

ADAMS COLLEGE      THE RISE AND FALL OF  
A GREAT INSTITUTION

by

C SINGH

submitted in part fulfilment  
for the requirements of the  
HISTORY HONOURS DEGREE in the  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, at the  
UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN-WESTVILLE.

SUPERVISOR: MR D E BURCHELL

DECEMBER 1987

REG. NO.: 22045

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A project like this is bound to drain one's energy and intellect and it involves a great deal of thorough research and understanding. But in the end it is all worth the effort I have put into it because I have developed with this project. However, this project would not have been an enjoyable experience had it not been for the enthusiastic assistance of the members of staff of the following libraries:

1. The Killie Campbell Africana Library especially for their provision of illustrated material in the form of photographs.
2. The Don Africana City Library.
3. The University of Durban-Westville Library especially the members of staff of the Africana Library.

A special thanks to Mr D E Burchell of the History Department at the University of Durban-Westville for his invaluable support and encouragement throughout the duration of my project.

I would like to thank and extend my appreciation to the abovementioned people.

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## INTRODUCTION

Adams College, the famous high school in Natal, played a very significant role in Black Education in South Africa. It was originally known as the Amanzimtoti Institute until its name was changed in 1935 in honour of the early medical missionary Dr Newton Adams. Adams College began in 1853 as a small boy's high school with only nine pupils. It started out as a seminary with the aim of training young men for teaching and the ministry. By 1865 it was finally located at the Adams Mission station, south of Durban. Despite temporary closures due to lack of funds, academic work and industrial training were added to its courses and it became co-educational in 1909 when girls from Inanda Seminary were admitted to teacher training.

Adams College had grand aims for its students and these aims were outlined by the successive principals of Adams, for example, both E H Brookes who was principal from 1935-1946 and G C Grant from 1949-1956 aimed to offer a 'Liberal Christian Education' to the students. But this did not mean that Adam's students were not so radical in their views. Some of the most outspoken critics of the Government came from Adams, for example, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi who is at present Chief Minister of Kwazulu and Albert Luthuli, the exiled leader of the African National Congress (ANC).

Brookes was very popular among the students and his principalship was characterized by very little student unrest, but the principalship of Grant was characterized by intermittent student unrest.

This unrest which broke out in the late 1940's was characterized by boycotts, food rioting, strikes and inter-tribal flare-ups. Most of the people at Adams believed that the cause of the unrest was purely internal whilst others believed that there were external factors present which led to the outbreak of unrest among the students by external factors I mean the growing forces of Black Nationalism and the advent of the A.N.C. into Black politics.

But despite the student unrest, there were happy times at Adams. These happy times were characterized by the various student activities which led to a large degree of interaction and co-operation not only between the students and Staff at Adams, but also between the students from Adams with those from neighbouring schools like Mariannhill, Ohlange Institute and Indaleni and Michaelhouse. These student activities comprised of Inter-Collegiate athletic meetings, Inter-School debates and the staging of numerous dramatic productions.

Unfortunately these happy experiences came to an abrupt end in 1956 when Adams College was closed down by the Government. But Adams was never forgotten by the people who either studied or taught there. In fact Adams had a reputation of being a pioneering African high school 'a haven of comparative freedom in a strange land'. The school intended from the outset to train teachers and ministers and to cater for those capable of profiting from a course of studies beyond that provided in the normal day school.

Adams was certainly a unique institution because apart from being the oldest institution in Natal, it was the only one to celebrate

its Centenary in 1953. Its uniqueness is further emphasized by the fact that Blacks enjoyed important positions of authority at Adams and the fact that it was gradually turned over to Africans control for example, Z K Matthews who was the first Black to graduate at a South African Native College, Fort Hare, was the first Black Head of Adams High School. Surely this is a unique situation.

Therefore Adams College will never be forgotten mainly because it was a pioneering and a unique institution. The memory of Adams will always remain a nostalgic one in the minds of all the people who were part of this great institution.

## CHAPTER ONE

ORIGINS OF ADAMS COLLEGE

Adams College was originally American foundation controlled by the American Board of Missions until the 1930's. This American influence came about in 1806 when six students of Williams College in the United States of America (USA) were caught in a rainstorm. After seeking refuge under a haystack they experienced some sort of catharsis or spiritual reawakening and decided that: "The burden of the heathen people of the world is heavy on our hearts."<sup>1</sup>

They pledged themselves to engage in humanitarian and missionary work among the 'heathen' peoples of the world. Perhaps the most important of these missionaries was Dr Newton Adams who arrived in Natal in 1836. He was a medical missionary of the American Board. He had no theological training, but was trained as a medical practitioner. His medical abilities were tested when there was an outbreak of an epidemic at the Cape in 1835. Dr Adams was at the Cape at that time and he was the only qualified medical man in the area. In 1839 the epidemic spread to Natal and caused more suffering. During this entire 'epidemic episode', Dr Adams proved himself as an exceedingly skilful physician and surgeon. He could not bear to see people suffering and this caused him to state that:

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1. K.R. Brueckner: 'Amanzimtoti Institute - A Historical Sketch', in The South African Outlook, p.145.

"Our doors are thronged with invalids from sunrise to 12.0'clock and some days I am able to do little else than administer to their numerous needs." 2

In 1836 after paying his respects to Dingaan and receiving 'a qualified concent' to begin missionary work, Dr Adams went to Umlazi and there he began his work as a doctor, preacher and teacher. According to E H Burrows: "He attracted large numbers of people from all over the area, often a large number of Natives (patients)."<sup>3</sup>

Because of increasingly unsatisfactory conditions at Umlazi, Dr Adams moved to the Amanzimtoti area in 1847, and there he opened a new field of service, still in the role of doctor, preacher, and teacher - hence the nickname "The man with the three coats" as he was affectionately called by the Zulu. This affectionate title referred to:

"The white overall which he wore as a doctor, the black frockcoat in which he took services and the short lumber jacket which he wore when he was chopping down trees. If he had three coats, he also had three coats of affection in his heart." 4

As one can see, Dr Adams was indeed a very versatile man and was loved very much by everyone, especially the Zulus. Even Dingaan who was king of the Zulus at that time was impressed by the medical knowledge of

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2. Undated newspaper article: 'Humanitarians of Old Natal. The Mission of Newton Adams', obtained at the Don Africana City Library.
  3. E.H. Burrows: A History of Medicine in South Africa, p. 198.
  4. Undated newspaper article: 'Adams College 1853-1953'. The Witness, obtained at the Don Africana City Library.



Dr Adams. Perhaps the greatest successes of Dr Adams lay in his work with the Zulus especially when he engaged in spiritual work among them. According to him, the Zulus were conservative by nature and Adams Mission (which was established by Dr Adams in 1847 and later to be called Adams College) had the difficult task to get the Zulus to jettison their own customs and move in favour of those of the Western world. He was also an accomplished singer and stressed the role of hymns during this 'conversion' process. If the Zulu were to be converted, they would have to be westernized first. Therefore:

"English became the basics of teaching at Adams Mission and nurseries and boarding schools were seen to be the foundation of education." 5

Therefore Dr Adams aimed to bring to the Zulus the benefits of western education. But the exacting labours of the triple role proved too much for Dr Adams and he died at his post in 1851 at a comparatively early age of 47. Fortunately his memory did not die, nor did his influence. He established the tradition which has become characteristic of Amanzimtoti Seminary combining pastime and useful activities with instructions, making as far as possible the educational process natural and pleasant. This meant that apart from studying, the pupils at the Seminary also engaged in manual work. Therefore it was not a situation where it was 'All work and no play'.

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5. Undated article obtained from The South African Encyclopaedia, 12, at the Don Africana City Library.

In order that Dr Adam's work might not lapse, the American Board moved a certain Reverend Rood to Amanzimtoti in 1853, with the express object of opening a school for those capable of profiting from a course of studies beyond that that provided in the normal day school. Consequently 1853 is the date usually associated with the founding of Adams College. It will be seen, therefore, that Dr Adams himself did not actually find the College which bears his name. Yet it was his groundwork which led to its foundation. So the College is rightly called "Adams College" in his memory.

Thanks to the influence and intervention of Dr Adams and the American Board of Missions, Adams College was finally established in 1853. This certainly proved a milestone for Black Education as it will be shown in the subsequent chapters. It was situated approximately twenty miles from Durban and it was one of the largest and most advanced institutions in Natal and one of the largest in the Union, for Black Higher Education. Adams was thus transformed from a local Seminary into a very important institution for Black Education.

## CHAPTER TWO

INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION OF ADAMS COLLEGE

## 2.1 VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS AT ADAMS COLLEGE

As I have mentioned at the conclusion of the previous chapter, Adams College was regarded as one of the largest institutions for Black Higher Education in South Africa. The reason for this was the creation of various departments at Adams to cater for the students who studied there. Adams could proudly show off the following departments:

A High School which trained students as far as the Matriculation Examination, a Teachers' Training College which covered all courses for the Teaching Certificates of the Province of Natal open to Natives. There was also an Industrial Department which firstly gave some industrial teaching to all students and secondly it provided an extensive three-year course in carpentry and building to a special student group. The Theological School was perhaps the most important one which aimed to provide a good Christian education for the students.

A School Farm was also built in order to give agricultural training to a large number of students. The Music Department which was created as part of the College of Music was headed by a Mr T Caluza. The aim of this department was to:

"While giving full musical training on 'western' lines, to preserve and adapt Bantu folk-music and to study and use Bantu instruments, bringing out in all its activities the self-respect which successful achievement in this field of peculiar ability must produce." 1

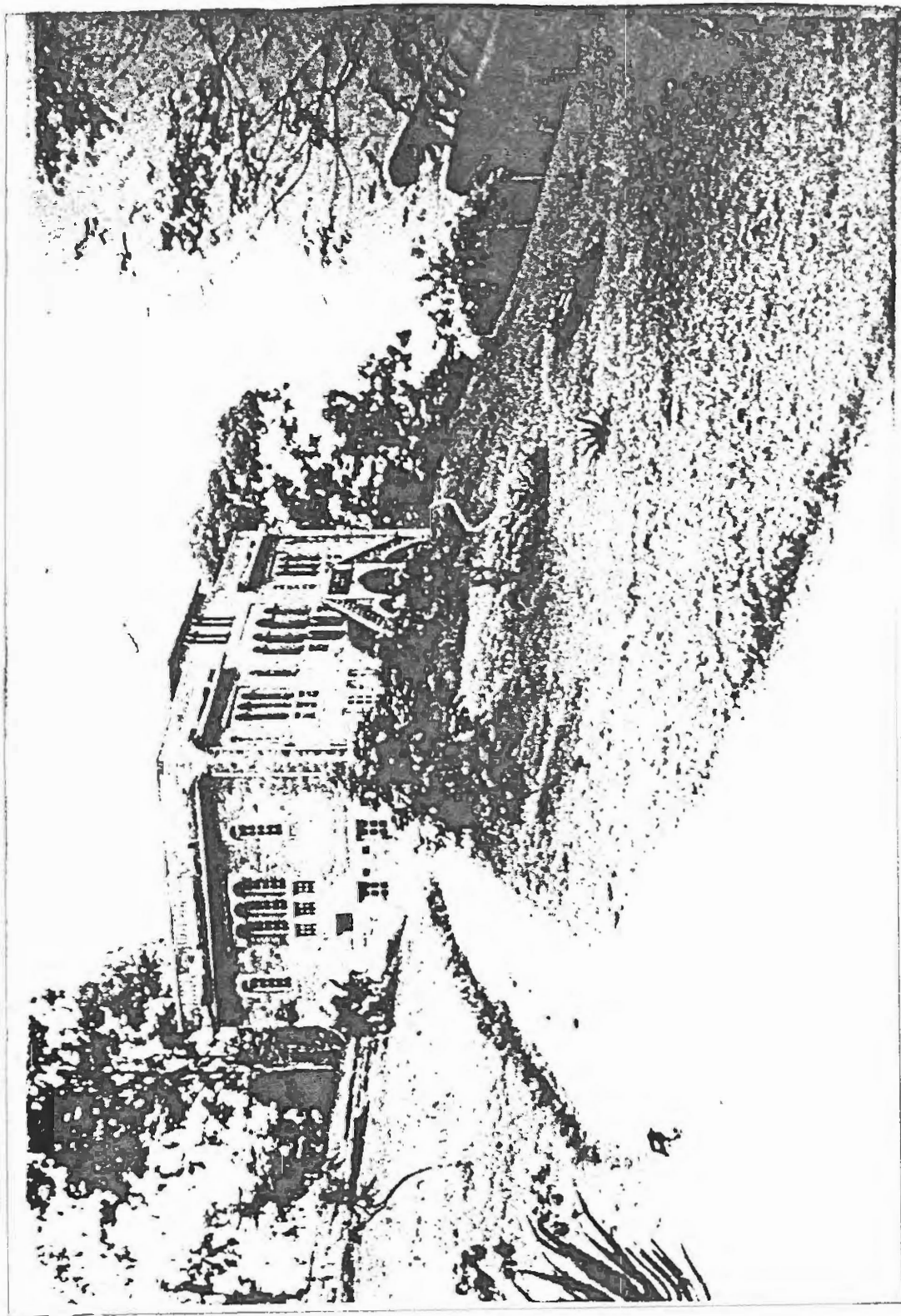
A course in Post-Matriculation extension Work was also introduced for teachers and others in co-operation with their local institutions so arranged to provide inter alia, Degree Courses for established teachers.

Adams College had attracted large numbers of students from throughout the continent of Africa. Students came from Kenya, Lesotho, Transkei Botswana, Rhodesia and from many other little countries. As we can see, Adams College, apart from being famous nationally was also famous internationally. Because of the various tribes studying at Adams, the Student Body was drawn from every Province of the Union of South Africa. No less than seven home languages were represented. In addition English and Afrikaans, Zulu, Sotho and Xhosa were also taught.

Another school created at Adams was a Medicine School. It was headed by a man called Mr Edgar S Hernochsberg who was also the chairman of Adams College Council of Governors. Adams provided preliminary training in medicine.

