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URBAN AFRICAN AFFAIRS

Bantu Affairs Administration Boards (BAAB)

“Bantu Affairs Administration Boards are a fact of life in Black urban townships from which African people have literally on escape.”¹

They were introduced three years ago (1973) by Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr R. N. H. ‘Punt’ Janson. “Since then the harvest of complaints, discontent and finally exasperation and fury has been a big one.”

The urban African is told what to do in every serious matter concerning his daily life and where he may live by the Boards. The Bantu Administration and Development Department is a government within a government and its officials are accountable to a government department rather than to a country.

Mr Janson is reported to have once said that the Boards would become the organisations on which African workers would be dependent for their physical and spiritual welfare. The Boards’ officials would be the first line of contact between the White authority in South Africa and the citizens of the homeland governments.

The administration of Black townships was taken over by 22 State-controlled Bantu Affairs Administration Boards on 1 August 1973. Only Nationalists or sympathisers are “appointed chairmen of the Boards”.

There have been complaints about the Boards and urban Africans have been calling for a Commission of Inquiry into the Boards. A Nationalist MPC for Vryheid said in September 1975, that “the only

achievement of the Boards had been to become the biggest beer brewers in the world—and to double the price of the beer. The Boards had failed to make Black labour more easily obtainable in White areas. Mr Liebenberg (MPC Vryheid) said the Boards' actions in entering and searching homes and farms for illegal workers were harming race relations and he knew farms where workers fled when one of the Boards' vehicles arrived. They had become bureaucracies, had set themselves high salaries."

The Language Issue

In 1974 a circular from the Department of Bantu Education was sent to school principals. It stated a new policy: from 1975 English and Afrikaans were to be used on a 50-50 basis as mediums of instruction in schools situated in White areas. English was to be used as a medium of instruction in general science and practical subjects like homecraft, needlework, wood and metal work, art and agricultural science. Afrikaans was to be used in mathematics, arithmetic, geography and history. Mother-tongue instruction was to be used for religious instruction, music and physical culture.

This move by the Department of Bantu Education was condemned by a very large majority of Africans, both educationists and laymen.

The General Secretary of African Teachers Association, Mr H. H. Dlamlenze, expressed the feelings of African educationists when he said, "To say that the Blacks are opposed to the study of Afrikaans is a gross understatement In strict terms what we oppose now is the manner in which this is being done without regard to the interests of the children concerned. And if this trend continues without being checked then the education of the Black child will be seriously threatened" He went on to say that most teachers were not fully trained to teach in the medium of Afrikaans.

In spite of the fact that teachers were not equipped to teach in Afrikaans Mr Dlamlenze continued, "Some white inspectors are pressing the point regardless of whether this is in keeping with recognised educational practices or not. It is to be appreciated that these very inspectors have promised to assist but one cannot see how they can do this without lowering the standard and having to push children forward when in fact they know little of the subject, much to their own disadvantage"

He (Mr Dlamlenze) was happy, however, that the head office of the Department of Bantu Education had allowed deviations where there were problems but the inspectorate, in some cases the very men who hold the key, seemed to build up a wall of resistance to this deviation.²

There was a strong resentment by civic leaders against the behaviour of school inspectors in Soweto. Mr Peter Lengene, former mayor of Soweto, said, "Education is a professional matter. But in Soweto,

inspectors of schools are turning the issue into a political matter. It is unfortunate that we have to deal with school inspectors who are politicians and not educationalists. It's high time the Secretary for Bantu Education, or the Minister himself, got into this matter. It is already getting out of hand." Mr Maponya, an Urban Bantu Council member, felt that the activities of school boards were being frustrated by 'over-zealous' inspectors.³

Members of school boards voiced their misgivings to school inspectors about the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. It is reported that the inspectors told them that compulsory Afrikaans had been laid down by the Department of Bantu Education and therefore they could not help. The Inspectors further pointed out that teachers had stated that they were bilingual when they completed their application forms for posts. Board members were further told that that was a "professional matter and out of their scope".⁴

"Mr A. P. Treunicht, the Deputy Minister of Bantu Education, is reported to have said that Afrikaans was used as medium of instruction in the 'interests' of Africans The Government's policy was that both official languages must be given equal treatment."⁵

When the language question was discussed in Parliament in 1975, Mr Janson said he "thought it a good thing that everyone should learn as many languages as possible. An African might find that 'the big boss' only spoke Afrikaans or only spoke English. It would be to his advantage to know both languages." Asked if he had consulted the Black people, Mr Janson said that he had "only consulted the constitution of South Africa".⁶

In May and June 1976 pupils from seven Soweto schools boycotted classes following an order that they be taught half of their subjects in Afrikaans. More than 500 pupils at the Phefeni Junior Secondary School refused to attend classes on 17 May in protest against the order. It is reported that they stoned the principal's office and beat on his car.⁷

Meanwhile, a school circuit inspector, Mr M. C. de Beer, gave them three days to return to classes or face expulsion. On 19 May a school at Orlando West joined the boycott. By the beginning of June about six schools had joined the boycott and one school board had resigned over the language issue. On 4 June pupils who continued to attend were stoned. Students at Naledi High School set fire to a police car after security police tried to arrest a student. The police were told that there would be trouble if they arrested him. Their car tyres were deflated and they had to get help.

