

BANTU EDUCATION IN ACTION

By **DUMA NOKWE**

WHEN Bantu Education was introduced, Dr. Verwoerd wrapped it up in apparently 'progressive principles.' These were, firstly the separation of educational and religious institutions, and the transfer of the control of education to the state. Secondly, there was the much boosted extension of the control of education directly to the African people through School Committees. Thirdly, the introduction of mother-tongue instruction. It was not difficult to strip Dr. Verwoerd's schemes of the appearance of progressiveness and to expose Bantu education for what it is—a treacherous attempt to destroy the critical and creative abilities of the African people, and to restrict their ambitions within the narrow confines which the Nationalists design and desire should be the functions of the members of 'Bantu Society.' The publication of syllabuses for the Lower Primary Course and the Higher Primary Course, have confirmed the predictions of the people as to the true purpose of Bantu education.

THE NEW SYLLABUS

In both cases Dr. H. F. Verwoerd has invited criticism of the syllabuses, and he contends that they are unassailable from the point of view of modern progressive educational principles. But Dr. Verwoerd has no regard for criticism; if he had, he would long have abandoned his post and his Party. These invitations for criticism are intended to shield the ruthless autocracy with which the Nationalists implement their schemes. The Nationalists hate criticism and are determined to punish it severely. The volume of protest and criticism against the very introduction of Bantu Education met with the most scathing retorts and contemptuous dismissal in government circles. Teachers who will in the main be responsible for the implementation of Bantu education have been forbidden from criticising the policy of the Native Affairs Department, and whoever criticises the syllabus adversely will be a marked man. No amount of criticism, therefore, will persuade the Nationalists to modify or abandon their plans.

There was a mixed reaction to the Syllabuses, as there was to the introduction of Bantu Education. Some people (fortunately only a small, and relatively uninfluential section of the people) adopted the attitude that there was no fundamental change which had been introduced by Bantu Education. Native education, they argued, was as much an education created by the ruling class for the oppressed people as Bantu Education was. It was further argued that whatever dangerous innovations there might be in Bantu Education these could be remedied by raising the political consciousness of the teachers so that they teach that which would liberate the children rather than what would enslave them mentally. Another group (consisting mainly of teachers) which whilst admitting the destructive nature of Bantu Education regarded it as an insult to suggest that teachers could willingly 'inject poison' into their own children. Before assessing the role of the African teacher

in Bantu Education, it is necessary to examine some aspects of the syllabus for the Higher Primary Course (Std. III to Std VI).

The medium of instruction throughout the whole course is vernacular, except in the case of English and Afrikaans. The following are the subjects and the time allocated to each is indicated in brackets in minutes per week: Religious instruction (100), Afrikaans (205), English (205), Arithmetic (180), Social Studies (180), Health Education (150), Nature Study (60), Singing and games (60), Needlework (for girls), Tree planting and soil conservation, Handwork and Homecraft, and Gardening for Boys and Girls (each 120). It should be noted that out of a total of 1,650 min. per week, 360 minutes or nearly a quarter of the time is spent in handwork, gardening or tree-planting and soil conservation. In addition, the Nature Study course provides for practical work for all classes which includes the 'collection of weeds' and this resembles Dickens' 'Do-the-Boys School.' In the words of the syllabus the primary aim is to inculcate the attitude that "work ennobles."

The moral and mental training of the child is provided by a subject called Social Studies. This is really a training in Nationalist policy under the guise of Geography, History, Citizenship and Good Conduct. There is no clearer statement of the purpose of this course than that contained in the syllabus itself. These subjects have been "orientated economically and socially with an aim to develop in the Bantu child Social consciousness and responsibility." The course is intended to make the child realize that he is bound by various ties to particular groups of people as they are represented in his home and in his tribe. Groups of people beyond his tribe are omitted, apparently it is undesirable that he should realize the bonds with people beyond his tribe. A further aim is:

"The acceptance by the Bantu child in an intelligent manner of the fact that the welfare of his community depends on the contribution made towards it by each of its members. He should therefore know how his own people work and others earn a living; . . . and he should be convinced that he must work if he wishes to lead a useful and contented life . . . He must realize that by his behaviour other people will determine whether society will accept him as a dependable and useful person . . . He should be convinced that he cannot live and act as a detached individual in society . . . Furthermore, he must realize that the laws are necessary for the people of any community for harmonious living together. Consequently, teaching should lead the child to do naturally, and therefore willingly, what society has prescribed as correct, good and commendable."