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1. C1.1-C1.6, Personal Papers of Z K Matthews, undated pamphlet by Dr E H Brookes on 'Adams College'.



The Music Building created at Adams including the Music Department under Mr R T Caluza.

From these various departments created at Adams, it was certain that Adams College provided enough opportunities for students (Black) to obtain a higher education. It certainly offered Black students the opportunity to gain a higher education and become responsible people.

## 2.2 AIMS OF ADAMS AS OUTLINED BY PRINCIPALS E H BROOKES (1935-1946) AND G C GRANT (1949-1956)

The aims of Adams were outlined by successive principals, who placed character-training as the first priority within the context of Christianity. For example, E H Brookes who was principal at Adams from 1935-1946 very briefly outlined his aims for the College. He aimed to:

"Build upon the foundation of living Christianity, and to put character-training first in our activities, to withhold nothing that we can give, generously offering to the Bantu life the full treasures of Western education, but so to relate these to Bantu life, experience and practical needs as to integrate the new with the old, preserving and accepting to modern needs all that is good and sound in the old traditions, to stress the oneness of education, academic, industrial and agricultural by providing for some hand-work in every academic course, and to train for civic duty and some leadership by a thorough discussion of social and economic problems." 2

The school aimed to offer Blacks the full treasures of western education, but at the same time, this type of education was related to the African

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2. C1.1-C1.6, Personal Papers of Z.K. Matthews, undated pamphlet by Dr E Brookes on 'Adams College'.



way of life. This meant that the African was not completely de-tribalized as it so often happened. Adams resembled White private schools in its ideals by placing considerable emphasis on 'broad liberal values'. In fact Brookes placed a great deal of emphasis on 'liberal Christian' values. It has been stated that the students at Adams enjoyed a considerable amount of freedom. It sounds impressive, but to what extent was this realized in practice? According to Dr Brookes: "The accent on educational freedom at Adams sometimes resulted in a lack of discipline."<sup>3</sup>

But another person who saw the so-called 'freedom' as a problem was a Black student at Adams called Ezekiel Mphahlele who believed that there was no freedom at Adams. He compared Adams to:

"A mine compound with an ascetic atmosphere, a strange assortment of Black and White teachers and with none of the scholastic aura of St Peters, the Anglican Secondary School in Johannesburg (which he had attended)." 4

But to come back to the aims of Adams. In fact:

"For some years, it has been the declared policy of the College, to develop into a University College or rather, to include such activities with its pre-matriculation work." 5

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3. Killie Campbell Oral History Program, KCAV110, interview of A Manson and D Collins with Dr and Mrs E Brookes, 11 February 1979.
  4. E Mphahlele: Down Second Avenue, pp. 145-147.
  5. Adams College Papers: File containing loose minutes, p. 1.

From this one can deduce that Adams College had big dreams for itself and its students. The proper functioning of any educational institution depends primarily on the principalship of that institution. Edgar Brookes certainly saw to it that Adams was properly run. He was principal at Adams for an incredible eleven years and he was very popular among most of the students.

He regarded his eleven years as principal of Adams College as prosperous years. He regarded those eleven years as the richest and happiest years of his life. This happiness he felt at Adams is justified by the following:

"When I think of the eleven years which I spent with my wife and family at Adams College, it is though a series of vivid pictures passes before me - happy pictures, for though my happiness has deepened since then, the years at Adams were exceptionally happy ones." 6

Under the principalship of Brookes, the College grew from strength to strength. The number of students increased. More buildings and better buildings were erected. There was also an increase in educational facilities. For example, in 1937, a special music course under the direction of Mr R T Caluza was introduced. In 1938, a Post-Matriculation Teacher's Course was introduced. A more significant change occurred in 1940 when the American Board handed over the College completely to the Board of Governors. This major step in management

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6. E.H. Brookes: A South African Pilgrimage, p. 51.



was brought about mainly through the power and influence of Dr Brookes. Thus in 1940, Dr Brookes with the help of a progressive, liberal body of Natalians formed a new body known as 'Adams College Incorporated'. This was a breakaway from American influence, but the College still maintained the Christian background. In fact the only reason as to why the Americans consented to this breakaway was that they were still certain that the College was there to safeguard the Christian background. They believed that:

"The main and paramount object for which the Association is established is to acquire control of Adams College in order thereby to maintain and thereafter continue the same in perpetuity as a Christian educational institution for the Bantu people of South Africa and adjacent territories." 7

Another 'humanitarian' act performed by Brookes was when he appointed European staff to the high school which was headed by an African headmaster. This was indeed a unique experience for both staff and students. Brookes was a principal who did not interfere unnecessarily in student affairs. He had confidence and faith in his students. His motto was that students should learn responsibility and have confidence about everything they do.

Brookes did not have many problems with students at Adams. In fact he saw no reason to cane a boy. But there were tribal differences among the students and Brookes tried to solve this by creating an

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7. Adams College File: Undated pamphlet by G.C. Grant, 'Adams College', Killie Campbell Africana Library.

Africans Heroes' Day whereby each tribal group was given separate days to worship their kings, for example, the Zulus were given a certain day for the Shaka Day Celebrations, while the Sotho were given their separate day to worship their King Moshesh. The creation of an Africans Heroes' Day led to tribalism which was disliked by many students at Adams. Nevertheless it was successful to a certain extent and among the students it was quite popular. One such person was Ms M Mtshali who was a student at Adams between 1938-1955. When asked in an interview about Brookes as principal, she stated: "It is so difficult to talk about a man like Dr Brookes, because he was just everything."<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore according to Dr Brueckner, Brookes had:

"Just the right spirit, experience and connection to bring about a further development of the school that will make it the richer and purer source of 'Sweet Water' life that its name suggests."<sup>9</sup>

Amanzimtoti was known as 'Sweet Water'. It was characterized by devotion of changing men, love, gratitude. This was exactly the way Brookes felt about his stay at Adams. He regarded his years at Adams as eleven of his richest and happiest years of his life.

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8. KCAV 112, Interview with Ms Mtshali, 21 February 1979 and also on Brookes, op. cit., p.69.
  9. K R Brueckner: 'Amanzimtoti Institute - A Historical Sketch' in The South African Outlook, p. 147.

Brookes was always remembered by his students and his staff at Adams. For example, Chief G M Buthelezi, who is at present Chief Minister of KwaZulu, was one of the students who had studied at Adams under the principalship of Brookes. At an Adams College Reunion held on 7 January 1978, Buthelezi called upon all Ex-Adamites to remember their stay at Adams, and in particular to remember all the men who had made possible their existence at Adams a very pleasant, rewarding and enriching one. Out of all these men, the name which stood out the most was that of Dr Brookes. Buthelezi stated at the Reunion that:

"This occasion has given us this great opportunity to count our blessings. It has also given us the opportunity to pay tribute to men like Edgar Brookes, through whom God showered those blessings on us." 10

Brookes will never be forgotten by his fellow students and staff members. His interest in politics had caused him to be absent from the College for quite some time. It was with regret that in 1945, the College authorities accepted his resignation. Brookes went on to become Senator and he became highly involved in politics. He also became the author of many successful books on Black Education. The resignation of Brookes as principal led to a very unstable situation at Adams which was characterized by sporadic outbursts, fires, violence, boycotts and even more inter-tribal friction. G.C. Grant replaced Brookes as principal of Adams College. He arrived at Adams in 1949 and remained principal until the College was closed down in 1956. Grant followed the ideals set down by his predecessor by

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10. Adams College File: Undated pamphlet by G.M. Buthelezi, 'Adams College Reunion - 7.1.78,' Killie Campbell Africana Library.

stressing broad, liberal, Christian values. On his arrival at Adams, he lay out his program for the College. He aimed to achieve a high academic standard without reducing Adams to a swotting examination-ridden institution. He aimed to: "Instil a sense of responsibility and self-reliance in the students, coupled with an awareness of Christian brotherhood and service."<sup>11</sup>

He also:

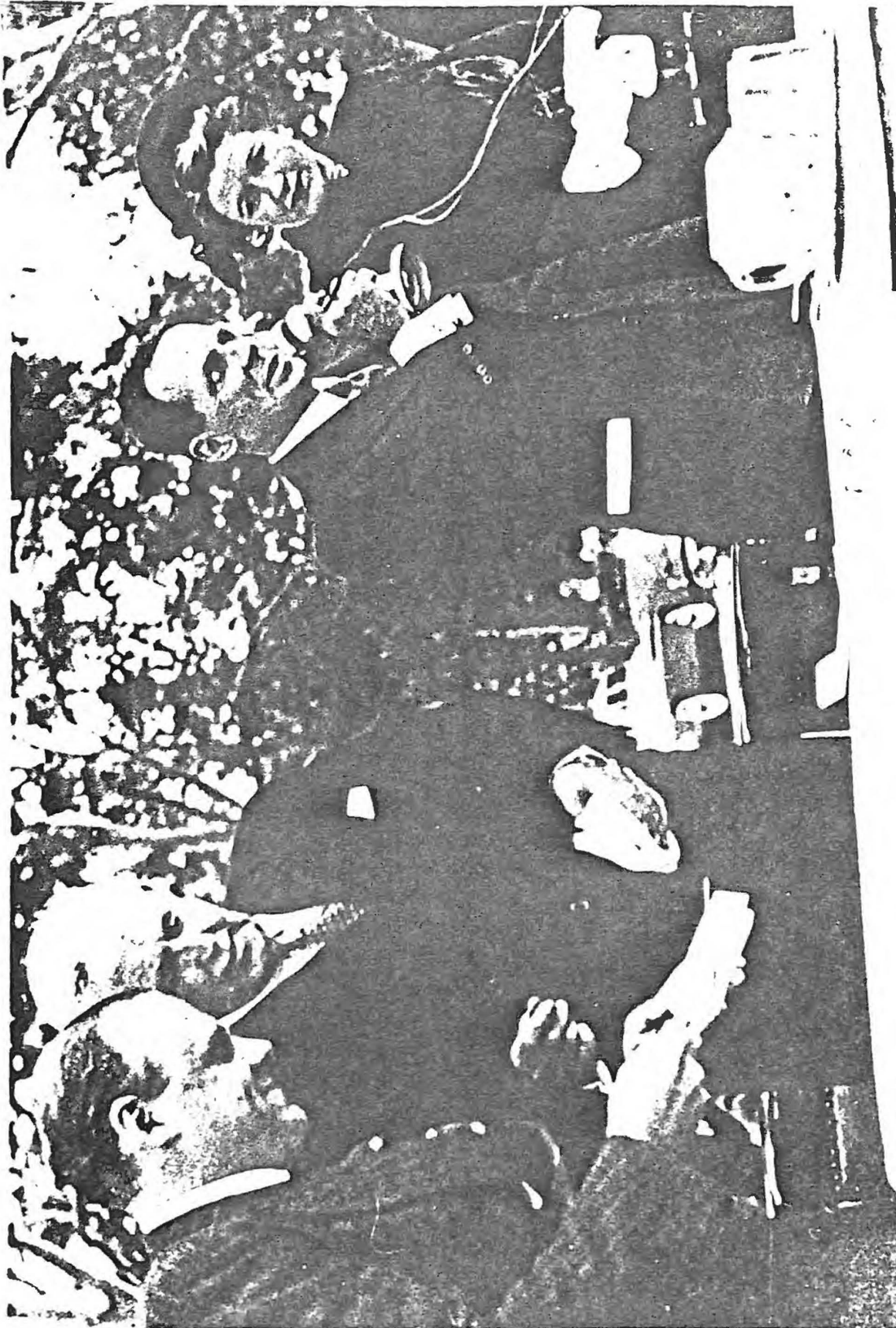
"Stressed the strengthening and development of character as an important tract in the development of the human mind." <sup>12</sup>

But Grant's principalship was characterized by many problems and one of these was the problem of discipline. He meted out punishment for the offenders in the form suspension and expulsion. But he was faced with numerous other problems such as increased inter-tribal friction, student strikes, boycotts, fires, food rioting. Grant had the difficult task of trying to solve these problems at a time when there was complete student discontentment for example, Grant faced a student boycott in 1950. But these problems will be highlighted and discussed in a subsequent chapter. In spite of the problems he experienced, Grant's role as principal of Adams was also characterized by happy moments. For example, the creation of Builders' and Founders' Day on 16 September 1951, in order to commemorate the hundreth anniversary of the death of Dr Adams. As I have discussed

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11. Adams College Papers: 'Grant's annual report, 30 June 1946 and letter of A.N. Luthuli, 18 April 1956,' Killie Campbell Africana Library.

12. Adams College Papers. File containing loose minutes: 'Speci Meeting of General Purposes Committee of Adams College, 7 September 1950.'



Photograph of G C Grant laying out his program  
for Adams College on becoming principal on 27 August 1949.



Dr Adams was the father and founder of Adams College and this day was set aside to salute him.

In order to help him solve and control the students' problems, Grant created a prefect system. Grant's main intention here was to seek their co-operation so that everybody might work for the welfare of the school. He also felt it necessary to stress the duties of a prefect rather than his or her privileges. The response of the prefects at times were discouraging and this made Grant often wonder whether he was on the right road or not.

