

Letter to Mission Services Committee¹

Rev. Van Tol, Gen. Sec.

Rev. L. Van Essen, Convener of Committee of BC 1519

Brothers in the Lord

Before me lies a letter I composed the first of August and addressed to you. However, because I felt that the matters dealt with in that letter were worthy of most careful handling, I placed the letter in my “pending” file. Subsequent to the writing of that letter we received minutes of the last Building Dept. meeting and read with some interest min. BC 1518 and 1519, for they deal with the same matters I planned to write to you. I now have rewritten that earlier letter in order to incorporate the latest decisions.

My basic proposal in that first letter and in this one as well is that we should ***disband the Building Department (BC)***. This proposal is the fruit of considerable reflection as well as discussions with colleagues. It has occurred to me that I am by no means the only one to entertain this idea. Furthermore, it should be understood that this proposal is not to be taken as an expression of personal dissatisfaction with my colleagues in the BC. Finally, this notion is no expression of outrage against the fabulous garage facilities of Mkar – I have only heard of that structure, but never seen it.

Grounds

1. The most superficial and immediate ground is shortage of money. Selling literally all stock and buildings and utilizing the staff so freed in more immediate missionary activities would constitute an important shift in the flow of mission finances to more basic activities, i.e. from services to missionaries to what missions are all about.

¹ 12 Sept/1974.

2. All the functions performed presently by the department are already performed by Nigerians throughout the country. When I need a lorry, I can appeal to numerous owners in Wukari or Takum or wherever. When I need the generator repaired I can appeal to the same people who see to the continued operation of the numerous generators in Wukari or any other town. Etc. Our present independence from Nigerian business and trade life may be comfortable for a small section of the mission, but it serves to separate us from the very people we have come to serve with the Gospel. This may have been justified at one time, but it is no longer necessary.

Counter-arguments

1. Nigerian builders, mechanics, etc., are less efficient and more sloppy. That is to be granted and it is something we shall have to put up with – as we in Wukari have had to for some time already. But we are still here as a mission and life continues to be quite bearable. This counter argument would require that the Building Dept. would be the last department to be disbanded.

2. How can the so-called outstations be supplied? This problem could be solved by having one Nigerian agent stationed in Takum and one in Gboko who would be responsible for the purchasing of necessary supplies and arrange for their transportation. He would also see to various needs that might arise, especially for the more remote stations. Furthermore, each remote station could possibly have assigned to it a particular Jos-based staff member who would do any Jos purchasing such stations would require.

Additional comments:

1. Of course. I realize that my proposal might give rise to more problems than I personally foresee, but I cannot believe they would be insurmountable. On the other hand, I am convinced that whatever the cost in terms of comfort and efficiency, the missionary cause would profit from the greater integration of the mission with Nigerian economic life.

2. My proposal does not aim to eliminate the need for the mission to own cars. Those requiring regular use of vehicles for their work should not be forced to buy

their own, though they might be encouraged. Those living in areas where there are no real mechanics would thus be forced into expenses considerably higher than those living in larger centres. There are private circumstances that might prevent a missionary from purchasing his own car even though he needs one for his daily work.

Yours in Christ,

John H. Boer