When the Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr Willem Cruywagen, was asked about the boycott of classes, he replied that five of the schools involved had applied for permission to deviate from the Afrikaans medium of instruction *but* the applications had been refused.

On 14 June Mr Mosala, the deputy leader of Soweto Progressive Party, warned of the possibility of another Sharpeville. He said that Soweto was heading for "very ugly scenes that will come through our children who are tired of being made to accept what they don't like".⁸

THE RIOTS

Soweto and the Transvaal

On 16 June "Police threw teargas canisters and fired shots into a crowd of about 10 000 pupils demonstrating (outside the Orlando West Junior Secondary School) against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction."⁹ At least one pupil was killed and a White official was clubbed to death in revenge. Police arrived in vans while pupils were assembled and singing the National Anthem. A *Rand Daily Mail* reporter wrote, "I did not hear the police give any order to disperse before they threw teargas canisters into the crowd of singing school children. The children scattered in all directions The pupils then regrouped and when the police charged again, they threw stones at the police. The police then fired a few shots, some in the air and others into the crowd. I saw four school children fall to the ground. . . . A white man was dragged from a West Rand Board vehicle, beaten with stones, clubbed with sticks and left dead. He was later picked up by students and thrown into a rubbish bin. Some remarked: "This is where he belongs".¹⁰

By 18 June the number of those shot dead was estimated at 50 and those injured were said to be 250.

Meanwhile Government spokesmen accused what they called 'known agitators' as elements behind the riots. Government spokesmen and the Prime Minister said that the riots were being used to stop the Vorster/Kissinger talks. Blacks and many English newspapers blamed the whole apartheid structure for the riots. The *Rand Daily Mail* had this to say, "The compulsory use of Afrikaans by teachers and pupils who are not at home in the language did play a role. So did agitation. But that does not diagnose the disease. These are merely symptoms. Only people with legitimate grievances are susceptible to agitation on a large scale. Can we honestly say that the hundreds of thousands living in Soweto alongside the splendour of a rich city have no reason to be dissatisfied with many aspects of their existence?

"Basic living facilities are lacking, sufficient protection, adequate street lighting, shopping facilities, electricity Now we hear that

police had to shoot; water canons could not be used against rioters because there is not enough water.”¹¹

Mr Hlaku Rachidi, president of Black People’s Convention, said that it would be difficult to restore the ‘old order’ in townships. “The authorities, the parents and the teachers are going to be faced with a new child. The kids have learned a whole political lesson during the last week They are rejecting the imposition of the whole White establishment and system plus the norms and values of Whites The BPC interprets this as Black Consciousness in the kids. It is gut reaction, not lofty philosophy, and it reflects and articulates the feelings of the people.”¹²

On 17 June the riots spread to schools in the Orange Free State.

On 18 June the West Rand Administration Board (WRAB) reported 21 offices burnt out and ten plundered, three schools burnt or plundered, bottle stores plundered or robbed, a bank, a library and filling stations destroyed and beer halls damaged. Mr Mulder (Chairman of the WRAB) said that the WRAB offices had clearly been prime target—“it represented the White man’s property”.¹³

The Minister of Justice, Mr Jimmy Kruger, appointed Mr Justice J. P. Cillie, Judge President of the Transvaal, to conduct a one man inquiry into the riots. Black leaders asked that there be a Black man on the Commission. This request was not accepted.

On the same day Mr Vorster, the Prime Minister, made the following statement in the House of Assembly, “I have to inform the House that the police have orders to use all the means at their disposal, without fear or favour, to protect life and property. I can, unfortunately, come to no other conclusion than that we do not have to deal with a spontaneous outburst but with a deliberate attempt to encourage polarisation between Black and White Orders have been given to maintain order at all costs.”

All meetings (except sports meetings, and meetings held indoors or meetings specially authorised by the Minister [Justice] or Magistrate of the area) were banned under Riotous Assemblies Act as the riots spread to the rest of the provinces.

The riots had (by 22 June) spread to the East Rand, Pretoria Black Townships, Witsieshoek, Duduza (Nigel) and Lebowa.

By 26 June, 176 people had died. The Minister of Justice postponed the opening of African schools. On 16 July the preventive detention sections of the Internal Security Act were put into operation for the first time in the Transvaal.