The prefect's duty was part of Grant's program of character-building and young people gaining confidence in themselves. It was also an attempt to see how young people contend with power. The prefect system became very important in the 1950's when there occurred the student unrest and violence when the prefects were labelled as spies and cowards. Nevertheless, Grant's main aim in introducing the prefect system was that:

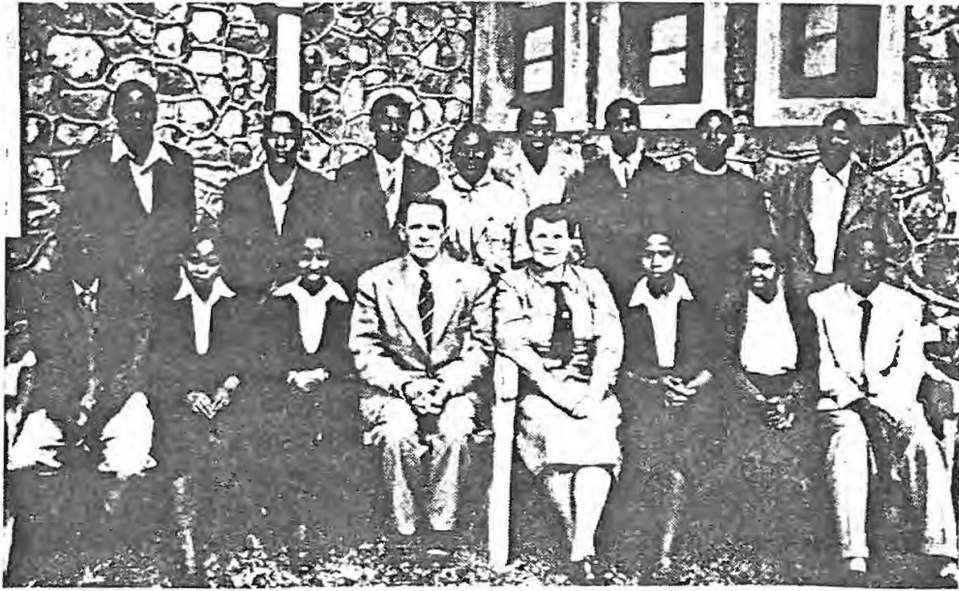
"Until the student leaders co-operate more with the powers - that be, there is unlikely to be much improvement in the esprit de corps of the school." 13

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13. Adams College Papers - File containing loose minutes: 'Address by G.C. Grant to the General Purposes Committee, 8 April 1949.'

In 1949 Grant re-introduced the prefect system. He claimed that he had seen some improvement, a growing sense among the prefects of the important positions they occupied. The prefects became more co-operative and slightly more responsible but still they were not perfect. They were still young, but the prospects were promising. Incidentally there is no evidence of a prefect system under Grant.

When one compares the principalships of Grant and Brookes one will see that Brookes experienced very little or hardly any student unrest while Grant had to deal with major outbreaks of student unrest and violence. Both Grant and Brookes held the same ideals, and both were dedicated to the Christian belief. Both of them tried to instill a sense of confidence and responsibility in the students and aimed to prepare them for the 'real world' which make demands on everyone. Adams College would never have been so successful had it not been for the patience, love and understanding of Grant and Brookes.



Mr and Mrs Grant with the Prefects



## CHAPTER THREE

### STUDENT ACTIVITIES

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

The proper functioning of any school depends primarily on the socializing of the students in that school. Therefore in order for the students to socialize, there has to be various extra-curricular activities which would make this socialization possible. Adams College provided many activities for the students such as debating societies which promoted debates not only among students and staff at Adams, but also inter-school debates. Other activities included inter-school athletic meetings, the production of dramas which attracted a large number of visitors and perhaps most important the visit of Adam's boys to Michaelhouse, an Anglican School for White boys. As it will be shown these inter-collegiate activities and visits certainly led to a great deal of racial integration between the students at Adams and other students from other schools like Mariannhill, Ohlange, Inanda Seminary and of course Michaelhouse.

It is important to note that the students at Adams showed initiative when participating in those extra-curricular activities. The close co-operation between the staff and students in their extra-curricular activities are highlighted by the willingness of both the staff and the students to work together. Their co-operation also underlined

the 'liberal' ethos of education in action. Another important point to note is that the students at Adams were given a great deal of freedom to develop their own talents and they were given their chances when they engaged in extra-curricular activities. Therefore this section, in my opinion, is one of perhaps the most important ones because it shows us communication and socialization among people and communication is very important to understanding people.

### 3.2 CREATION OF AN AFRICAN HEROES' DAY

When Brookes became principal of Adams in 1935, he was faced with inter-tribal friction. In order to combat this problem, he created an African Heroes' Day which became an annual event. In fact on his arrival at Adams, he found two celebrations, namely, Moshesh Day and Shaka Day already in existence. He found that he had to cater for other African groups coming in from the Transkei to Uganda. Therefore he had to be fair to all the ethnic groups and created this special day so that each group could worship their heroes.

Mr R Guma, who was head of the High School at that time, gave his reasons for the creation of the Africans Heroes' Day. He stated that:

"All people have a present, a past and a future. The aim of the celebrations of this kind is to examine these three tenses of a people. We must examine the past so that we may remind ourselves of our debt to the generation before us. This will enable us to see what they have sacrificed in order that we, their successors - might have a fuller and richer life than they had. The success and strength of any age must go to characters (most of them not recorded in history) to men and women who made a habit of doing sound work quietly, of

foregoing applause, of making sacrifices, for example on behalf of their children, and of denying themselves in many ways in order to let their children be fitted for the work of life. Such an examination will save us from selfishness of pride." 1

Therefore, according to Guma, these celebrations were of vital importance to the students. The creation of Shaka Day was characterized by many games and a dance which was the most fascinating aspect of the celebration. The main aim behind this celebration was to relive the memory of Shaka. According to one student, S Mkhize who was also the Secretary of the Zulu Students Society: "The celebrations were quite good and many strangers came and watched."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps most of the credit for making Shaka's Day a success should be given to the Zulu Speaking Association or the Zulu Students Society. For many years, this body has been a well-known one at Adams and a very prosperous one. It was introduced in order to remember the famous Zulu King Shaka, who was affectionately known by some people as the 'Black Napoleon of South Africa.'

The Committee really began in 1937 with Mr A Gcabashe as chairman. Their main aim was to remember Shaka. According to the Secretary of the Committee, Mr P Ngcobo who was the Secretary in 1940: "The celebrations of the death of this chief Shaka, are based on the Zulu primitive dance and dress."<sup>3</sup>

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1. R. Guma: 'Africans Heroes' Sunday - October 31, 1943', in Iso Lomuzi, 12, No. 2, p. 7.
  2. S. Mkhize: 'Shaka's Celebration', in Iso Lomuzi, 10, No. 2, p. 19.
  3. P. Ngcobo: 'Zulu Speaking Students Association', in Iso Lomuzi, 9, No. 2, p. 11.

This Committee always remained grateful to many people who helped with the celebrations for example, Mr T Caluza who was Head of the Music College, who had composed the songs for the celebration. This Committee remained a very prestigious one and a very popular one indeed.

The creation of Moshesh Day was done in order to remember Moshesh the Sotho Chief. It highlighted the good deeds performed by Moshesh when he was alive. The celebration usually began with a huge gathering of people and students from the College who all praised God by singing 'Nkosi Sikelela, Afrika'. After this, somebody, usually gave a lecture on the good qualities of Moshesh. A melodius choir then sang 'Maseru', after which refreshments in the form of cakes, sweets, cooldrinks were provided. The celebration was incomplete if somebody did not give a thrilling history of the Sotho people. According to one observer, Archibald Mofubelu:

"The Basotho Likoena flags which were hoisted in front of the dining halls made each Masotho feel as though he or she was being welcome into Basutho-land." 4

Like the Shaka Day Celebration, this display was dramatic in character and was almost perfect in every respect. But in creating the day, Dr Brookes perhaps unconsciously helped foster tribalism. In fact when he first announced the creation of this day, he was not left to totally unopposed. Opposition came from the parents who found that:

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4. A. Mofubelu: 'Moshoeshoe Day Celebration, 1943', in Iso Lomuzi, 12, No. 1, p.4.

"The revival of the old tribal dances too redolent of heathenism."<sup>5</sup>

But one cannot deny the fact that Brookes was very much concerned with preserving the best in African culture and furthermore he did not force the students to speak English. Therefore Brookes tried to solve tribal differences by creating this day, but unconsciously, he did foster a tribal spirit (tribalism).

Other celebrations included a Carpenters' Day which was not a tribal, but an occupational celebration. The training college and the high school always tended to look down on the Industrial School. They saw these pupils as no good. Therefore 19 March, St Joseph's Day was named 'Carpenter's Day'. This was also an annual event. It was the day when the industrial school pupils took the stage and entertained the rest of the students. In fact Mr Caluza, the music teacher wrote a composition entitled "Carpenter's Symphony" in which saws, chisels and planes were added to the more orthodox musical instruments. It is interesting to note how the high school and training college students saw themselves as a cut above the industrial department. This shows that the Black School elite preferred a full "academic" and white education and looked down upon any manual work. There were students who were very ambitious for higher education, but unfortunately it was impossible to obtain further evidence on this particular topic as the information was very limited.

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5. E.H. Brookes: A South African Pilgrimage, p. 64.

Another celebration which I have already mentioned was the creation of Founders' and Builders' Day. Each year on the 16 September, the anniversary of the death of Dr Adams was commemorated. Dr Adams was a pioneer in the development of the College. He with his own two hands built the mission station which then led to the building of the high school and the College. According to E Brookes: "We also celebrated annually 'Founders and Builders Day' on which a wreath was placed on the grave of Dr Adams with filial piety."<sup>6</sup>

### 3.3 DRAMATIC PRODUCTIONS AND DRAMATIC SOCIETIES

A Drama Society was also existent at Adams College. Numerous plays were staged. For example, on 29 September 1941, Benard Shaw's St. Joan was staged. The play: "Drew a large and interested audience of visitors and students to Adams."<sup>7</sup>

Students from Adams performed the play. It was an ambitious effort and the young players were undaunted by any difficulties either in character portrayal or in the interpretation of the Shavian idiom. Sincerity and an entire lack of self-consciousness was the keynote of the acting. A 17 year old girl Rachael Motsile played St. Joan with an earnestness that was most convincing. It was a long and exacting part, but the youthful performer came through triumphantly and was warmly applauded on the fall of the curtain. Other performances were just as excellent. The play was received with enthusiasm.

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7. D.T. Zama: St. Joan, 'A successful Production by the Adams College Dramatic Society', in Iso Lomuzi, 10, No. 2, p.10.



On 6 October, 1945, 'Richard of Bordeaux' was staged. According to H. Le Roux:

"The gift of dramatic presentation is essentially a gift that matures with the years. At the same time it is a gift that is apparent in youth as well. We enjoy lack of the groups at its own level of development and the dramatic critic judges the various players in their own groups. It is in the same spirit that I would seek to describe the dramatic performances of students and that it is in that spirit too, that I would appraise the Dramatic Club presentation of Richard of Bordeaux." 8

Furthermore she wrote:

"Because of this attitude of mind I never fail to enjoy the plays put on by schools and their students. There is a spontaniety and freshness in their acting and a lack of self-consciousness. One result is an almost adult interpretation of character. 9

This play was also excellently performed and the most striking thing about it was the decor on the stage which conveyed an atmosphere of quiet dignity. Shakespeare's 'Henry IV, Part I' was also staged by the students. Once again it attracted many outside students especially European students from the Durban Schools. There were also a few students who came from Mariannhill and their Black institutions. Once again the actors were able without exception at their best level on the stage. According to one critic. H. Chitepo, the two main characters:

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8. H. Le Roux: 'Dramatic Production - Richard of Bordeaux', in Iso Lomuzi, 14, No. 1-2, p. 19.

9. Ibid.

"Deserve extra mention, even to the point of monotony and repetition. They deserve no lower complement and credit than the best language is capable of experiencing. I append the cast and with it I extend my personal gratitude and administration of their action, and by the same, I hope that of all the College students." 10

The Dramatic productions were very successful as we can deduce from what the critics wrote. The plays were really a test where students gained self-confidence and were able to communicate with each other.

#### 3.4 VARIOUS SOCIETIES AND COMMITTEES CREATED AT ADAMS

Many societies, committees and organizations were created at Adams to ensure co-operation among the students. One such group which was introduced in 1940 was the Students Christian Association (SCA).

This committee was responsible for getting Sunday school teachers, arranging for Sunday morning prayer meetings with leaders, distributing Bibles among the Bible Study Classes. The S.C.A.'s main aim was to inculcate ideas of Christianity into the students' minds and it did so very successfully. The chairman of this organization was a man called Mr Z. Mothopeng.

An important aspect of the S.C.A. was that it was always concerned with community work. For example students from the S.C.A. had done

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10. H. Chitepo: 'The Dramatic Society Stages Shakespeare's Henry IV Part I' in Izo Lomuzi, 12, No. 2, p. 10.



excellent work at Umbumbulu by visiting native homes and arranging services. Mr Gillespie, a staff member had helped them financially to start a Bantu Womens' Workers' Association which made comforts for the Bantu men who were on active service. European women in Durban had also taken a keen interest in this movement. This is an important aspect because it showed the outreach of Adams into the surrounding neighbourhood. It also showed student initiative and their Christian work in the surrounding neighbourhood.

Perhaps a more important example of Community work among the students concerned a project where both students and staff, Black and White got together and worked side by side. This was Road-making at Amahlongwa. The Adams Oxford Group Team of 1942, under the leadership of Dr Brookes felt gilded to hold at Amahlongwa a camp for M.R.A. to build a road in the Mission Reserve. The young men who went to this camp had to sacrifice their holidays and in addition, they had to pay for the cost of the camp. The number of boys at first were twenty-one consisting of Dr Brookes, a Zulu teacher, two boys from Kenya, six from Zimbabwe, four from the Transvaal, one from Zululand and the rest were from other parts of South Africa. On 26 June 1942 these people left for Amahlongwa with all the necessary tools for the construction of the road. They were warmly received. The arrangement for their work was based on voluntary service. Everyone working, worked with ease, for example, they took their time to go to work, they eat whenever they wanted to and rested whenever they felt like it. According to a particular Zulu camper called R.N.K A Bleni Hani:

"Everything we wanted done, we decided upon after a quiet time. We also learned to listen to God. If there was any difficulty we all sat together and had quiet time about it. It is very surprising how every time a solution was aimed at." 11

An important point to note is that this expedition was not simply for road-making or manual work. It seems to have had a deeper purpose. There was a strong religious motivation behind the project. The religious aspect of Adams work was very important. The students and staff at Adams took the missionary aspect of the school very seriously. Brookes, although he was not an active missionary, he was a very committed Christian who saw a great need to develop the spiritual side of his students' development. One way to achieve this was to involve students in community work.

