

languages and dialects spoken by the indigenous population of Liberia, with the exception of Vai, has ever had any written script. To overcome this difficulty, the Liberian Government enlisted the co-operation of a noted world literacy expert, Dr. Frank Laubach, who devised a visual method of teaching alphabets for eight Liberian languages.

For each language, thousands of sets of lessons and pictures were printed for free distribution at the Government's expense.

In one village, the local chief said, "I thought only young people could read, but now I see I can learn easily too."

The purpose of Dr. Laubach's method is to associate the shape of the letters with meaning and sound. Once the tribesmen learn the roman letters through the medium of their own language, they can then learn English, both written and spoken, more easily.



In this picture we see a woman who has learned to read, teaching one who has not yet learned.

Liberia, an independent republic, founded over a hundred years ago by freed American negro slaves, has a very large tribal population who cannot read or write and knows no English, Liberia's official language. "Educational" games are encouraged by the Government as a "painless" way of learning. One of the most popular is the letter card game. Open air classes for adults have become the most important part of the campaign and many areas, hitherto isolated, have been opened up by new roads and railways built to haul iron ore from the interior. The advantages of education are well realised by Paramount Chief Ahamadu of the Dey Tribe. For years he had wanted to build a road linking his village with the ocean, 22 miles away.

The labour was there, all he needed was some tools from the Government. But he could not write, so he waited.

By chance an educated Liberian passed through the village with a typewriter. This was the Chief's great opportunity, and he dictated his request. The letter reached Liberia's President. Soon the Government sent tools and the village got its road at last.

This campaign of education in Liberia is only one of a great many undertaken by U.N.O., for it is determined that the coloured peoples of the world must play an important part in the administration of their own countries . . . something they cannot do if they lack education.

ARE ABORIGINES OPPRESSED!

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"A fair bit of technical skill is needed in my present job as fitter's assistant, and I claim, without boasting, that an aborigine is in every sense as capable, with the right training, as a white man."

"As for the liquor question, of course you will find some who can't carry their drink. Don't you see plenty of white drunks? But it's nonsense to pretend that because a man's dark he's physically different."

"Given the same conditions, he should be allowed the same privileges as a white man. If any of us overstep the mark then apply the same discipline . . . order us out of the pub, or, if we become worse nuisances, arrest us. Of course, we know that these laws are made for our protection, but to my mind they are unsound."

At least as far as Fred Foster and some other "dark" folk are concerned, the proprietor and white patrons of the Captain Cook Hotel at Botany are in complete agreement.

"You won't find more gentlemanly chaps anywhere," says the licensee, Mr. Ashton (who, incidentally, is an Englishman).

"They're real white blokes," concurs a regular customer without intending to be funny. "Look at Bob Timberry. You won't find a nicer or quieter little man in a day's march."

There is a rumble of agreement from the front bar.

Bob Timberry IS a nice bloke. Perhaps he has some of the dignity of his great grandfather, King Joey, last ruler of the Illawarra tribe. Now 56, with grizzled hair, but still bright childlike eyes, Bob works at Farleighs Tannery along Coward Street at Mascot. He is a good worker and liked by his mates.

He has no grumbles whatever. "I'm not penalised in any way because of my colour," he says, "though it may be different in other parts. Dark fellers around Botany or Yarra Bay are treated just the same as whites."

"Up north, a good many years ago, I remember it wasn't like that. We were living sort of under two flags. I've seen young fellers up near Lismore chucked out of the reserve because they played up, and then on top of that fined a couple of quid at the court."

He is one with Foster on the liquor question. "We can be just as well behaved as whites; a few beers can't hurt us. After all, our stomachs are made the same."

What is the verdict of the Botany police?

"We never have any trouble with them. As far as we are concerned you'd hardly know they existed."