

APARTHEID AND THE MEDICAL SCHOOL

It seems to have surprised many people that the Government has declared its aim to transfer administrative control of the Medical School, Durban, from the University of Natal, to the University of South Africa. Already the liberal professors have filled buckets with crocodile tears and volumes with print expressing their indignation, concern and surprise over this move. Yet this should have been expected a long time ago, and instead of making pious platitudes about the whole business, we would be better served if we thought seriously over its meaning and implications.

As long ago as 1948, soon after its sweep to power, the Nationalist government declared that it was not content to allow education for blacks to proceed on even remotely similar lines to that for whites. The sooner the black intellectual was taught his place, the better! At that time already they came out with their policy of establishing "nigger universities" for the blacks; bantuisd schooling for the African children; Colouredised schooling for the Coloured children and a tribalised, sectarian schooling for the Indians. Slowly but inexorably they set in motion the machinery for crushing education amongst the oppressed and splitting us into various racial kraals.

The Eiselen Commission Report emerged as the Bantu Education Act; the De Vos-Malan Commission was laying the basis for a Coloured Education Act; the introduction of Religious Instruction in Indian Schools is the thin end of the wedge for an Indian Education Act. And side by side with this is the development of the process: of creating second grade universities for second grade people.

But whilst this was going on all the liberals could do was to blandish about the slogan of "Academic Non Segregation". Many of us were gullible enough to swallow this nonsense that we forgot all about the wider issues of segregation itself, and now are also busy shedding tears over the "loss of status" of the Universities. And yet out of all this one thing has emerged clearly, that ought to be a signal lesson to. That the policy of appeasement always means a loss to the oppressed.

It is not without significance that the first University to be attacked is that of Natal, for it has always been the first to try and appease the temporal gods of the South African Herrenvolk. When there was no compulsion on them they refused to throw their doors wide open to the non-whites but created instead the "Non-European Section". When the rest of South Africa cried out in protest they hailed the establishment of a segregated medical school. When they found students qualifying for the law courses but realised that it might mean admitting them into mixed classes with white students, they promptly disbanded the law classes for blacks. But they have the effrontery to protest that the control of the medical school is being taken away from them for political reasons! It is time, we, the oppressed said to them: "Come to us with clean hands."

It is for these reasons that we say that the medical school issue is nothing new, nothing surprising. The writing is on the wall the minute the first bricks were laid. The next step is this game with us as the pawns is the transfer of all education to various departments of state, each with its own racialistic basis. It is for these reasons that we condemn not only this latest move, but condemn the whole system of oppression which divides us piecemeal into little bits of colour and destroys human values and human traditions, not only in education.

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