But to come back to the section on various societies formed. Another society formed was the Students' Co-operative Economic Society. ( It was founded by five students under the leadership of Mr W Mseleku, the social worker, in 1940. It was the first of its kind among the Bantu Schools in Natal. According to its Secretary, Mr Mhlope, the

"Ideal of and the hope of this society is to inculcate the spirit of wise use of money among the Africans and to create mutual trust and understanding for the service of the people." 12

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11. R.N.K A Bleni Hani: 'Road-making at Amahlongwa', in Iso Lomuzi 11, No. 2, p. 21.
  12. R.T. Mhlope: 'The Students' Co-operative Economic Society', in Iso Lomuzi, 12, No. 2, p. 8.



The Road-Repair project by Staff and  
Students at Amahlongwa

This organization was entrusted with many of the school duties such as running the school Tuck Shop, the employment of two students as salesmen to find out whether they could control their finances or not. The Society also held their annual party on 18 September. These parties proved very successful because students were given responsibility and they did control their finances in a responsible way.

In every well organized society there should be a committee to represent that society and to assist its members and its authorities. At Adams such a society was existent. This was the Student Welfare Committee and its function was to act as a mediator between the staff and the students. For example, when students had any problems, they would refer to the Student Welfare Committee who in turn would refer the problem to certain members of the staff for example the principal.

Perhaps the one society which led to a great deal of co-operation and communication between the Staff and the pupils was the Literary and Debating Society. It was primarily concerned with the organization of inter-collegiate debates, public lectures and with improving relations between staff and students. For example, Dr Brookes in 1941 gave a public lecture on a 'Gallery of Kings and Queens'. In the same year, Mr S.B. Ngcobo gave his lecture on 'His Experiences Overseas'. This lecture was particularly inspiring to ambitious students. Another person (was a visitor to the school in 1941) delivered his lecture on 'His Troubles in Central Africa'. This proved geographically and geologically interesting to the students.

According to the Vice-Secretary of this Committee, Mr I I Mongauza:  
 "Inter-Collegiate Debates also played a great role."<sup>13</sup>

For example, on 14 September 1941, students from Adams Colelge debated against Mariannhill School on the subject of "The African is the Worst Enemy of Himself." Adams was on the opposition side and they lost to Marianhill. But the girls debating team brought home a victory on 2 November 1941, when they beat Inanda School, here the subject being "Africans should be allowed to govern themselves without the help of Europeans." Once again here Adams was in the opposition. The Inanda-Adams debate of 1941 shows that Africans at mission High schools were encouraged to debate about burning and controversial issues facing South Africa at that time.

Another debating session was held on 6 April 1940, a year earlier than the above mentioned. Here the topic was a very controversial one indeed. It was entitled: "Man has failed to rule the world."<sup>14</sup>

Adams gave hard facts on this motion. The students at Adams debated on very controversial issues which is an important thing for young people. The staff versus the students debates proved just as exciting

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13. I.I. Mongauza: 'The Literary and Debating Society', in Iso Lomuzi, 10, No. 1, p. 13.

14. M.P. Ngcobo: 'Student Welfare Committee', in Iso Lomuzi, 9, No. 2, p. 10.



and interesting as the Inter-School debates. But here the topics were slightly more twisted. But nevertheless the Literary and Debating Society proved very successful and did much to improve relations between staff and students and between students from other schools.

### 3.5 ATHLETIC CLUBS AND SPORTING ACTIVITIES

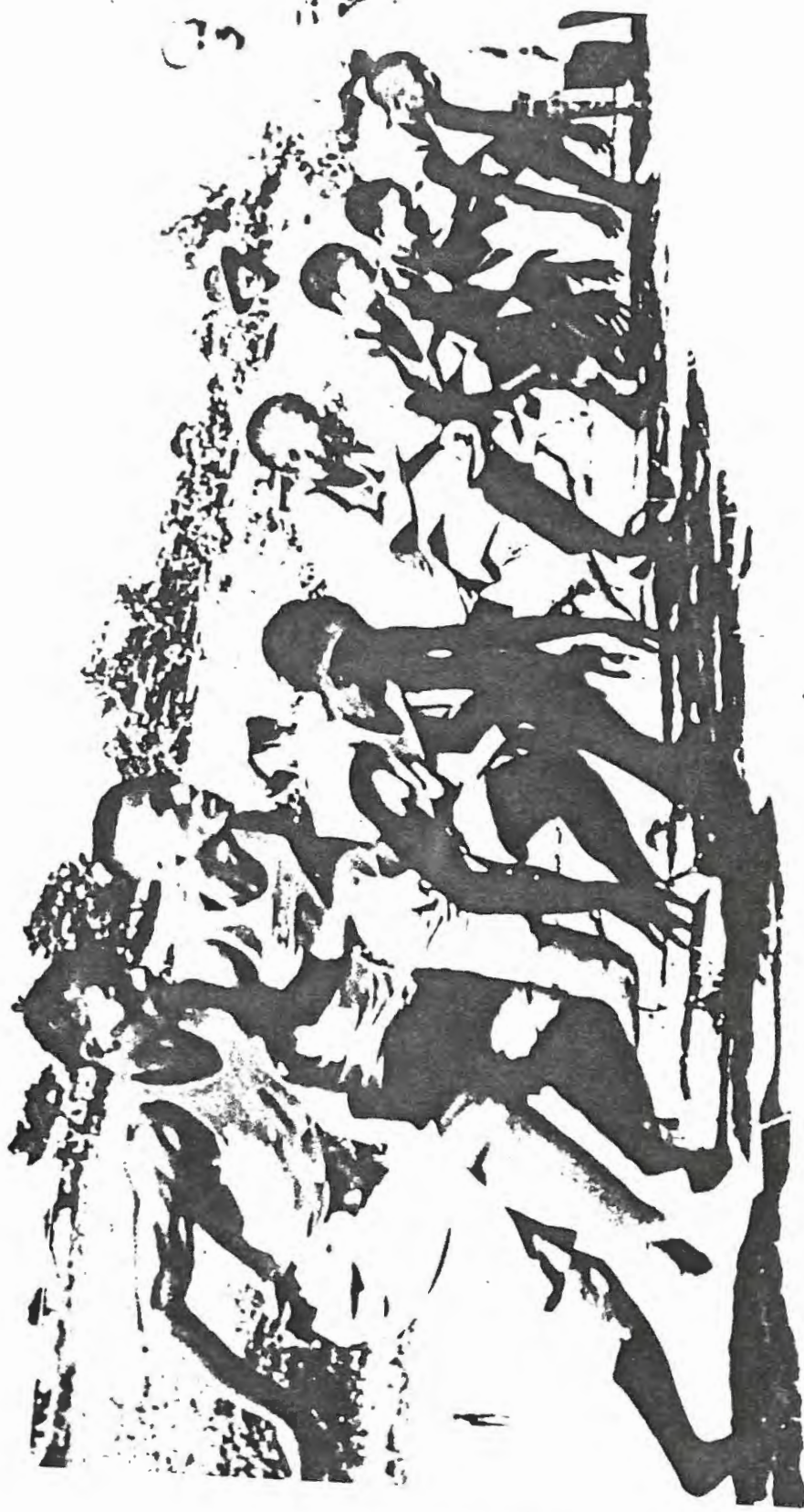
The students at Adams were also very athletically inclined. For example, the formation of an Inter-House System at Adams showed initiative from the student's point of view. Its main objective was to encourage sports and to ensure student participation in all sporting activities. The organiser of this club was Mr James Ngobese. According to its Secretary, Z.M. Tlali:

"On the whole the standard of sports in our school has been very satisfactory. Every student seemingly, was determined to contribute the best possible." 15

There was keen competition between the different houses and the inter-house athletic sports aroused great interest among the students. But perhaps more important and more exciting was the Inter-Collegiate School Athletic Sports because it formed a link between Adams and the various schools like Ohlange Institute, Mariannhill, Indaleni and Ohlange-Inanda. For example in 1949, there was an exciting match between Adams and the abovementioned schools which caused Grant, who was principal of Adams at that time to state:

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15. Z.M. Tlali: 'Inter-House System', in Iso Lomuzi, 9, No. 2, p. 10.



Sports Day at Adams

"In the latter competition as many as five schools participated. Ohlange, Inanda, Mariannhill, Indaleni and Adams and the general opinion which I share, is that the competitions were most successful." 16

The athletics organizer, Mr Ngobese had stressed that a successful athlete depended on training and skill. This showed during the Inter-Collegiate competitions where Adams competitors proved more superior. Adams Boys subsequently paid more attention to improving their athletic capabilities.

The Shooting Stars Football Club was formed in the late 1930's and early 1940's. It involved itself in organizing Inter-Collegiate football games. For example during the 1940's they played against the 'Wild Zebras' of Ohlange and the 'Rangers' from Mariannhill. Adams only won the first couple of rounds against both the schools. But when they played against the 'Willows' of the North Coast in 1942, they won. Their other successes included on 14 September 1941, they 'invaded' Indaleni High School and had taken the victory home. According to a particular spectator B.B. Msontota when the 'Stars' lost to the 'Springboks' from Pietermaritzburg:

"This was the first that the Stars were beaten in the association matches since 1940. In 1941 they were the champions of the whole of Natal as they won the Championship Shield." 17

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16. Adams College Papers - File containing loose minutes: 'Report No. 2 by G.C. Grant, 24 June 1949', p. 1.
  17. B.B. Msontota: 'Match between Shooting Stars and Springboks Pietermaritzburg, 1942 Season', in Iso Lomuzi, 12, No. 1, p.17.



Although the 'Stars' did not win all their matches, it did not matter because healthy competition was encouraged to improve relations between the students of Adams and other schools. There have also been matches played between the staff and students at Adams. These matches proved just as exciting and they certainly helped to improve student-staff relations. Apart from a football team, there were other teams formed, such as a cricket team, a Basket ball club, a boxing club, a tennis club, a softball club. Once again this showed student initiative.

Another important club formed was the Scout Troop. It was founded by a Mr Ramseyer in 1943 (he was also known as the District Pathfinder Master). The troop under him progressed from year to year. Troop meetings were held every Wednesdays. It was regarded as a school activity and its membership was restricted. Unfortunately I have been unable to find any information as to why its membership was restricted. The troop was divided into two groups. The first was called the 'First Adams Troops' while the second one was called the 'Day School Troop' under the leadership of Francis Segwe. On the whole the members had shown a very keen interest in the movement. According to Mr Segwe, the Scouts were faced with many problems, like obtaining material but as Scouts, they have to overcome these problems. He stated that:

"Due to the present war conditions, there are great difficulties of obtaining material for Scouts, but as Scouts, they have not forgotten "to smile and whistle under all difficulties". We have to do the best we can with all we have." 18

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18. F.D. Segwe: 'The Annual Report of the Adams College Scout Troop 1943', in Iso Lomuzi, 12, No. 2, p. 9.



Adams Scout Group as they  
appeared in 1943

Up to this point we have seen racial interaction between the students of Adams with the students of other Black High Schools. But in 1938, the visit of a group of White boys from Michaelhouse, an Anglican School for Whites, to Adams and the visit of Adam's Boys to Michaelhouse proved a turning point in student relations at that time. It showed that racial integration between Black and White was not impossible.

E. Brookes was principle of Adams at the time of the first visit. He also regarded these visits as a turning point. He stated that: "Adams was also used as a meeting-place for White and Black students."<sup>19</sup>

Brookes recalled the happy experiences when in 1938 when a group of Maritzburg College boys came down with their teacher Alan Paton. In fact these boys stayed over at Adams. After a few months, a few students from Adams were invited to visit Michaelhouse. These both groups engaged in extra-curricular activities. In fact Adams was proud when one of its students beat the Michaelhouse champion at tennis. This certainly showed racial harmony between Black and White. In 1938, the Rector of Michaelhouse invited a few students from Adams to spend a week at Michaelhouse as guests of the school. Three boys were chosen and they reached Michaelhouse on a Monday evening. These boys apart from being very shy, were also afraid because they were uncertain about their reception at Michaelhouse. One of the boys said:

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19. E.H. Brookes: A South African Pilgrimage, p. 67.

"On our journey to Michaelhouse we were, as pioneers, very much afraid. This is the first time in the whole Union of South Africa that Bantu Students have visited a European College, so we feared that we might meet with opposition of one kind or another... within a few days of our arrival our fears vanished. Our welcome to the school was a very warm one, and for the rest of the time we stayed happily with both staff and students." 20

The Adams' boys really enjoyed themselves at Michaelhouse. They did exactly what the Michaelhouse boys had done when they had visited Adams. In the mornings, the Adams' boys went to various classes and they generally picked up information about the running of the school. After their midday meal on their first full day, they wandered shyly onto the playfields. There they met a friend Peter who helped them break the ice, after which they asked the Rector questions about College life at Michaelhouse. The boys from Adams were very impressed by the fact that 320 boys took their meals in a Hall without a Master being present, and, that the prefects controlled all the 'prep' time in the various classrooms, and that there was not a sound heard in the quadrangle. The students from Adams wanted to know what powers these prefects had and at what point did the staff take possession of the situation. The Rector dealt with the whole 'prefect tradition' and he added that in the first quarter of the year, the head of the school had not been to ask for permission to cane a single boy. But the boys from Adams kept their ears and eyes open. They concluded that: "The prefect system is functioning at its best at Michaelhouse with the result that the discipline is very good."<sup>21</sup>

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20. Adams College File: Undated extract on the 'Students Visit To Michaelhouse', p. 3, Killie Campbell Africana Library.

21. Adams College File: Undated extract on the 'Students Visit To Michaelhouse', p. 4, Killie Campbell Africana Library.

The Adams' boys also noticed other aspects of the Michaelhouse for example, the boys' uniforms (grey flannels, blue blazers) were used daily by the students, the promptness with which they attended to their students, the good relationship between the students and their masters, the cleanliness of the classrooms and the surroundings. The masters were intimately friendly with the students and the students spoke freely but respectfully to their teachers. In fact everything at Michaelhouse seemed so perfect. The boys from Adams really enjoyed themselves at Michaelhouse and hoped that in the future that Black and White would be able to live in harmony as they had done at Michaelhouse.

