

WEST RAND ADMINISTRATION BOARD
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MINUTES OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE MINISTER OF BANTU ADMINISTRATION & DEVELOPMENT, MR. M.C. BOTHA, OFFICIALS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BANTU ADMINISTRATION & DEVELOPMENT, THE CHAIRMAN AND OFFICIALS OF THE WEST RAND ADMINISTRATION BOARD, AND A DELEGATION FROM THE SOFISO URBAN BANTU COUNCIL AND OTHER SOFISO LEADERS, HELD IN THE CONFERENCE HALL, ROOM 341, THIRD FLOOR, BANTU ADMINISTRATION BUILDING, PAUL KRUGER STREET, PRETORIA AT 10:00 ON 19 JUNE 1976

PRESENT

Messrs. M.C. Botha	:	Minister - Bantu Administration & Development
I.P. van Onselen	:	Secretary - do. do.
J. Rossouw	:	Secretary - Dept. Bantu Education
G. Vermeulen	:	Official - Bantu Admin. & Development
F. Cronje	:	do. do. do.
J. Eysen	:	do. do. do.
K. Raath	:	do. do. do.
H.P.P. Nauder	:	Chairman - West Rand Admin. Board
C.P. Venter	:	Vice-Chairman - do. do.
J.C. de Villiers	:	Chief Director - do. do.
M.P. Wilsnack	:	Director: Housing -do. do.
N. Malon	:	Asst. Director: Housing - do. do.
J.G. Jacobs	:	Official - do. do.
T.J. Makaya	:	Urban Bantu Councillor
R.J. Maponya	:	Urban Bantu Councillor
S.N. Motlha	:	Urban Bantu Councillor
L. Mszala	:	Urban Bantu Councillor
M.T. Moerane	:	ASSECA
P.N. Mungane	:	Urban Bantu Councillor
B.S. Selepe	:	Teacher
E.E. Mahabane	:	Reverend - Methodist Church
H.H. Dhlamlenze	:	Teacher
L. Mlonzi	:	Urban Bantu Councillor
M.M. Sebetlelo	:	Student

The Minister, Mr. M.C. Botha welcomed the delegation and requested the Reverend Mahabane to open the discussions with a prayer. The Minister then asked Mr. T.J. Makaya to proceed in presenting the case of the deputation.

Mr. Makaya extended his sincere thanks and appreciation to the Minister for affording the deputation the opportunity of discussing the serious Soweto situation with the senior Minister. He stated that the Urban Bantu Council approached the Regional Director of Bantu Education on Monday 13 June 1976, to try and bring the seriousness of the situation to his notice. The Regional Director refused to discuss the language question with the Urban Bantu Council delegation, as, he stated, it was a professional matter and the Urban Bantu Councillors were not competent and capable of discussing this matter.

He proceeded to say that the Regional Director only agreed to listen to their case after the Director: Housing pleaded with him for some time. The Urban Bantu Council then requested the Regional Director to request the Minister to suspend the 50/50 sodium requirements for some time to defuse the very explosive situation in Soweto. The Regional Director informed the deputation that he takes his instructions from the Minister who lays down the policy and that he cannot deal with the request from the deputation.

Mr. Makaya further stated that the Soweto leaders are satisfied that the situation could have been saved if the Regional Director was more sympathetic in his attitude to the deputation. He also referred to the meeting of the Soweto leaders which was called by the Chief Director at New Canada and stated that even at this meeting the opinion was expressed that the medium of instruction was the main reason for the violence of the 16th. He requested the Minister to suspend the 50/50 language requirement.