It would be difficult to find a clearer exposition of fascist principles of education. The passage from which these extracts have been taken represents the process of education as a task in which every effort should be made to twist and hammer an otherwise rebellious child into accepting and submitting to conditions which have been created for him. That is, of course, the basic aim of Bantu Education.

The Social Studies course is therefore designed to inculcate a strong tribal consciousness, acknowledgement and acceptance of what has

been prescribed for his tribe, obedience to the laws; and the function of education is to make him accept all these naturally and willingly. The orientation has been achieved by ruthlessly omitting everything which is inconsistent with the above purpose and including everything fashioned in Nationalist style.

In the section dealing with History, to indicate what a fortunate heritage awaits him, the child is taught in detail all the 'benevolent contributions' which the State and Church have made towards the development of the 'Bantu.' Not a word is mentioned of the contribution made by the Africans towards these institutions and towards the development of the country generally. Under Mining, Commerce and Industry, the History course includes

"the effects of Mining, Commerce and Industry on the life of the Bantu—the creation of opportunities for work; new professions and trades; movement of the people to cities; need for influx control."

No mention is made of the fact that these industries really exist by exploiting African labour. Throughout the whole course the Africans are presented as lifeless clods of earth upon whom mysterious forces are acting to shape their destiny.

The section dealing with Citizenship and Good Conduct is an abomination. The whole course is designed to impress indelibly upon the child that he is a citizen not of South Africa but of the tribe and that he has "duties, privileges, and responsibilities in the village and the town" and not beyond. The word 'privilege' instead of 'right,' is insistent throughout the syllabus, and sandwiched between duties and responsibilities. There is not a single occasion when the word 'right' is used. Quite clearly the African child will be taught that he has no rights. Apart from an intensive training in the mechanism and virtues of tribal organisation, supplemented by the modernized version provided for by Dr. Verwoerd's Bantu Authorities Act, the precepts of "Good Conduct" include a knowledge of how to assist, amongst others, the CHIEF, the STOCK INSPECTOR, the LOCATION SUPERINTENDENT and the POLICEMAN. Assistance to the latter will probably follow the Gestapo method of charging children with the task of spying on their parents, and reporting any anti-Nationalist activities. By the time the child is in Standard Five, and on the verge of leaving school, he is given final trimming in the form of

"instruction and guidance in the Personal Reference Book—why and how used, the Labour Bureaux, control measures in Urban Areas, Curfew."

These are the things which he must naturally and willingly do because the society of Dr. Verwoerd and Swart have prescribed them as 'good, correct and commendable.' It is only if and when the pupil gets to Std. VI that he is given a glimpse of the sanctuary which is above the Chief and his tribe. Even here the emphasis is on 'Bantu representation' in Parliament and the 'officers who deal with the Bantu people.' After a constant grinding for thirty minutes each day, for eight years, the child will, it is no doubt hoped, submit naturally and willingly to the dictates of the Paramount Chief Verwoerd and his

clique, and also regard it as his duty to persuade other Africans to do the same.

CULTURE AND POLITICS

It is only the most blind dogmatism which makes it possible for people not to realize that if there have been no fundamental changes brought by Bantu Education, at least the changes are radical enough, and create conditions for new methods of struggle, and a new emphasis on the struggle in the cultural and educational spheres. Through Bantu Education the Nationalists have realized the inseparable unity between the cultural life of the people and their political aspirations, and they now hope to use the former to smother the latter. Surely it is the task of progressives to organise the cultural life of the people so that it serves the true interests and aspirations of the people.

