

BCAF MEMO

Update for BCAF committee members

OCTOBER, 1988

Dear committee members,

In order to most effectively maximize on that valuable but insufficient commodity called TIME, I have chosen this news-letter method by which to bring all committee members up to date on what has been happening during the past few months with regard to Kenya.

In the planning stages is a proposed visit to Kenya. God willing, bro Bob, bro Lowell, and I will be spending a week in the Nairobi and Webuye (Bungoma) areas during the first part of December. We were somewhat concerned that such a visit at this time may be accompanied by the risk of conflict with the authorities. I put the matter to the lawyer for advice, and just a few days ago she replied that there would be no risk or danger from an informal discussion with our members providing the discussions were non-political.

The purpose of the visit will be to address areas of concern to us; current issues and problems some of which could get out of hand if not addressed promptly.

I will attempt to itemize these for your information:

1. REGISTRATION:

The wheels of progress continue to grind slow, but at least they are grinding! To date, we have received a request from the lawyer for some copies of the Berean magazine, the plot number for the land where the Kenya headquarters are to be located, and also for a copy of the Constitution of Berean ecclesias in North America. We responded by sending along with the copies of the magazine, a copy of The Berean Basis of Fellowship. This should give all they need to know - and more. I thought it better to send that particular form of the Constitution rather than the Birmingham version because it is directly and specifically related to the situation of Berean ecclesias where ever they are.

I just recently received acknowledgement from the lawyer that the material had arrived. The matter of the plot number was referred to bro Epaphras.

2. WELFARE ASSESSMENT:

A re-assessment of the state of welfare of the brethren and sisters is necessary at this time; not that the BCACK (Berean Christadelphian Assistance Committee in Kenya) are incapable of doing that, but, as will be explained later in this news-letter, the credibility of the BCACK needs to be re-established in the eyes of the general membership. The situation of bro David Njoka will require special assessment. He is quite destitute and is a very sick man. We will try to determine what will be the most effective way to minister to his needs.

3. BRO PHILIP WEKATI:

Apparently the charges leveled by some regarding bro Philip's political involvement are true. Recently, bro Philip was withdrawn from on account of having successfully contested a seat in the Kenya Government. This came as a great disappointment to all of us - but most of all to the brethren and sisters there. Particularly we feel for bro Epaphras. Cer-

tainly this is not an easy time for him; his stalwart stand for the sake of the Truth in the face of such circumstances is to be admired and respected.

We will have to assess the situation when we arrive to see how others have been affected, how they are reacting, and if there is anything that we can do to salvage the situation or at least to help them to cope with the loss of a brother who apparently many had looked up to for example and leadership.

4. BRO STEPHEN WATITI:

There still appears to be a problem regarding bro Stephen's attitude toward and use of assistance funds. It appears as though bro Stephen has a preoccupation with assistance almost to the point of giving it higher priority than the spiritual aspects of the Truth. It also appears as though he has been applying for (and receiving) funds not only from the BCAF but also from the C.B.M. (Christadelphian Bible Mission - a Central organization). It will be necessary to investigate his sincerity for the Truth, as well as his overall knowledge of it. Bro Epaphras has reservations about bro Stephen's basic understanding of the Gospel.

5. BRO JOSHUA CHESOLI:

We are proceeding with caution. Here also there are some

question marks regarding sincerity and integrity that we would like to clear up with all concerned once and for all. Bro Epaphras has some reluctance to work with bro Joshua on account of past experiences. We have learned to respect bro Epaphras's judgement and precautions. He has always been very fair and patient with everyone, and generally has very good reason for what he says and does.

6. MATERIAL vs. SPIRITUAL:

In general, there seems to be a need once again to set things into perspective regarding the relationship of the material to the spiritual. The emphasis has unfortunately been shifted more to the financial and material help that each member will receive, or rather, to what each member feels that they are entitled to receive as a member of the Bereans. Some of this can be traced back to what happened last winter when the Kenyan bre & sis were encouraged to write directly to the administrator of BCAF funds for Kenya, stating their needs - with the implication that what they asked for would be supplied, or at least that appears to be how they understood it. Also implied was the inadequacy and incompetence of the BCACK to do their job properly in representing to us the needs of the bre & sis there. The outcome was that the BCACK resigned on account

of the fact that their credibility with the bre & sis had been called into question and severely impaired. We acted on the matter as quickly as possible and took corrective measures, resulting in the complete reinstatement of the BCACK, with the understanding that the needs of the Kenyan bre & sis MUST be represented through the BCACK, and that funds in general (with one or two exceptions for the sake of expediency) MUST be administered through the BCACK. There is, however, a reluctance on the part of some to co-operate on this basis. In the eyes of some, the BCACK still lacks credibility, that is, there is the feeling that the brethren on the BCACK are not accurately representing the policy of the BCAF; and also that more funds are being sent over than what the bre & sis are receiving, the implication being that the brethren on the BCACK are lining their own pockets or financing their personal projects. We know for a fact that such is not the case, and that the brethren making these charges have a greatly distorted idea of the amounts that are actually being sent over.