Mr. Mlonzi expressed regret for what has happened as a result of the children's action. On behalf of the Soweto leaders he wants to assure the Minister and the Government that they are very sorry for what happened and stated that this was purely the action of the children. He requested the Minister to convey the leaders' regret to the Government. He further stated that nobody could have foreseen the results of the action of the children and said that the leaders have now come with their caps in hand, pleading for mercy and the good judgement of the Minister. They assured the Minister that they were not here to dictate or to demand but to plead for a chance to settle the grievances of the children and an opportunity to rebuild Soweto. He assured the Minister that the destruction of the Board's offices in no way reflects on the competence of the Board's officials. The leaders are extremely shocked by the vandalism in Soweto. He assured the Minister that it was not a question of not wanting to have Afrikaans taught as a subject in the schools, but the children were finding it difficult to do certain difficult subjects in Afrikaans. Afrikaans should be taught as a subject but not used as a medium of instruction for difficult subjects. He further stated that they have never been disappointed in their pleadings to the Minister. He merely wants the Minister to look at the request from that angle and added that there were not sufficient teachers capable to teach, using Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

He further requested that in all Teachers' Training Colleges more attention should be given to qualify teachers to use both official languages. He pleaded with the Minister to help in taking a decision in regard to the suspension of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction.

Mr. L. Nosala also expressed regret with the events that took place in Soweto on 16 and 17 June. He stated that in view of the Prime Minister's policy of détente, Blacks were expecting that changes were coming. He further stated that the Blacks are dependent on the Whites and the Whites are dependent on the Blacks of this country to decide the future of this country. He pleaded with the Minister not to view the request for the suspension of Afrikaans as medium of instruction, as animosity of the Blacks towards Afrikaans, but it was because of the inability of teachers to teach difficult subjects in Afrikaans. The children and the teachers were happy to have Afrikaans as a subject and he pleaded with the Minister to assist with defusing the very explosive situation in Soweto. He then thanked the Minister for affording the deputation an opportunity of presenting the case to him.

Mr. R.J. Mponya also thanked the Minister for the opportunity to meet him in order to present the case of the Black parents and children in Soweto to him for consideration. He expressed his personal sympathy and that of the Black population with the damage and the loss of life that was caused during the riots. He stated that he is of the opinion that irrepairable damage has been done to the race relations in this country. He thanked the Minister for always having open doors for the Black leaders of Soweto and again expressed his regret with the happenings in view of the Prime Minister's overseas visit. He assured the Minister that Afrikaans was not hated by the Black population but that the children were finding it difficult to make sufficient progress in the schools because of the 50/50 requirement.

of the Department to force Afrikaans upon them as a medium of instruction, in spite of repeated appeals for English as medium, turned the whole matter into a political problem.

Messrs. L. Mlonzi and T. Thebehali were of the opinion that officials of the Department of Bantu Education were responsible for the issue at hand and requested their dismissal forthwith.

Mr. S.I.P. Kgame stated that parents preferred their children to be taught in the language of their own choice. He requested that schools participate in the election of their own School Boards.

Mr. B. Mdaka pointed out that all School Boards opted for English as medium of instruction when approached in this regard during 1972. When this matter was discussed with the Circuit Inspectors, it was mentioned that not only would grants not be made to schools, but even existing grants would be withdrawn if the instructions of the Department were not carried out in full. Mr. Mdaka mentioned that they are not objecting to Afrikaans as a language but are concerned about the problems that arise when Afrikaans is used as a medium of instruction by teachers who are not proficient in the language.

The Chairman stated that it has been the policy of the Department since 19 to at all times consider applications for deviation from the 50-50 ruling favourably in cases where real problems were experienced and mentioned that, in fact, for the first time in history a subject was offered in Afrikaans in Port Elizabeth at the beginning of 1976.

Mr. P.M. Lengene mentioned that when the matter was discussed with him the Senior Regional Inspector, informed that the matter did not concern the Urban Bantu Council. The fact that the School Board was nominated and not elected by the parents made the position worse. He requested in immediate decision to take home to the people.

Mr. M.T. Moerane said that the deplorable confusion and misunderstanding as mentioned by the Minister, was in his opinion, at the door of the officials of the Department. He further held the opinion that it was not a question of the proficiency of the teachers, but that the crux of the matter was the enforcement of 2 foreign languages upon the children. He implored that the African people have more opportunity to make decisions regarding their own education.