On 17 July the Cillie Commission of Inquiry started. Evidence was to be led by Dr Percy Yutar S.C. assisted by Mr P. B. Jacobs and Mr A. M. Hlungwani. Meanwhile violence again erupted in Soweto.

On 23 August Soweto workers were told not to go to work for

three days. On 24 August vigilante groups in Soweto, made up mostly of Zulus, escorted workers from work. On the 25th and 26th a Zulu impi attacked Soweto residents. Chief Gatsha Buthelezi went to Johannesburg where he alleged that hostel dwellers were urged by police to attack the residents. A number of reporters reported seeing police urging the hostel dwellers to attack the residents.

Meanwhile the riots were still going on at the time of going to print and the police were still looking for the leader of Soweto Students Representative Council—Tsietshi Mashinini.

Natal

Between 15 and 17 June 1976 Natal papers reported that all was quiet in Natal. On 18 June the University of Zululand was set on fire and White staff members were attacked.

The Administration building and its extension were almost burnt out. Most of the University records were destroyed. The NG Kerk on the campus and the library were badly damaged with windows smashed, furniture destroyed and part of the library catalogue destroyed. Several vehicles including a bus and a mini-bus were burnt out, stoned or had their windows smashed. Two staff members were badly injured.

The rector of the University, Professor Marie, said that he believed that the Soweto riots and the attack on the University were part of a national plan to wreck the meeting between the Prime Minister, Mr Vorster and Dr Kissinger.

The students' view was that the burning of a university was a way of protest against the shooting of school children in Soweto and to express solidarity with them over the Afrikaans issue.

The University was closed and it will be re-opened at the beginning of 1977. Many students have since been arrested and are being held under Terrorism Act (Section 6), apparently for interrogation.

The library at the University of Natal Medical School was burnt down and the University was closed before the end of the first semester, following the arrest of about 99 medical students after they attempted to march into the city from the Medical School. These students were later charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act. They all paid admission of guilt of R50 each.

On 24 July a high school at Tugela Ferry—Umsinga was burnt down.

On 25 July a library was damaged at Vryheid High School.

On 19 September a classroom at Umlazi Technical College was burnt down and type-writers were destroyed.

At the beginning of August students at the University of Durban-Westville boycotted lectures in protest against the police shootings in Soweto and other places. Three of their leaders were arrested and they are still in detention.

Cape Province

On 18 July Fort Hare students shattered windows and tried to set buildings alight. The University was closed. It was later re-opened in August. Again an attempt was made to set a building on fire. It was closed again and it will now re-open on 4 October according to a statement by the University authorities following representations by some parents.

At Lovedale College the administration building was destroyed together with the offices of the circuit Inspector of the Department of Education in the Ciskei. A store-room at Lovedale Press was also damaged by fire.

On 5 August about 800 students from the University of Western Cape boycotted lectures in protest against the boycotts.

Riots broke out in African townships of Langa and Gugulethu in Cape Town on 15 August. On the 24th there was rioting in the Coloured townships of Bonteheuwel, and all over the Cape Flats. Fourteen people were shot dead, 28 injured and 31 arrested in Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage.

Riots and shootings continued in Black areas of Cape Town and the Minister of Justice banned meetings until 31 October. By the 2nd of September riots had spread to Adderley Street in Cape Town. By the 8th of September the following places had been affected by the riots: Ravensmead, Tiervlei, Gugulethu, Nyanga, University of Western Cape, Athlone, Uitsig, Elsiesriver and the Grand Parade in the centre of Cape Town.

Riots spread to Kimberley where a beer hall and Bantu Administration buildings were smashed at Galeshewe township. Students at the University of Stellenbosch stood guard with sticks on 9 September 'as a safety measure'.

On 9 September 14 people died in Cape Town alone and 19 were seriously injured, 30 were arrested.

At the time of publication there was an uneasy calm in Black areas. The very conservative count was 371 dead, unknown number injured and about 5 000 arrested.

Reactions to Riots

Mr Kruger (Minister of Justice) blamed what he called 'Black Consciousness Movements', University Christian Movement, the PAC and the ANC for playing a role in organising the riots. He is reported to have said, "Those who want confrontation must be given it because we are sick and tired of the troubles they have caused and the country could not live with it permanently We must show the Black man with words and deeds what Black Power ideology is and that it is not worth keeping because he cannot win a

confrontation. . . . We must bring home to the Blacks the only way to avoid confrontation is through separate development”.

When Mr Vorster (Prime Minister) was asked to take a closer look at his policy and change it, he told the leader of the opposition (Sir de Villiers Graaff) that he was not prepared to do so—riots or no riots. Otherwise the Prime Minister has been noticeably quiet over the riots.

