and European, as well as a number of the students who did everything possible to avert these fatalities. Mr. Dickson and the police stretcher bearers and the Dispenser Buea, who came so quickly to the rescue also deserve commendation. Our heartfelt sympathies go out to the relatives of these young men".

The following observations refer to the points raised in the petition:

A(1). Francis Ekema, together with another student sent by the Cameroons Development Corporation, arrived twenty-four hours late for the course in question, thereby missing the examination conducted by the C.D.C.'s own Chief Medical Officer, of students on the first day of the course. No particular significance was attached to this fact, however, since he had recently been medically examined by the C.D.C.'s medical staff in order to enter the C.D.C.'s service. The verbatim proceedings of the Inquest reveal that the Chief Medical Officer, C.D.C. (Dr. Wilson), recalled a second time for evidence, expressed the view that the lung condition of the deceased, mentioned by Dr. Strudwick in his evidence, could not have been revealed in the medical examination to which other students were submitted, as only an X-ray could have detected that. The implication that this student's death was the result of his not having been medically examined on joining the course is totally unsubstantiated: another student, the late Hyacinth Nnaji, died at the same time - but had been medically examined on arrival.

A(2). The Principal of the Centre observes:

"The decision to accept his employer's nomination for the course was, so far as is known to us, a decision of Francis Ekema's. Likewise it was by his own decision, after arrival at Man O'War Bay, that he continued with the training. Any implication that students are held against their will at Man O'War Bay or prevented from leaving is totally without foundation: it was open to this student, as to any other, to leave the Centre, and the deceased was, as a local native, better placed to walk out than any other student. The function of the staff is to put heart into the students and to encourage them to overcome difficulties - that is indeed the *raison d'être* of the scheme - and students seeking counsel are given encouragement to this end, to the utmost ability of the staff."

A(3). The question of the food supplied to those taking part in the exercise was fully investigated at the Inquest into the death of Hyacinth Nnaji, the proceedings in which are attached. It will be observed that the African Instructor, P.C. Ekechuku, was called to give evidence, and testified not only to a warm meal having been consumed at breakfast early that morning before departure from Hut Two, but also of every student being in possession of very adequate haversack-rations, to be eaten whenever he felt hungry. As breakfast was taken at dawn, and Francis Ekema is assumed to have died some time after noon, there was a period of time in which the normal digestive processes could act. It can be stated categorically that more than adequate food is taken on every mountain expedition for the students, that hot meals are prepared before the climbing, and that every student has in addition individual rations.

B(1). The Inquests in question were held in a normal manner in public by the Magistrate, Special Powers on the second and third days after the accident. The incident was thoroughly well known locally and the Inquests were known to be legally necessary: no special announcement regarding them was called for. The Coroner received no request for adjournment or for the appearance of Counsel. On the second day of the hearings a letter from

the Secretary-General of the Bakweri Land Committee was received by the Commissioner of the Cameroons asking for representation at the Inquest of his Committee, the Bakweri Native Authority and the families of the deceased: the contents of this letter were immediately communicated to the Coroner, but the Inquests had already been concluded. The bodies seeking representation could have had no material evidence to offer as to the cause of death of the deceased. All material witnesses were available at the Coroner's Court.

B(2). In fact every African concerned with the tragedy did attend the Inquests and the Principal of Man O'War Bay drew the attention of the Court to the fact that they were available to give evidence if required. The African Physical Training Instructor gave evidence in the case of Hyacinth Nnaji.

B(3). The Police statement is misquoted. It will be seen from the proceedings attached to the petition that the Police report stated "there are no suspicious circumstances surrounding the death nor are there any marks of violence on the body". The Medical Report stated "There were no signs of external injury or violence."

B(4). The proceedings appear to have been fully adequate to establish the cause of death and the holding of fresh Inquests could serve no useful purpose.

C. The Administering Authority suggests that the question of compensation is one which should be taken up with the Cameroons Development Corporation, the employers of the deceased.

D. The Man O'War Bay Character Training Scheme was as the Council is aware, originally devised as a measure to assist the rehabilitation of the Bakweri people. Like other measures to this and it has not yet commanded popular support among the Bakweri. Nevertheless certain Bakweri entrants have acquitted themselves with distinction at the courses and more responsible Bakweri opinion has endorsed the policy. The two House of Assembly Members of the Victoria Division (Doctor the Honourable E.M.L. Endeley and Mr. Motombi Woletae), both of whom are Bakweris, have visited the Centre, addressed the students and declared themselves to be in favour of the scheme.