The three students who had visited Michaelhouse in 1938 wrote a report about their stay at the College. They discovered that the library at Michaelhouse was five times bigger than the one at Adams. There were two stories of books, the top story was filled with fictional books, while the bottom story consisted of all different types of books. There was also a class of 'Civics' which consisted of students who had already matriculated and who were preparing for university work. The Rector taught 'Civics' and he lectured on topics like Democracy. The boys from Adams were very impressed by this.

The Adams' boys also had tea with the Prefects of 'Founders'. They all sat down together and spoke of topics affecting student-life. In their discussion with White students, the boys from Adams realized that White students did not know much about the Bantu people. They had the difficult task of explaining to the White students what sort



of people the educated Bantu really were. Adams' boys also came across a 'carpentry shop' at Michaelhouse which was quite small and poor rated compared to the one at Adams. They also came across a Native Compound which had 3 main buildings each with bedrooms and a kitchen. This place was extremely filthy and one would certainly not expect to see people living there.

The students at Michaelhouse did nothing in the way of manual work. They did not even lay their own beds and there were servants who did that job. Adams' boys took pride in manual work and they expected everyone else to do the same. The students at Michaelhouse hated being cadets. One student gave his opinion on his return from Michaelhouse. He stated:

"My visit to Michaelhouse has given me some outline of the Europeancy youth with regard to labour problems of South Africa. One can see from their actions that if the youth had his way, colour would not be a problem." 22

Nehemiah Munyama and Elliot Makubu also wrote a report on their stay at Michaelhouse. They found that there were 320 males at Michaelhouse and their ages ranged from Form 11 to Post Matric. A Bantu/Zulu language class was introduced in the Post-Matriculation level. According to Munyama and Makubu: "They did grammar with ease in Zulu - yet some of us still find it difficult to study our grammar in our own language."<sup>23</sup>

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22. Adams College File: Undated pamphlet containing 'Extracts from Diaries of Adams College Students who visited Michaelhouse - May 1938', p. 2, Killie Campbell Africana Library.
  23. N. Munyama, E. Makube: 'Report of the Visit at Michaelhouse', in Iso Lomuzi, 11, No. 1, p. 3.

The school also had sufficient apparatus in the Science and Biology laboratories. The friendliness among the prefects, masters and students really impressed the boys from Adams. Prefects had their own sitting rooms where they could read, have tea or play the gramophone.

Sports at Michaelhouse were compulsory every afternoon. The boys from Adams were impressed by the cricket, tennis and squash teams at Michaelhouse. They were so thrilled by their stay at Michaelhouse that they were of the opinion that:

"If only most of our students could have the honour to visit Michaelhouse, they would have a better outlook towards the importance of discipline in a school. Although the school is run on rather expensive lines, we feel that much is added to the beauty of that place by the boys themselves in keeping absolutely, not allowing any bits of paper or orange peel to lie on the premises." 24

One can see that there existed a very harmonious relationship between the Black students of Adams and the White students of Michaelhouse. Their visits to each other's schools certainly proved a turning point in Black-White student relationship. There was a strong link between schools which showed that Adams was not isolated. Adams' boys looked critically at the set up at Michaelhouse, for example, they looked critically at the accommodation of the African staff at Michaelhouse. In fact, this entire section on student activities illustrates the close co-operation between students at Adams and between students of other institutions and Adams.

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24. N. Munyama, E. Makubu: 'Report of the Visit at Michaelhouse', in Iso Lomuzi, 11, No. 1, p. 4.



## CHAPTER FOUR

STUDENT UNREST AND VIOLENCE

The harmonious co-existence of the students at Adams College was rudely interrupted by the outbreak of student unrest and violence in the late 1940's and early 1950's. G.C. Grant was principal of Adams at that time and his principalship was characterized by constant outbreaks of student unrest. Strikes, rioting, boycotts and inter-tribal friction all contributed to the unrest among the students. But one could ask the question: Was it only the internal problems which led to the student unrest or were there any external factors prevalent at that time which helped to further aggravate the situation? By external factors, I mean the growing force of Black Consciousness or Black Nationalism and of the African National Congress, the African-Indian Riots of 1949 and the Nationalist victory under Malan in 1948. It is believed by certain people that these external factors had led to a certain degree of radicalism among the students and thus the student unrest.

Others, however, believed that only the internal problems prevalent at Adams had led to the outbreak of violence and unrest among the students. They also believed that the so-called 'external factors' had no bearing whatsoever on student activities at Adams. But nevertheless, there was considerable unrest among the students and this posed a serious problem for the school. One should not forget that Grant as principal of Adams had the most difficult task of trying to solve these problems. One could therefore ask the question: Why

was there no student unrest or hardly any student unrest under Brookes, but a great deal under Grant? Did it have anything to do with their respective characters or was Brookes a better principal than Grant? But when it comes to Grant, one has to take the 'external factors' into consideration.

One of the major problems which existed at Adams was the inter-tribal friction. Adams was considered to be a predominantly Zulu institution because there were mainly Zulu-speaking students who attended the institution. Furthermore Adams College was based in Natal and most of the Blacks who lived in Natal were the Zulus. Therefore this caused many problems for Blacks who came from the other neighbouring states. They were seen as 'foreigners' by the Zulus who also saw them as invaders. Therefore the creation of an African Heroes' Day was an attempt to solve this problem, but it did not work and the inter-tribal friction continued. The Blacks from the Transvaal especially were at the receiving end of the Zulu students and they were constantly ostracized by the Zulus. One such student from the Transvaal was Ezekiel Mphahlele who gave his opinion of the situation. He stated:

"I left Adams with a nagging memory of the strong spirit of tribalism that prevailed in Natal. Natal had two tribalisms: the English and the Zulu brands, with the Indian at the butt-end of both. The province is predominantly Zulu country, and the bulk of the students at Adams have always been Zulus. They did not like non-Zulu boys and girls coming to the College. They regarded us from the Transvaal as dangerous rescals and they had the superstitious belief that we carried deadly knives in our pockets." 1

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1. E. Mphahlele: Down Second Avenue, p. 148.

From this one can clearly see that there has been a great deal of inter-tribal friction among the students. There has always been numerous incidents (physical) of inter-tribal friction. One such example occurred in 1949 when two Zulu students waylaid a Xhosa and had hit him with a stick on his face. The alleged reason given was that the Xhosa had been rude to the other students at a football match that afternoon. But under examination, they could not remember on which side of the field or during which half of the game the rudeness had occurred. Both offenders had bad records and were sent on probation. According to Grant, "The Head Teachers, the Dean, the House Master and the Principal agreed that they be expelled."<sup>2</sup>

The expulsion of these two students was too good an example for the other students who had similar ideas in the future. But one should expect inter-tribal friction to exist in a school where so many different tribes went to study.

One of the other ways in which the students demonstrated was in the form of fires which broke out at Adams in the late 1940's. For example on 3 March 1947, the Training College and High School Buildings were completely destroyed by fires. It was believed that these fires were engineered by the Transvaal students who probably wanted to get back at the other students who had made their stay at Adams very uncomfortable one indeed. But then again it could have been an accident. The library was also destroyed.

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2. Adams College Papers - File containing loose minutes, 'report No. 2, by G.C. Grant to the General Purposes Committee, 24 June 1949', p. 2.

On 24 March 1947 an attempt was made to burn down "Jubilee", the boys' Dormitory. The aim was to set fire to the three stairways in "Jubilee". Although two stairways went undamaged and the other (an outside one) only partially burnt, the general effect had been seriously to lower the morale of students and staff. In fact three students were injured when they jumped from the first floor to the ground floor. Two of them suffered only slight sprains, while the other one sustained fractured sacrum. Consequently two notices were placed on the notice boards which incited students to acts of violence, however, no violence or attempt at organized action resulted. According to G.C. Grant,

"The C.I.D. had investigated the cause of the fires and Captain Boster from the C.I.D. went out of his way to go to the College and speak to the staff, the prefects and student representatives." 3

In order to prevent the outbreak of any future fires, Grant adopted strict disciplinary methods in regard to all students. He also aimed to uplift the morale of the school. Some of the other measures adopted to achieve these aims were to enlist the help of the Natal Safeguard and to buy more fire extinguishers to name a few. There was speculation on the part of the authorities that the fires could have been deliberate, a spill-over of Black frustration at the time. But this was mere speculation.

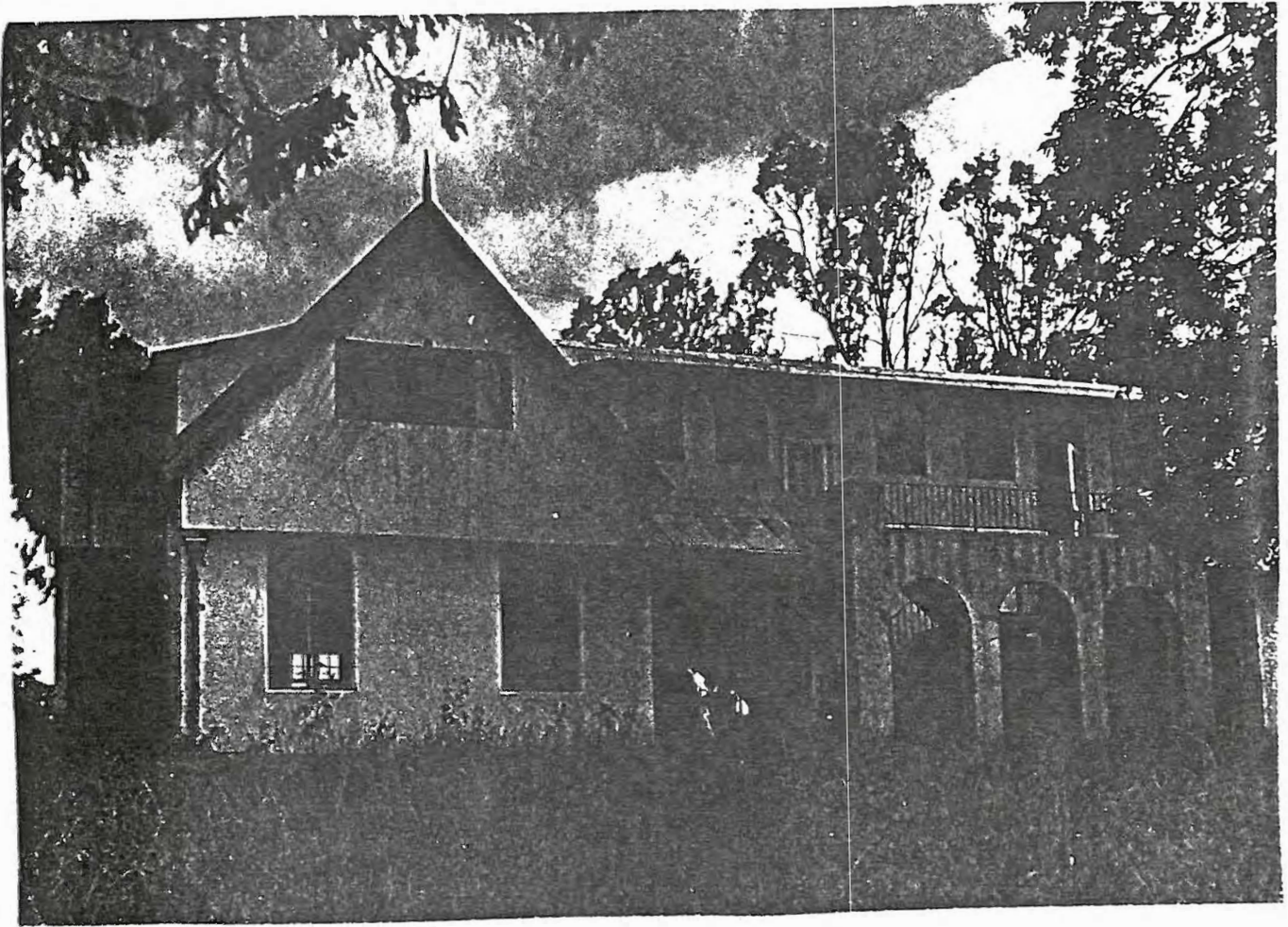
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3. Adams College Papers - Minute Book 1940-1958 (MS 57): 'Minutes of the 23rd Governing Council Meeting, 28 March 1947', p. 2.



The Training College Building which  
was destroyed by 'arsonists' in 1947.





The Old High School Building which  
was burnt down in 1947.

Another example of student unrest was the constant rioting over food. The students demanded meat for lunch on Fridays. The situation especially by September 1950 became so serious that Grant thought it advisable to get meat even though it was unusual to eat meat on Fridays. Meat was provided, but the people who were rioting over food refused to touch it, except for a few girls who were not involved in the rioting. According to Grant, "They just left the meat and the food untouched."<sup>4</sup>

The students further complained about the porridge which was served every morning for breakfast. They claimed that it was badly cooked. Another incident occurred on 7 September 1950 when the students refused to eat their breakfast and lunch. The food proved distasteful to them and the students revolted by going out into the hills for twenty-four hours, but after a day, they came back and ate. According to Grant, the food problem was just an excuse used by the students to cover-up their true dissatisfaction. He stated that:

"By far and away my hardest experience at Adams was a student strike during my second year. Like most student strikes in South African black boarding schools the immediate cause was dissatisfaction with the food. But the underlying cause was discontent at my banning of a tribal celebration. I was probably right in my decision but I was definitely wrong in my method of carrying it out. But it is easy to be wise after the event." 5

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4. Adams College Papers - File Containing loose minutes, 'Special Meeting of General Purposes Committee, 7 September 1950', pp. 2-3.
  5. J. Grant: Jack Grant's Story, p. 93.