THE KEY FIGURE

The hope that African teachers will be able to teach anything other than Bantu Education in Dr. Verwoerd's schools, is based on an unrealistic assessment of the situation. Dr. Verwoerd is clearly aware that the key figure in his schemes is the teacher. He said "So much depends upon the teacher carrying out his **duties conscientiously . . .** For the teacher who is not faithful in this regard there is no place in Bantu Education." The conditions of employment of teachers make it quite clear that Dr. Verwoerd will tolerate no unfaithfulness or even criticism. It is also clearly stated that any teacher who encourages disobedience or resistance to the laws of the country or participates in political activity would be instantly dismissed. Even if therefore it was possible to increase the number of militant teachers who would be prepared to risk 'their bread' in order to serve the interests of the people, these conditions of employment combined with the spying activities of some Principals (which will no doubt be intensified because of the 'enhanced' prospects of becoming a sub-inspector) make it unlikely that such militant teachers would remain teachers for long. It should also be borne in mind that the prospects of raising the political consciousness of teachers are no better now than they were a year ago. In fact, because of their conditions of employment, and the distrust which is bound to grow amongst them, the teachers can be expected to be more reticent and less responsive to the voice of the people, and a little more 'bread conscious.'

The prospects of using teachers in schools is further diminished by the fact that Dr. Verwoerd is going to train his own Bantu Education teachers. And he is going to train them not merely to be dumb tools for his policies and schemes but also to be active agents against the liberatory movement. Apart from the fact that it is a condition of a teacher's employment that his whole time should be at the disposal of the Native Affairs Department, Dr. Verwoerd has stated that he considers it the duty of teachers to agitate against the African National Congress and to discredit its campaigns. Recently, after he had dismissed 116 teachers on the Rand he said that he did not think that they had done sufficient work to sabotage the boycott of schools.

It is important to realize that Bantu Education is not merely designed to destroy the political consciousness and understanding of

the African child, so that he may be a dumb and contented serf, but it is positively designed to produce Nationalist cadres, who will sow seeds of hostility against the Liberatory movements, sabotage its campaigns and attempt to terrorise and intimidate progressive people. **Bantu Education thus constitutes a positive political front against the movements.** Since it is so fraught with danger for the liberatory movements which are the bulwark of the people's interests and aspirations, it deserves the utmost vigilance and most careful study and the most effective assault.

CAN THE CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATS WIN MASS SUPPORT?

By J. JOHNSON

UNDER the impact of the Nationalist Party's fascist programme the majority of the non-white people of South Africa have taken their stand and are committed irrevocably to a struggle for democracy for all people.

A small number of White South Africans, in the Congress of Democrats, have committed themselves to this same struggle in alliance with the non-white peoples.

In the balance—still to be determined one way or the other—are the majority of anti-Nationalist whites.

Conditioned by tradition and social and economic privilege to the principle of "White Supremacy," will they succumb to the pressures of the Nationalist Party and fulfill actively or even passively the role required of them—the role of "defenders of white civilisation?" A role which inevitably must make them parties to the inhuman theories and practices of the Nationalist Government and which may require of them that they take up arms in defence of these foul things. Or will they—can they—be won to take their stand on fundamental democratic principles in alliance with the non-white majority?

It is certain that some of these white anti-nationalists will find their way into the democratic camp. But what of the rest—the majority?

There are those who believe that it is inevitable that this majority must end up in the Nationalist camp. Then there are those who believe that, in the process, the majority of anti-Nat whites can be won to take their stand together with the non-whites in a common struggle for the Freedom Charter.

The first opinion arises out of a lack of understanding of the situation and of the nature of majority of anti-Nationalist whites. The factors affecting the issue are as follows:

While fascism represents the need of the capitalist class as whole, **it is the most reactionary section** of this class which gives effective