In a press statement the National Vice-President of Black People's Convention, Mxolisi Mvovo, said:

**Mr Mvovo has subsequently been banned
so it is not possible to quote him**

All statements hitherto emanating from the Nationalist Cabinet, especially in the person of Mr Kruger, the Minister of Justice, Police and Prisons, have shown a complete inaptitude on the part of this Government to grapple realistically with the root causes of the disturbances. Equally so, the Government is refusing to move away from its racially bigotted attachment to separation of races at the expense of the black man through his subservience to the white power structure.

This insensitivity of the Government to the real problems of our society is very clearly shown in the recent statement by Mr Kruger where he says: “We are committed to getting rid of discrimination and making South Africa a happy and easy place for everybody to live in”, and in the same breath goes on to say “apartheid is the only method in which we can live in peace in this country.”

BPC wishes to warn not only Blacks, but indeed all men and women of goodwill in South Africa, that this kind of utterance can only serve

to provide more fuel to the protests and disturbances now going on in the country because of its utter short-sightedness, arrogance and insensitivity.

BPC also feels concerned at the self-deceit on the part of the present government which it shows through its tendency to listen and talk to dummy institutions like the Urban Bantu Councils and Bantustan governments set up by them through the apartheid formula. There is no gainsaying the fact that these institutions have long been rejected by Blacks and are seen as mere extensions of the enemy into our ranks. When the Government therefore claims to be talking to the leaders of Blacks when consulting with these institutions they are, in fact, begging the question and insulting to Blacks. It is high time that the Government accepted once and for all that what they regard as being good for Blacks is often rightly seen as poison by Blacks.

Homeland leaders had this to say about the riots.

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi: The blame for riots lay squarely on the shoulders of the Prime Minister and the White electorate who had vested its mandate in him.

Dr Cedric Phatudi: “. . . . the seeds of discontent are within the country, not outside.”¹⁴

Professor Hudson Ntsanwisi: “The Government itself has contributed to the accusation that we are irrelevant (since they could not diffuse the riots) by ignoring the genuine representations that we have made for our people.”¹⁵

The *London Daily Express* blamed the Afrikaner race policy for unrest saying that in practice apartheid “is a system of exploitation”. The *London Daily Telegraph* asked whether the Nationalist Government had “a policy other than that of sheer, physical repression”.¹⁶

The *Times* of India reported that “it (the riot) has brought home to the White minority regime in Pretoria that it can no longer terrorise the Black people into silence and surrender The youths are no longer afraid of reprisals by the Whites and their parents know they cannot win the respect of their children unless they stand up and fight for their rights. This psychological revolution cannot be undone, whatever else happens in South Africa in the short run.”¹⁷

President Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast said, “They (the riots) have been caused by a decolonisation process which has been blocked by the obstinancy of the White minority. The Whites in South Africa do not seem to realise that their days of supremacy are over. They should realise that one day it all has to end.”¹⁸

Mrs Sheena Duncan, President of the Black Sash, said, “The children of Soweto have shown us all the inevitable consequences if this Government continues to display the insane arrogance and power-satiated race pride which is rapidly bringing us all to disaster.”¹⁹

The Black Allied Workers Union protested strongly against the police shooting and the use of dogs. It called the children's protest "a legitimate cry that deserved serious attention. The minority group cannot force their language down our throats and those of our children."

The Methodist Church of South Africa released this statement: "We believe it is an instance of incitement at its worst to suggest that the horror of these days is solely or even primarily the product of agitators." The suggestion "is not only a vain attempt to declare one's guiltlessness, but fails to solicit in trust and dialogue the understanding of the Black community concerning the reasons for unrest."²⁰

The South African Council of Churches released the following statement: "The fact that the confrontation involved school children has the frightening implication that black grievances are not only a matter of politics, but have become a matter of intense and widespread agony, felt even by children The people of South Africa and the authorities in particular must heed the deep hurt, anger, and frustration which the apartheid system has bred in the heart of all Black South Africans."²¹

The African Independent Churches called "upon the Government to remove all the root causes of misunderstanding and friction between White and Black"

The Inter-Denominational African Ministers' Association of South Africa (IDAMASA) expressed "Their abhorrence of the acts of violence perpetrated by the police on Blacks now, and in the past, which has now spread from adults to children whilst decisions are made for Black people and not with them and by them there shall continue to be dissatisfaction and race relations in this country will continue to be unhealthy."²²

Diakonia, an association of churches in the Greater Durban Area, urges all its members "to listen to the anguished plea of Black people which has so often gone unanswered and has now resulted in violence. Though we deplore violence as a means of affecting change, we have little difficulty in understanding why such an explosion of rage has taken place.

"We realise that many of our White Christians will not understand, and that they see in the riots an unjustified outburst we earnestly urge our members to take note of the deep groundswell of bitterness and resentment that exists among Black people throughout our country, and that can so easily be fanned into violence. If attention is not paid to the well-known causes of that discontent, no amount of security legislation, repression, deportations, detentions or bannings will give this country genuine and lasting peace."²³

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