Grant in the above extract is referring to his banning of a tribal celebration in 1950. Actually it was a tribal dance and all such dances at the College were banned. The Zulu Society Committee thought that Grant was being unfair to them and this led to a large degree of dissatisfaction among the Zulu students. This dissatisfaction was illustrated in the form of Boycotts, strikes, food rioting and inter-tribal flare-ups. These students boycotted classes, they did not attend services in the Chapel and most important was their organization of illegal meetings. They intimidated other students and threatened to stone them if they attended classes.

Grant was very worried about the situation. He was faced with a serious problem, the Zulu students totally misunderstood his intentions. Grant was really disappointed and furthermore he was upset to see:

"500 students huddled together apparently united and sullenly and silently defiant. There was little that I could do. As long as they stay quiet and do no damage, do nothing. As they stayed quiet, I kept quiet." 6

This was open defiance by the students and there was nothing Grant could do to solve the problem and to get them back to classes.

The strike continued for days in spite of Grant's threats to suspend the students and to close down the school. The students on strike threatened all the other students. The strikers wanted to 'take care' of the head prefect and the head waiter. They also threatened to

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6. J. Grant: Jack Grant's Story, p. 93.

cut down the telephone wires. It was only the appearance of the police which compelled the students to disband and to return to classes. The ringleaders were severely dealt with and were expelled.

Other reasons given for the outbreak of unrest, were the inadequate facilities at Adams, more specifically the poor lighting system. In general, Student Amenities were deficient at Adams. As I have mentioned, the bad lighting system created problems for students whenever they needed to study.

Another grievance of the students was that they were not allowed to speak their vernaculars except only during weekends. They did not understand why they could not speak their own languages everyday. Therefore it is evident that Grant faced serious problems as principal, especially disciplinary problems. All these problems mentioned were purely internal problems. But according to others who believed that there were 'outside factors' which prompted the student unrest:

"The problem does not start and end with food. The strikes indicate a new sensitiveness to treatment meted out to African students by those schools which have had trouble, a natural reaction when the entire African Community has begun to see their problems in light of their future as full citizens. Thus the strikes indicate that time is long overdue when students have a voice in the councils of the institutions of learning." 7

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7. KCN 200, 'Student Strikes', Inkundla ya Bantu - Bantu Forum 1944-1945, 8, 1945.

The editor of this newspaper is thus stating that the Blacks, especially the students were growing conscious of themselves as full citizens of South Africa. Striking occurred not only at Adams, but also at places like Forthare where students were beginning to hit out against things which they felt were wrong. Therefore one needs to take the 'outside factors' which I have already mentioned into consideration because it was these factors that have led to the gradual militancy and radicalism of all students, but more particularly Black students.

But when asked in an interview on the subject of whether the student disturbances might have been caused by the sort of political changes which were going on in South Africa at that time, Mr M Mtshali stated: "I don't think so. I think it was just domestic." <sup>8</sup>

Therefore the people at Adams believed that the cause of the student unrest was purely internal. But one cannot leave out external factors because Adams and other Black institutions were certainly being caught up in the troubled cross events of South African politics. But the important point to note is that in spite of all the unrest at Adams, it did not pose any major problem for the College authorities, the College still survived and it would have, if the Nationalist Government did not unnecessarily interfere in Black Education. This interference led to the closing down of the College in 1956.

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8. Killie Campbell Oral History Program, KCAV 112, interview of 'A Manson and D. Collins with Mr M. Mtshali', 21 February 1979.

## CHAPTER FIVE

THE LIQUIDATION OF ADAMS COLLEGE

## 5.1 THE PROBLEMS OF "NATIVE" HIGHER EDUCATION

As I have mentioned at the conclusion of the previous chapter Adams College or any other Black institution would have survived in spite of the unrest, had the Government not taken control over Black Education. The Government control over Black Education occurred after the overwhelming victory of the National Party under Malan in 1948. The coming to power of the Nationalists proved detrimental to Black Higher Education. The introduction of the dreadful and most hateful Native Education Bill and the subsequent Native Education Act of 1953 proved disastrous for Black Education in South Africa. There was great opposition to the Bill especially from the people at Adams College.

They tried to prevent and resist Government control for example by trying to register Adams as a private school. But all their attempts proved unsuccessful and Adams was finally sacrificed to Apartheid in 1956. Adams College consequently ceased to exist. Many criticisms were levelled against the closing down of one of the greatest Black institutions not only in Natal, but in South Africa. These criticisms came from people like Brookes, Grant, Chief Buthelezi and Alan Paton.

The problem of "Native" Education in South Africa, especially "Native" Higher Education, has been a long standing one. In fact high school

education for Blacks in South Africa and particularly in Natal has been a minority problem. This is so because "Native" Education has always been in the hands of the missionaries and the mission stations. Therefore Black education has always been determined by the Church. Therefore Brookes is justified when he says the following:

"One of the major problems of Native education, not only in the Union of South Africa, but throughout the whole African Continent, is the respective parts to be played by missionary bodies and by Governments in the control of policy and of high schools." 1

This was Brookes' opinion before he became principal of Adams College in 1935. Furthermore he is of the opinion that "Native" education remained directly in the hands of the missionaries and that the control of governments as regarded syllabuses, building and equipment and grants was only indirect. But the important point to note is that mission high schools prepared pupils for the normal matriculation examinations. But mission schools have always been subject to criticisms, especially from the Nationalist Government in 1948 when they severely attacked missionary education. According to Edgar Brookes:

"It is unfortunate, it is painful, it is unfair that that section of the European Community which has given most to the Africans, namely the missionary bodies, should have to bear the brunt of such attack." 2

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1. E.H. Brookes: Native Education in South Africa, p. 103.
  2. Shepherd Papers, Cory MS 16453 I (iv), E.H. Brookes: 'Presidential Address on Education for the South African Institute of Race Relations', p. 9.

This attack of criticism by the Government on missionary education is an unfair one because the Church has always played a prominent role in Black Education in South Africa and also in the whole continent of Africa. Before 1953, mission schools provided the necessary education for Blacks, but after 1953, under the Apartheid Educational System, most of these schools were forced to close down, Adams being one of them. But according to P. Christie:

"That hasn't meant the end of the Church's involvement in education. Today Church Schools and especially Catholic Schools are admitting black students into their private schools which up till now had admitted White students only. These are the so-called open schools." 3

Therefore in spite of the government take-over of Black Education the Church is still playing a prominent role in Black Education in South Africa and in my opinion it will continue to do for a long time.

But when one looks at Black Education throughout the years, one will notice that it has underwent drastic changes from the time it was under missionary control up to the period when it formally came into the hands of the apartheid regime. Black Higher Education has taken a turn for the worse because today it is suffering. This is the case because very little attention is being paid to Black Higher Education in South Africa today. In fact more money is being spent on a white child's education and a far less amount is being spent on a Black child's education. Therefore Black Education in South Africa is still suffering and it will continue to do so as long as the National Party is in power.

## 5.2 THE GOVERNMENT TAKE-OVER OF "NATIVE" EDUCATION - THE NATIVE EDUCATION ACT OF 1953

Perhaps the most shameful decision made by the Nationalist Government was to take control over Black Education completely. To help them achieve this, the Native Education Bill (later Act) was introduced in 1953. H.F. Verwoed was the Minister of Native Affairs at the time the Bill was introduced. He gave his own reasons for the introduction of the Bill by stating:

"When I have control over native education,  
I will reform it so that the natives will  
be taught from childhood that equality with  
Europeans is not for them."

Furthermore he stated that: "There is no place for the Bantu in the European Community above the level of certain forms of labour."

The Bill received stiff opposition from staff members at Adams who also believed that the introduction of the Bill by the Government was a measure designed to bring Bantu Education more in line with its own outlook on African development.

The Bill was part of the Government's Grand plan to cripple the further development of Black Education. For example, the Bill proposed to transfer the administration and the control of "Native"

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4. P. Christie: The Right to Learn, p. 12.

5. Ibid.

6. KCM 69, Adams College Papers: 'Adams College to Close - Abrupt Severance of Mission Link', Amanzimtoti Observer, 1956.



Education from the Provinces to the Union Government. It also proposed to place the control in the hands of the Minister for "Native" Affairs and this meant that it was no longer in the hands of the Minister of Education.

This was disliked by all Black institutions, especially by the people at Adams College, and more specifically by Grant who felt that: "Education did not bring fuller life first and foremost, but the indoctrination and practice of Apartheid."<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore he stated that the introduction of the Bill meant that education was used as a weapon in the hands of the government to advance further its political ideas. Instead of education bringing enlightenment and advancement, it was being used to fit the "native" for the station in life which it has pleased God to call him."

There were many clauses to the Bill for example, one clause provided for grants - in aid to "native" schools provided that the Minister was assured that the existence of any such "native" school would not preclude or retard the establishment of a Bantu Community School or a Government Bantu School for the area concerned. But then the Minister could at any time withdraw or suspend the grant made under this section. These are just two of the many clauses of the Bill. In short, the introduction of the Bill meant that the Government had complete control over Black Education, no Black school could

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7. KCM MS 55/1, Adams College Papers: 'J. Grant to A. Hopewell, 7 September 1953', p. 1.

make any changes without reporting to the Minister of Native Affairs, H.F. Verwoed. Black institutions were totally at the mercy of the Nationalist Regime. Grant likened Verwoed to Satan, he called Verwoed Satanic Verwoed and not Senator Verwoed. Verwoed was one of the chief Apartheid agents in South Africa. He was disliked intensely for the introduction of the Bill which certainly had a negative effect on all Black institutions like Fort Hare, Mariannhill and of course Adams College. A commission was appointed to Adams in 1954 to try and come to terms with the College authorities. But according to Grant:

"The extent to which the existing... educational system for Natives... should be modified... in order to conform to the proposed principles and aims and to prepare Natives more effectively for their future occupations. In other words, the Commission was appointed to prepare a blue-print of apartheid." 8

As I have mentioned, the main criticism levelled against the Bill was that Bantu Education should have been left in the hands of the Minister of Education. It was also believed that Education was a Provincial matter and that the Provinces should be left alone, to decide on the educational aspect of their respective provinces.

In fact the Provincial Council of Natal had experienced its unanimous objection to the passing of the Bill. Perhaps the greatest criticism came from Arthur Hopewell who was a member of staff at Adams. He was also an M.P. in the Provincial Council of Natal. He treated the Bill

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8. G.C. Grant: The Liquidation of Adams College, p. 8.

as if it was non-existent and urged the other members of the staff at Adams to do likewise. Everything should continue as it did so on a normal school day. Hopewell stated the following:

"I do not agree that we should retard our efforts at Adams College in any way. We should go ahead as if the Bill has not been introduced. We should demand every grant we can from the Province, and borrow every bit of money that is available. That has always been my attitude because if the Government have to eventually take it over they can take over the liabilities as well. The more developed, well organized and professional it is the more difficult it will be for the Government to take it over at a moment's choice. Adams College has lasted for 100 years and I have no doubt whatever that the Nationalist Government will have a much shorter life than that of Adams College. I certainly do not counsel despair. I also deprecate that which divides people in South Africa, and I think the time has arrived for everyone to write against the Nationalists, and they can enjoy the luxury of the finer points of difference at a later date." 9

One can see from this reaction, that the people at Adams were certainly going to put up a fight against this unpopular move made by the Government.

The Bill was introduced exactly a hundred years since Adams College was founded. It was certainly an ironical situation because on the eve of Adams Centenary Celebrations, the appearance of the Bill was regarded as a cloud on the horizon. This cloud according to the principal G.C. Grant was the Bantu Education Bill which appeared to spoil all the fun at Adams. According to Grant it was a Bill that

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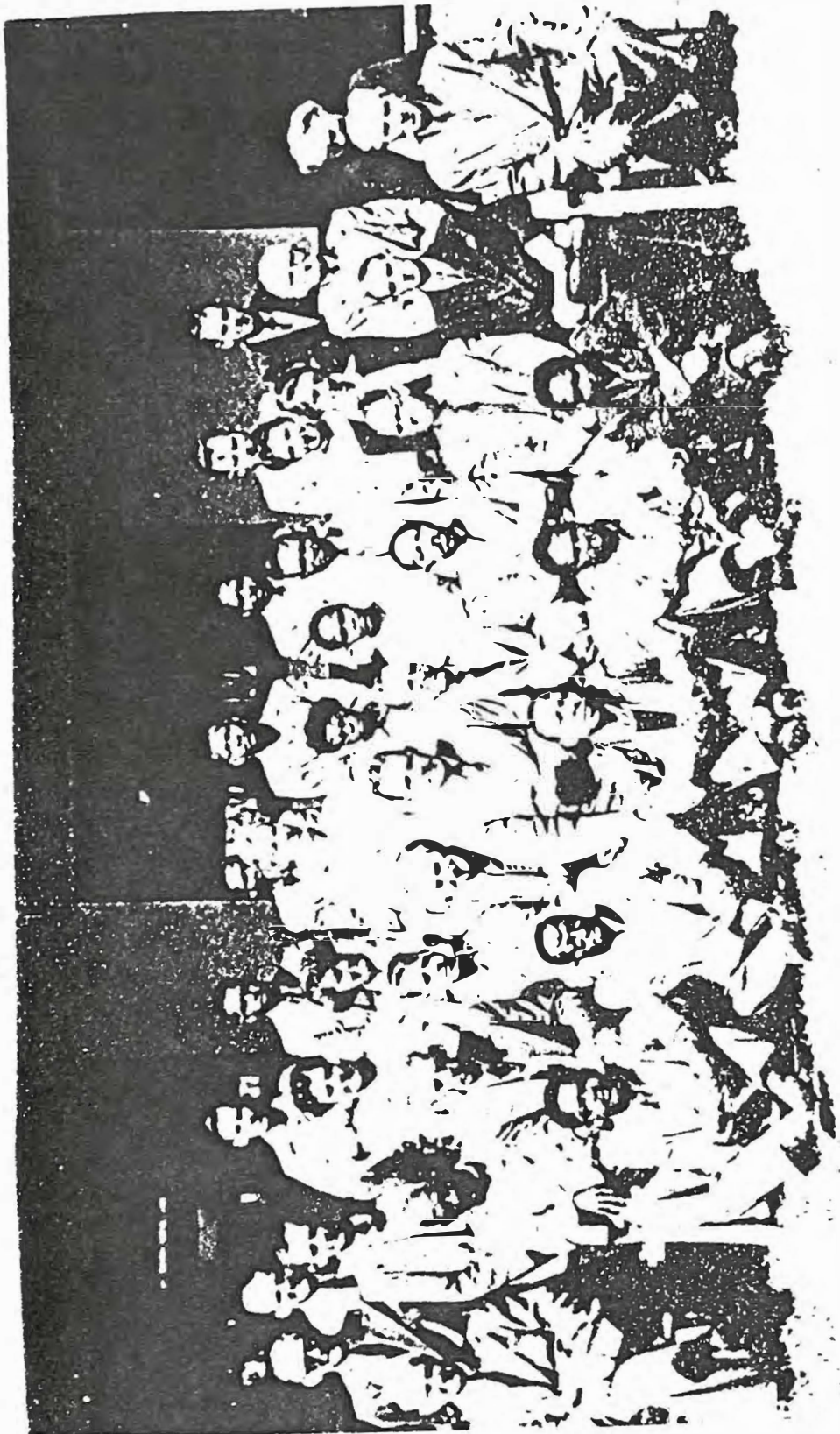
9. KCM MS 55/1, Adams College Papers: 'A. Hopewell to Jack Grant, 11 September 1953'.

was not welcome because in outlook and detail it reflected a point of view which everybody opposed.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore everyone at Adams was determined to fight tooth and nail to keep their College open and to prevent further expropriation of the land on which Adams was built.