With all this taking place, the priorities have become inverted somewhat from their proper and rightful position in the minds of many. The members of the BCACK have not been affected personally by this shift of priorities, however, and indeed are able to see the

danger that could result from all the hype and publicity that the matter of welfare assistance has been receiving. Our object in this is to clear up matters as quickly and as cleanly as possible, restating the objectives and restoring credibility to the BCACK, i.e. that they DO represent the policy of the BCAF, and that they have duly and as fairly as possible distributed the funds as instructed. We may be forced to stress that if welfare matters continue to take precedence over spiritual matters, we may have no alternative but to discontinue the assistance program. The Bereans are not a welfare organization that one joins in order to receive a monthly cheque! If that is truly how Bereans are beginning to be perceived in the minds of some, we may have to take some rather drastic corrective measures to get things back on track as they should be. Our policy and reasons for the assistance program have been clearly stated and outlined in previous reports. We will not deviate therefrom.

7. BCACK PERSONAL VISITS:

As per our suggestions, the three members of the BCACK have started to pay personal visits to the ecclesias every four months in order to have a first-hand knowledge of conditions. Some things which they have noticed and reported are disturbing to us, although we

are pleased that they are doing a good job in striving to attend to the spiritual welfare of all members. What they have found is not entirely new or surprising to us, but does support some premonitions that we were feeling. We will not say more on this matter until we are certain - and hopefully by that time things will be resolved. We have been receiving conflicting reports, and really this is part of the problem as outlined in #8 immediately following:

8. METHOD FOR SETTLING DISAGREEMENTS:

There is a need for more instruction regarding the scriptural method to be used in the settlement of disagreements and disputes among brethren and sisters (i.e. Matt. 18). There is too much indiscriminate writing by some Kenyan bre & sis to bre & sis abroad - i.e. North America, Australia, & England, containing allegations and charges, some of which are little more than unsubstantiated gossip, and some of which may be true, but all of which pertains to local matters and local bre & sis. This should not be. There is a scriptural method of dealing with these problems, and we will endeavor to get this message across, not only just to those concerned, but to all the brethren and sisters there. They must all learn, as we must all learn, to deal with problems amongst ourselves discreetly,

wisely, & above all, scripturally.

These are some of the main issues that need to be addressed quickly, and are collectively the reason we decided that another visit was necessary by two or three that have been in touch with these things over the years that Bereans have been in Kenya. Any one or two of the above items taken by themselves could probably be handled through regular correspondence. All of them together, however, is too much of a plateful for the ponderousness of the mail system. There is also a need, we feel, for the kind of encouragement that can only be obtained through the fellowship and association of personal contact. This is vital for all of our Kenyan brethren and sisters during this crisis that they are going through on account of bro Philip Wekati's actions. In particular, I believe that personal contact at this time could be crucial and vital for bro Epaphras, as he will be acutely feeling the stress and burden of the situation, and the pressure of his responsibility now as the sole mainstay and spokesman and example and teacher and examiner for the Berean believers in Kenya.

OTHER THINGS THAT WE AS THE BCAF COMMITTEE NEED TO THINK ABOUT:

1. A suggestion has been put forward regarding special indi-

vidual sponsorship of students, more or less on a one to one basis. Give some thought as to how this could work and be administered effectively. I am quite enthusiastic about the idea. It would be the answer to a lot of problems, as currently the fund cannot afford to sponsor more than six students. There are simply too many other needs relative to the amount of funds that we have to work with on a month to month basis.

2. BCAF committee organization - who, how many, and how to structure it to work smoothly and effectively. I feel it necessary to perhaps have a body of directors as well, to whom the BCAF committee would be answerable. Perhaps this is getting too complex, but both bro Bob and I feel the weight of making decisions that affect so many in the balance. It is an awesome responsibility for only two or three. I feel it is a responsibility that should be shared by more individuals, but not so many as to make the process cumbersome and unworkable. However, it should also be said and noted that we do have "unofficial" consultants that we have been in touch with whenever an impor-

tant decision has been in the offing, and by that means we have felt comfortable that the decisions we have made to date were in keeping with the will of the brotherhood in general.

3. A suggestion has been made regarding the establishment of a system of libraries in Kenya. The suggestion, as presented to me, indicates that initially this would consist of starting one small library (in addition to the library already existing in Kimikungi, the status of which is not yet known since the dis-fellowship of bro Philip Wekati) of the major well-known and proven works of the pioneer brethren, set up in such a way that one brother or sister could look after it with minimal supervision on the part of the committee. Some of the BCAF funds could be channelled toward this work. Possibly in time more libraries could be set up. What do you think?

4. I will be writing to bro Mark Johannatty requesting that he continue his efforts to circulate to the Kenyan brethren and sisters a newsletter of spiritual content.

5. I am very pleased to report that since the BCACK reorganized, bro Epa has been

much more prompt & current in the providing of reports and financial statements. I had asked him not to bother typing them out. I think that was a problem for him. This way he has only to photocopy his notes and send them on. I will try to be as prompt in forwarding these reports to you as soon as they are received.

Hopefully this will be of some help in bringing you up to date on matters relating to Kenya. There is so much to do; we need help, and any comments and input that you would like to share with us will be most appreciated. Talk about Kenya to the members of your respective ecclesias, keep them informed as data is relayed to you, and solicit their comments and suggestions.

Remember, the bottom line of the BCAF is that it is a channel of assistance BY the members FOR the members, a medium through which those who would like to help, and are able to help, are linked with those who are in need. The objective cannot be more simply stated.

Respectfully, your brother in grace,

Ed Truelove
Secretary, BCAF