In reply to the Chairman's statement that better results in Afrikaans have been obtained over the last few years, Mr. P.N. Mephlane stated that these results have been manipulated to show an increase and were definitely not classroom results.

Mr. S.J. Maphike said that the threats and intimidations of the Department belonged more at home with the police and not with education. He requested Mr. Rosseau to give a ruling that English should be used until such time as the Minister decided on the matter.

Boards are well aware of their rights to appeal to the Secretary of Bantu Education if they are not satisfied with a ruling by the Regional Director.

The Minister stated that he was very sorry for what happened in Soweto and asked the members of the delegation to advise the scholars of his sincere regret and sympathy for the loss of life and damage to property. From the discussions he is satisfied that this was due to a misunderstanding, but to err is human. He agrees with the deputation that the population of the Republic cannot live with the gun and the assegai.

The Minister said that he listened attentively to the speakers and everyone requested the suspension of Afrikaans in Black schools. Both official languages were entrenched in the South African Constitution and there can therefore be no question of his or any other Minister's authority to suspend a language. He assured the representatives that they would not go away with empty hands. "He is aware that there are deviations and he quoted for instance Natal, where English is used exclusively in schools and the Free State where Afrikaans is virtually used exclusively in schools. He requested the deputation to understand and appreciate his position. The same object can be achieved by deviation rather than suspension of a language, which is not possible in terms of the South African Constitution."

The Minister stated that the Newspapers were to a large extent to blame for the unfortunate incidents, but he is satisfied that the reporters are very superficial in their reporting. He said that the deputation must accept that education is a professional matter. The problems of principals and teachers are not generally appreciated by outsiders. This problem must be discussed between principals and School Boards with their Circuit Inspectors. He is prepared to grant the request of Mr. Mlonzi to give the Leaders a chance to endeavour to solve the Soweto problems. It must however be appreciated that there are many complications if there is a sudden change in the medium of instruction, such as the availability of text books. Changes can and must be undertaken so as not to make a bigger mistake.

The Minister further stated that he will instruct the Secretary to meet representatives of School Boards and principals in Johannesburg, and asked the delegation to ensure that a representative deputation from the Urban Bantu Council, School Boards and principals are present to meet the Secretary for Bantu Education. He will also arrange for the Secretary of Bantu Administration to meet the same or a similar delegation to afford them an opportunity to bring to the notice of the Secretary the other problems mentioned by Mr. Moerane.

It was decided, in consultation with the delegation that the meeting with the Secretary for Bantu Education will take place on 25 June in the offices of the West Rand Administration Board, and with the Secretary of Bantu Administration, on 29 June in the offices of the West-Rand Administration Board.

The Minister assured the delegation that if it was later necessary for him to again meet the delegation, he will only be too glad to do so. He appealed to the delegation to assist with the reconstruction of Soweto, and emphasized that he will not dictate any conditions in this regard, but that the West Rand Board must investigate a manner of reconstruction and have discussions with the Soweto Urban Bantu Council.

The Minister further stated that he will visit Soweto during the course of the next week to satisfy himself of the position. Due to certain important legislation that he was dealing with in Parliament, it was not possible to do this sooner.

The Minister also instructed the Secretary for Bantu Education to extend " the closing date for examination entries for the year-end examinations. The Minister further stated that schools will not be reopened before the Winter Holidays and that he was unable to give a decision on the requests of the delegation, but that he would consult with the members of the delegation before he announced his decision.

Mr. Mlonzi suggested a joint statement should be issued, to which the Minister agreed. (See Annexure).

The Reverend Mahabane, on behalf of the delegation, thanked the Minister for agreeing to meet the delegation on such short notice. He also thanked the Chairman of the West Rand Administration Board for the arrangements to transport the deputation to Pretoria and being instrumental in contacting the Minister with the delegation's request to meet him in Pretoria. He also thanked the Minister for the very friendly manner in which the discussions took place and for his attitude towards the delegation.

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AT 14h00