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10. Bantu Education File: Undated article, 'Adams College - New Bill Adams' 1953, p. 2. Killie Campbell Africana Library.



The Staff at Adams College in 1954, at the time  
of the Government take-over



### 5.3 ATTEMPTS MADE BY ADAMS COLLEGE TO PREVENT THE TAKE-OVER

Many attempts were made by the staff and the students at Adams to 'save' their College. Even the American Board of Missions who had controlling interests in Adams attempted to solve the problem. I have already mentioned one of the ways proposed by Hopewell to borrow money. But another method was to register Adams as a private school. Two registrations were sent in 1956, but they 'disappeared very mysteriously', maybe they got lost or maybe the Minister received them, but discarded them. It was believed that Dr Verwoed and Dr Eiselen, the Secretary of "Native" Affairs refused to register Adams as a private school. In fact:

"The refusal of the Minister of Native Affairs to register Adams College as a private school meant that it will become unlawful for Adams College (Incorporated) to continue the College after 31st December 1956." 11

According to Grant:

"The government has had ample time to consider our application. We submitted in as many as three applications. Though the first two apparently failed to reach its destination and the third has been in the hands of the Government since September 1956. We asked: When may we expect an answer? and the reply was "Soon". The Government has therefore no valid reason for withholding the answer." 12

One can clearly see from this that the Government was playing games with the people at Adams and that the Government had no intention what-

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11. Adams College File : 'Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Adams College (Incorporated), 15 September 1956', p. 2.
  12. Adams College Papers: 'File containing loose minutes', dating 27 March 1956.



to register Adams as a private school. In fact the staff at Adams were most anxious to hear from the Minister of "Native" Affairs because they had no idea as to what the future held in store for Adams.

But one could ask the question: "For how long could Adams function as a private school?" In order to answer this question, one has to consider the conflicting points of view on this subject. For example, at a General Purposes Committee held on 18 April 1956 indicated a difference in the basic premise of why Adams College should endeavour to operate as a private school. On the one hand was the suggestion and the basic consideration to have Adams continue at all costs. At the other extreme was the suggestion that unless it had freedom of choice of staff, students and syllabi, it would not be worth the effort.

Another method used by Adams to prevent the take-over was the American Board's decision to buy shares in Adams College, while the Christian Council of South Africa wanted to run Adams as a private school. The Church was worried about the religious future of Adams. Their dilemma was:

"Will private schools be allowed only within the framework of the Bantu Education Act or will there be room for such schools to be run on a broader basis of academic interest and emphasize on the religious ideals of the Church concerned." 13

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13. Adams College Papers - File containing loose minutes: 'Minutes of interview of the Christian Council of South Africa with Dr Eiselen, 27 March 1956', p. 7.

They were growing afraid that the Church influence in Black Education might be threatened by the Government's new decision. But the Minister had made it clear from the beginning that Church Schools would not be encouraged in competition with Bantu Community Schools, and that the whole emphasis of the Act was on the Bantu Community School. Bigger facilities for religious work by the recognized Churches were provided. But this was just a facade, a lie, because he (the Minister) was most certainly not going to let Adams College get into the hands of the Church.

As a result of the American Board of Mission's decision to buy shares in Adams College, Adams College Incorporated was established in order to safeguard the Trust Funds. In fact the American Board was mainly concerned that the work of the Theological School would not be hindered by the changes at Adams.<sup>14</sup>

For various reasons, the Board felt that it would be impossible and undesirable for the Theological School to be located in a Government Bantu School. A new Theological School would have to be rebuilt elsewhere. One suggestion was from the Board to sell Adams in order to provide new buildings.

But all these attempts to save "Adams" were in vain because Adams was denied the right to register as a private school, in 1955 Adams Training School was closed down, but it continued as a centre for teacher-training and it reopened at an earlier date.

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14. Adams College File: 'Minutes of a special meeting of the American Board Mission Council, 25 September 1956, p. 2.

The Training school could only operate as a government Bantu School, while the Secondary, practising and Industrial schools were classified either as community schools or as government Bantu Schools. Adams was now virtually closed down and in the end, the American Board regretfully sold Adams to the government.

#### 5.4 ADAMS COLLEGE FINALLY SACRIFICED TO APARTHEID IN 1956

Adams tried to continue with its teacher-training College, high school and technical departments on diminished grants from the government. However, the government refused permission for the teacher-training College to continue. So Adams:

"Through its governing council and with the support of the high school and technical school to carry on as private unaided schools, when the reduced subsidy would stop entirely." 15

The many attempts to reason with Dr Eiselen during his visits to the College proved in vain. Even the attempts made by Adams College (Incorporated) to plead with Dr Eiselen to reconsider his decision to discontinue subsidies to Adams College failed.

In fact it was realized that Adams College was not strong enough financially to run its own private school.<sup>16</sup>

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15. A.A. Wood: Shine Where You Are. A History of Inanda Seminary 1869-1969, p. 127.

16. MS 57, Adams College Papers - Minute Book 1940-1958: 'Minutes of the adjourned special meeting of Adams College Incorporated 27 November 1954, p. 2.

But to add to this already difficult situation, the matric results were announced in 1956. The results were a terrible shock to Grant who was also facing other problems like student unrest, disciplinary problems among the students and the government's decision to take-over Adams College. This really was a terrible time for Grant and the announcement of the matric results just added to all his problems. In a letter to Z.K. Matthews and Selby Ngcobo he stated:

"But why continue if, among other things, we are not able to produce good results, particularly in our Matric Class? I do not know if you have seen the results of the 1955 J.M.B. They are shockingly bad. Of the 26 students we entered only 1 obtained a Matric and the other 25 failed. It is not much consolation in knowing that Inanda and Ohlange did equally badly. I may say that we at Adams did not expect such bad results. It was not a good class, but it was above the average. Imagine our second best student failing in 5 out of 6 subjects. She even failed in Zulu. For the past five years we have had no failures in Zulu except for a few non-Union students." 17

At this point Grant had lost all hope in saving the College. In fact in 1955, the Commission of "Native" Affairs had visited Adams in order to find a final solution. But what was shocking about the visit was that only three members of the Commission turned up. When they left Adams on 1 December 1955, the people at Adams thought that their problem would be given immediate attention. But according to G.C. Grant, they had failed to reckon with the rules of Government procrastination.<sup>18</sup>

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17. C15, Personal Papers of Z.K. Matthews, 'J. Grant to Matthews and Ngcobo, 30 January 1956.'

18. G.C. Grant: The Liquidation of Adams College, p. 42.

It was finally decided that Adams as a private school was to be closed down by the end of 1956. This was a terrible shock to everyone. The staff at Adams were worried about the future of their students. Grant was worried especially about the staff members who were loyal servants of the College and who had made their homes there.<sup>19</sup>

Adams was like a home to everyone. The idea of it being closed down was unbearable to everybody. Grant frantically wrote to his former colleagues, Z.K. Matthews and Selby Ngcobo both at Fort Hare asking for their assistance in finding outstanding Blacks to fill posts at the College.<sup>20</sup>

Finally in 1956 at a meeting with the Christian Council of South Africa, Dr Eiselen stated that there was in fact no place in Black Educational life for the equivalent of White private schools.<sup>21</sup>

This really was the height of Apartheid in education. Therefore Mr D G S Mtimkulu, who was a member of staff at Adams at that time is justified in saying that Adams was a shining light in the sea of racial strife.<sup>22</sup>

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- 19. KCM 55/6, Adams College Papers: 'J. Grant to A. Hopewell, 13 June 1955.'
  - 20. C15, Personal Papers of Z.K. Matthews, 'J. Grant to Matthews and Ngcobo, 30 January 1956.'
  - 21. Adams College Papers - File containing loose minutes: 'Minutes of interview of the Christian Council of South Africa, with Dr Eiselen, 27 March 1956.'
  - 22. Adams College File: Undated article, 'Adams College', Newscuttings Killie Campbell Africana Library.

The American Board regretfully sold Adams to the Government. Adams was finally closed down in 1956. The Government take-over signified a loss of liberty, freedom, independence and it also signified the triumph of prejudice and racial discrimination which Adams fought so hard to combat. This was a rather shameful decision on the side of the Government to close down and destroy a College which has survived for a hundred years.

#### 5.5 VARIOUS VIEWPOINTS ON THE TAKE-OVER

The take-over of Adams College was severely criticized by everybody at Adams College. They were all very disappointed that a great institution like Adams was to be closed down forever. In fact after the Government take-over, most of the White staff at Adams resigned, while most of the Black staff members remained behind, serving as temporary teachers. But the whole process of the take-over was a very unpleasant one and Brookes compared it to: "A man in jackboots walking all over the garden into which you have put all your love and trampling down your best flowers."<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore he stated that:

"The take-over everywhere represented the victory of apartheid. In the new regime at Adams the dish-washer was severely criticized for washing the tea-cups of the White staff and of the Black staff in the same sink. It meant a real loss of freedom, a real and very tangible restriction on student life. It substituted dull recognition for hope. It had no place for liberal-minded teachers." 24

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23. E.H. Brookes: A South African Pilgrimage, pp. 68-69.

24. Ibid.



But criticisms also came from people who have been students at Adams for example, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. He believed that it was politics which destroyed Adams College and her great institution and more specifically it was apartheid which destroyed that great institution and also the tradition. Adams College spread through its students within the whole of Southern Africa and beyond the borders of Southern Africa.<sup>25</sup>

Yet another criticism came from Ida Grant, the wife of Jack Grant. She was remembered for her long and honourable stay at Adams, standing by her husband's side and doing a lot both for the staff and the students. She compared the Government's intentions to:

"A hermit crab to inhabit the empty shell and run its own institution on the premises, but Adams College as we have known it, will cease to be. Nevertheless it will not be forgotten. We will remember Adams." 26

She called upon the people to remember the friendliness at Adams, the peaceful atmosphere and the harmonious relationship that existed between Black and White.

Furthermore she stated that:

"Whenever again Christian principles such as truth, justice, mercy, freedom and love are sacrificed to the Moloch of Apartheid, remember that Adams was sacrificed. Remember Adams." 27

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- 25. Adams College File: Undated pamphlet by G.M. Buthelezi, 'Adams College Reunion - 7.1.1978', Killie Campbell Africana Library.
  - 26. KCM 69, Adams College Papers: 'A Tragic Happening - Adams Sacrificed to Apartheid', Ilanga Lase Natal, 1956.
  - 27. Ibid.

Perhaps the most severe criticism came from Jack Grant who was Principal of Adams during the take-over. He had the most difficult task of keeping Adams a tight-knit institution during the throes of this crisis. According to him at the time of the closing down of Adams:

"Though our life at the College is about to come to an end, may we not adapt some words used by Latimer just over four hundred years ago and say: 'Be of good comfort, Adams College. We have these years lit such a candle by God's grace in South Africa as I trust shall never be put out'." 28

Furthermore he states that:

"The story of the closing of Adams College is to me painful. The more I consider it, however, the more distasteful it becomes. In one way, it is unbelievable that a supposedly Christian Government should be so ruthless as to close a Christian College with a long and honourable record of service. In another way, the Government's action is the logical outcome of its apartheid thinking." 29

In spite of the fact that Adams College was closed down in 1956, its memory has never been erased from the minds of the people who constituted her. The tradition of Adams is now continued in Adams United College, now a part of the Federal Theological Seminary, at present based at Edendale, outside Pietermaritzburg, reduced only to one linguistic group.

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28. G.C. Grant: The Liquidation of Adams College, p. 54.  
 29. J. Grant: Jack Grant's Story, p. 105.

## CHAPTER SIX

AN OVERVIEW OF ADAMS COLLEGE

## 6.1 ADAMS AS LEADER AND TREND-SETTER

The fact that Adams College was entirely closed down in 1956 did not necessarily mean that Adams was completely forgotten by the people who went there. The memory of Adams College has always been and will always be implanted in the minds of all those people who either studied or taught there. One reason for this is that Adams was regarded as a leader among missions. Adams has been a pioneer in a number of far-reaching ways. For example, Adams was the first African Boarding School to admit both boys and girls and this it did no less than 42 years ago. In fact it became co-educational in 1909 when girls from Inanda Seminary were admitted to teacher training. According to Grant, this gave an opportunity to numbers of young men and women to learn to respect each other and to treat reverently, 'the way of a man with a maid'.<sup>1</sup>

Adams taught young people how to respect each other and others. According to M T D Leboho, Adams College was one of the institutions in the Union which endeavoured to cater for the needs of the "Native" people, with regard to Secondary Education.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Adams College File containing an undated pamphlet by G.C. Grant on 'Adams College' obtained at the Killie Campbell Africana Library.
  2. M.T.D. Leboho: 'The Sons of Chiefs and General Civics Course', in Iso Lomuzi, 9, No. 2, p. 21.

Another way in which Adams pioneered was when it broke the traditions of other mission institutions was by giving responsible posts in their High School and Training College to promising African teachers. Two of the first to be so appointed were Chief A J Luthuli and Mr A Guma. Robbins Guma, for example, became the first Black to act as principal of the Training College. This practice was not only instituted at Adams, but it was carried further here than in any other institution. According to D E Burchell, the most spectacular case of a Black gaining a high position in education was that of the present Professor Z K Matthews.<sup>3</sup>

This occurred in the 1920's. In 1924, the Reverend A.E. Le Roy visited Fort Hare in search of a headmaster for his High School. Adams at that time although having offered secondary education for some years, had not succeeded in getting any of their students to pass the junior certificate examination. Rev. Le Roy felt that American teachers probably did not have the right approach in teaching the South African Syllabus. His appointment of Matthews as Head of the High School was an experiment, especially as certain fellow missionaries thought that he was attempting the impossible.

Matthews, Fort Hare's first graduate was destined to make history. His post at Adams was to be the start of an illustrious teaching career, as well as an initiation into the malestrom of Black politics through his contacts in Natal with Albert Luthuli, then

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3. D.E. Burchell: 'Adams College, Natal, C.1920-1956: A Critical Assessment', in The Journal of the University of Durban-Westville, 1, p. 153.

a teacher at Adams, John Dube, champion of the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union and others.

Another important point to note is that Matthews was the first African to obtain the LL.B. degree of the University of South Africa and a law degree opened up the possibility of practice either as an attorney or at the Bar.<sup>4</sup>

Matthews' appointment was indeed a major epoch making achievement as except for Dube, no Black man has ever been Head of a High School in South Africa.

Lovedale Missionary Institution, it may be noted, had no permanent Black headship of a department prior to 1952. A further achievement for Matthews was the success of two of his first batch of six students, who both passed the junior certificate in the second class.<sup>5</sup>

Again, until the transfer of Professor Matthews to Fort Hare in 1937, Mr D G S Mtimkulu was appointed to his place, while in 1947, when Mr Mtimkulu was appointed Principal of Ohlange, his place was filled by another African, Mr B C Mtshali. Therefore it is not open to contradiction that Adams has been a van in providing opportunities for promising Africans.

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4. Z.K. Matthews: Freedom for my People. The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews, p. 91.

5. The Z.K. Matthews Autobiography Papers, BC 706, containing an unpublished biography of Z.K. Matthews by F. Matthews.

Another way in which Adams has taken the lead was its tendency to grant a large measure of freedom and responsibility to its students. Consequently its discipline has been more 'co-operative' than 'authoritarian', while student activities were in a large measure student-organized. To learn by doing in the Dewey tradition - better still, 'to learn from experience' as the Bible puts it, has been a pronounced feature of student life at Adams. Such a tradition has its dangers, but with care, it is a tradition that has much to commend it.

Yet another feature of life at Adams was the annual exchange of visits with students of European Schools. For several years, a selected number of students from Michaelhouse came down each year to Adams, not merely to visit the College and to see the premises, but to attend the classes and share the life of the place as much as possible. In turn, selected students from Adams visited Michaelhouse and shared that life as much as was possible. That these visits have been an eye-opener and a stimulus to many is evident from the remarks and reactions of the visiting students.

One other way in which Adams has been a pioneer was in providing facilities, during the winter vacations for students of the Non-European section of Natal University College to attend a special course for additional studies. Under the capable lead of Dr Mabel Palmer, these winter vacation schools have played a vital role in the lives of the Non-European University students. Adams was therefore not isolated from the rest of South Africa. It was a very vital centre for inter-racial activity with regular exchanges



with institutions as the Anglican School of Michaelhouse, Maritzburg College and the Natal University College which arranged series of vacation courses at Adams during the holidays for African, Indian and Coloured undergraduates.

Adams was also a community lacking in colour consciousness. It was probably more racially integrated than other mission institutions. Frieda Matthews, the wife of Z K Matthews, has stated that the American missionaries of Natal:

"'Seemed friendlier and open' and completely free of the colour prejudice that the Matthews had, on occasions, experienced at their old Alma Mater, Lovedale." 6

An important point to note is that Adams College was the first to try out African teachers in Secondary Education. This proved a threat to other mission boarding schools like Lovedale and the University College of Fort Hare in the Eastern Cape and which had been the major centres of Black Higher Education. However, by the 1940's, this focus had to an extent shifted to include Adams and St. Peter's of Johannesburg.

According to M. Wilson, Lovedale was now being challenged as the leading Secondary School, particularly as in this era it came under very conservative leadership.<sup>7</sup>

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6. The Z.K. Matthews Autobiography Papers, BC 706, containing an unpublished biography of Z.K. Matthews by F. Matthews.
  7. Z.K. Matthews: Freedom For my People. The Autobiography of Z.K. Matthews, p. 199.

Also at one time there were fears that Adams would become a serious competitor of the University College of Fort Hare.

Adams will always be remembered for her long and monumental history and her pioneering spirit. In 1953 she celebrated her centenary as the oldest educational institution in the Province of Natal.<sup>8</sup>

Not only in her foundation, but all along she has pioneered advances in Black Education. The introduction of co-education, appointing African teachers to the High School, teaching science, post-matric teacher training are some of the innovations which began at Adams and were later adopted by other institutions.

Another unique feature concerned the Governing Body of the College. In 1940, the American Board of Missions, by which Adams College was founded, handed the College over to a local Board of Governors on the condition that they used it as a Christian educational institution for the Bantu of South Africa and adjacent territories. The College was then constituted as a non-profit-making company that elected its own governing council. Provision was made in its constitution for increasing control by Africans, ex-students and others. When the Government speaks of Bantu School Boards giving control to the Africans, it must be remembered that in the Adams College Board, there was opportunity for real control, not the spurious, delegated, circumscribed control envisaged by the Government. But this opportunity was closed with the closing down of the College in 1956.

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8. KCM 69, Adams College Papers: 'A Tragic Happening - Adams Sacrificed to Apartheid', Ilanga Lase Natal, 1956.



Adams College Centenary Celebrations held on 10 October 1953 showing the singing of the school hymn composed by Edgar Brookes on the extreme left and Mr G.C. Grant, the Principal of Adams College.

Another unique feature of Adams College was that it attracted a large number of students not only in Natal, but also from the Transvaal and other areas in South Africa. Adams also attracted many students from the different parts of the continent of Africa. Students came from Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Transkei and Rhodesia.

From all the evidence provided, there can be no doubt that Adams was definitely a unique and it provided a model for other Black institutions in South Africa.

#### 6.2 PROMINENT MEN ASSOCIATED WITH ADAMS

Among the many students attracted to Adams, there emerged many prominent men (Blacks) who are leading figures in South African politics today. According to Grant, a considerable portion of the leading Africans of South Africa and adjacent territories have been trained at Adams. Furthermore he stated that:

"It is also true that the College has made an invaluable contribution to the advancement of the status and the welfare of Africans." 9

This certainly shows when one outlines the prominent men who had studied at Adams. Of men in the public eye, Adams had Joshua Nkomo

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9. G.C. Grant: The Liquidation of Adams College, p. 7.

of Zimbabwe, David Warohio of Kenya, and for a very short while, Seretse Khama of Botswana. The only Zulu chief to be a University graduate and who is a leading politician today is Chief Gatsha Buthelezi. Cromwell Diko, one of the leading politicians in the Transkei also obtained his higher education at Adams. Another ex-Adamite is now a successful business man and the Mayor of Broken Hill in Zambia. Another student holds an important legal post in Tanzania.

Both Dr Munyua Waiyaki and Dr Mungai Njoroge were foreign ministers in Kenya and both of them also studied at Adams College. The present Attorney-General of Kenya, the Hon. Charles Njonjo was also a student at Adams. He is remembered for being the top long jump student.

Many Ugandans prominent earlier in Uganda such as the Lubogo brothers were also students at Adams. The Minister of Finance in Zambia, Mr John Muranakatwe also studied at Adams. These are the names of people who are now playing prominent roles in their countries today. One could therefore ask the question. Did Adams really provide a Liberal Christian Education for Blacks? Because if it did, how come we have today a group of radical politicians?

Another person who studied at Adams is Apollo Karondo of Uganda. Under a previous government, he was the Ugandan Ambassador to the United Nations. He was also regarded as the most outstanding Latin student who got through Matric Latin in fifteen months with a 'C'.

Most of these prominent men held important posts at Adams. For example, the first Council of Governors appointed in 1940, clearly demonstrated the provincial, if not national importance of Adams. On its board, were a group of men and women active in public life. These included Maurice Webb, Judge Dennis Fannin, Denis Shepstone, later administrator of Natal, Dr Malherbe, principal of the Natal University College and Blacks of the calibre of Chief Albert Luthuli, Dr Gumede, John and Charles Dube and Sibusisiwe, the Social Worker.

Strong feelings were held by Dr John Dube who founded his own institution at Ohlange. He believed that Adams divided the Zulu Community into Christian Converts and non-believers.<sup>10</sup>

In fact the main impetus behind the creation of his independent Black School may conceivably have been to prevent this polarization in Zulu Society. The core of Adams students remained Zulu speaking, but during the 1930's and 1940's, it attracted a number of students outside Natal.

One such person was a Black Educationalist of the stature of Selby Ngcobo who became Professor of Economics at the Universities of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Another one was Johannes Shembe who received a Bachelor of Science Degree and after teaching for a number of years, became head of the Church his father had founded.

Adams College certainly produced men who are today playing a prominent role in African politics.

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10. KCAV 116, 'interview with Mrs John Dube , 8 March 1979.



### 6.3 VARIOUS VIEWS ON ADAMS COLLEGE

Due to the fact that many different types of students studied at Adams, it is not surprising that there should be various view points on Adams. For example, one student Daniel Dube from the T31 class stated at the time of his leaving Adams that:

"I can now conclude without any shadow of doubt and a presentiment that having schooled, seen, and taught in many institutions in the Union of South Africa and Southern Rhodesia that None is better than Adams College which is known and endeared far and wide. May Long Live Democracy At Adams College." 11

Another student was Benediction M Mngomezulu from the fourth year Industrial Teachers Course. On his departure from Adams he recalled the good relationship that had existed between the staff and the students. He stated that:

"The Day has come, Goodbye Adams College,  
I thank you for the training I have got  
at Adams with many others." 12

Another person who owed gratitude to Adams was George Nehemiah Munyama. He especially enjoyed the visits of other students to Adams and he also enjoyed the extra-curricular activities at Adams. He stated that:

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11. D. Dube: 'A Fresher's Experiences', in Iso Lomuzi, 12, No. 1, p. 17
  12. B.M. Mngomezulu: 'Goodbye Adams College', in Iso Lomuzi, 12, No. 2, p. 13.

"As one continues to live at Adams each day he feels he grows to love the place - once a spot from which no pleasure could be derived. It is no longer a solitary place nor a dull place. In the end one is bound to say, 'Oh! What a wonderful and beautiful place Adams.'" 13

But apart from these positive impressions of Adams College, there were negative ones as well. For example, one such student was Ezekiel Mphahlele who felt a great deal of resentment towards the institution. He said a lot to condone it. He described his arrival at Adams by stating that:

"When the students poured down from Jubilee, they were like a stampeding herd. I soon got used to hearing boys shout or chant Zulu war songs from a balcony. Both the men and the women were generally big, tall, bony people, unlike the bunch of us de-tribalized and sophisticated up-country folk." 14

The first thing that struck Ezekiel on his arrival at Adams, were the massive buildings of stone blocks and the violent growth of vegetation. The floors were always dusty and the inside of the miniature halls smelt strongly of semi-dry grass. Adams was very unappealing to Ezekiel who also compared Adams to a mine compound. According to him, Adams had none of the scholastic aura of St. Peter's for example. Ezekiel especially disliked the staff at Adams. He regarded Brookes as a:

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13. G.N. Munyama: 'School Life at Adams', in Iso Lomuzi, 9, No. 1, p. 21.
  14. E. Mphahlele: Down Second Avenue, p. 145.

"Stockily built with a large professorial head and a timid upper lip and soft, watery eyes that looked wounded and apologetic." 15

Furthermore he states that:

"There was a strange assortment of African and European teachers at Adams: tired-looking, bored men, retired, decrepit, cantankerous white professors one has to come to associate with mission institutions, very large African teachers one with a smile as broad and unfriendly as the ocean, grim-looking white missionaries who were always telling us at speech day how lucky we were to receive an education." 16

Ezekiel is one of the very few people who has condoned Adams as a great institution for Blacks. He hardly has anything positive to say about Adams. Nevertheless, the positive views of Adams outweigh the more negative ones.

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15. E. Mphahlele: Down Second Avenue, p. 146.

16. Ibid.

## CONCLUSION

It is not easy to forget an institution like Adams College because its main objective was to provide an education which was purely for the benefit of the students. The aims of Adams were not far-fetched ones and they were meant to help the students to grow in character, for example, Adams aimed to strive for objectivity and freedom from prejudice, to foster amongst the students a spirit of self-reliance yet at the same time awaken a sense of inter-dependence and a concept of service. Basically Adams aimed to teach its students how to help themselves and others.

Adams College certainly provided opportunities to students (Black) for gaining a higher education. However, according to certain critics like Albert Luthuli, the careers open to Blacks then as now, were extremely few, except for manual work. But in spite of these criticisms, Adams College will always remain an indelible stamp in the minds of both the staff and students.

The rise of Adams College was an enjoyable experience, but on the contrary, the fall was a tragic experience with tragic consequences.

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