

AN ENDURING SCANDAL

by Alan Paton

In 1952 the South African Institute of Race Relations decided to make its annual Survey a kind of report on the "state of the nation". To the best of our knowledge it was Miss Muriel Horrell who initiated the change. She made the Survey indispensable to any student of South African Affairs.

It was in the Survey of 1951–52 that the first statistics were given of the comparative costs of education, for white Coloured, Indian, and African children. In 1949 the education of each white child cost £50 each Coloured (or Asiatic child) £17, each African child £7. I shall confine myself to the costs per white child and those per African child, noting that the costs per Coloured child and per Indian child lie between the two extremes. These costs however never reach 50% of the costs per white child.

In 1950 25% of white children were in secondary classes, and 6% of African children.*

The Cape provincial Administration aimed to introduce compulsory and free education for Coloured children by 1954, up to Standard IV. In Natal free education for Indian children already extended to Standard IX. There were 17,000 full-time white university students, and 490 full-time African students.

During the next ten years the gross disparity between the expenditure on each white child and on each black child actually increased, that is, it changed for the worse. In the year 1960-61 the expenditure on each white child in Natal was R132. On each black child throughout South Africa the cost was R14. The ratio of white to black in 1949 was 100:14. In 1960-61 it had become 100:11. The percentage of black children in secondary classes had declined from 6% to 3.1%.

During these ten years two important changes were made by the Government. In 1953 the control of African education was taken away from the four provincial education departments and handed over to the Union Department of Native Affairs. The meaning of that was plain. African education was to become a tool of Apartheid policy. In fact Dr. Verwoerd said so himself, though of course he did not use quite these words. He said "Native Education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accord with the policy of the State". This Act spelt death for the mission

schools, which had produced Luthuli, Z.K. Matthews. Buthelezi, Sobukwe, Mandela. It brought about the end of education through the medium of English, the chosen medium of the vast majority of African parents.* It increased the number of children in school, it lowered the standard of their education, it turned African teachers into a silent profession. It placed greater and greater financial burdens on African parents, a matter which we shall return to.

The second important change took place in 1957. The Government announced that it would create four more black universities.

With Fort Hare the total would be five. The Universities of Cape Town and the Witwatersrand would in the future be forbidden to accept black students except by Ministerial permit. The five black universities would be ethnic in character, and would be forbidden to accept students of other ethnic groups except by permit.

What were the motives for this action? They were

- one** the Nationalist obsession with own-race development.
- two** the determination to protect black students from the corrupting influences of white English-language universities, where black students would become imitation white men, assimilate alien philosophies, and entertain false ideas of what life had in store for them.
- three** the determination of the Government to **control** African education, its content and destination.

It should be noted that many South Africans, and not least among them members of the Liberal Party, warned the Government of the dangers of these actions. They argued that this university apartheid would not encourage own-race development; it would rather encourage a bitterly anti-white black racialism. These prophecies came true. In 1976 the Snyman report revealed the racial hatred, the resentment, the intransigence, that lay behind the student disturbances at the University of the North, factors which destroyed the very nature and purpose of the University.

There is another thing to report in the history of these ten years. The number of full-time African students at the universities rose from 490 to 618. In that period the number of full-time white students rose from 17,147 to over 24,000.

*It should be noted that Dr. Ellen Hellman in her paper "Some Comments on Bantu Education" gives the figure for 1953 as 3.5%. In that case the decline mentioned later would be from 3.5% to 3.1%.

*When the Transkei gained control of education, it reintroduced English. So did Kwa-Zulu. So will all the other Homelands. The Verwoerdian victory has turned sour.

At the end of 1970 the annual cost of educating each white child rose, to R191 in the Transvaal and to R286 in Natal. For each black child the cost was R14.48. In Natal therefore the white black ratio had now reached the shocking figure of 100:6.

It would appear that in these 20 years the cost of white per capita education rose consistently, while that of black education stayed where it was. In 1961 for example the Secretary for Bantu Education Mr. F.J. de Villiers, explained that the expenditure had been kept as low as possible by the following measures.

- (i) double sessions in the sub-standards.
- (ii) women teachers for lower classes
- (iii) regrading of farm schools
- (iv) **the diversion of school feeding funds to the expansion of education facilities, where requested by school boards.**

In fact school feeding was ultimately abolished. Today there are many school feeding schemes in South Africa for African children run by voluntary workers. If it were not for them, many children would go to school having eaten nothing at all.

I shall conclude the brief review of this decade by noting that the percentage of black children in Forms I to V rose to 4.21%. The corresponding figure for white children was 32,53%.

The latest survey of the Institute is for 1975. The figures for expenditure on education for 1973-74 fill any decent white South African with shame. They must surely do more damage to race relations than any unpleasant book like "Agter die Magalies."

The figures are as follows:

EXPENDITURE PER CHILD	RANDS
Whites; Transvaal	387.00
Cape	496.00
Natal	557.00
Free State	495.00
Coloured:	109.88
Indians:	141.13
Africans in "White" areas:	28.56

The figures are almost beyond belief. The white-black ratio in Natal has now become 100:5. There is one extenuating circumstance, not in itself very creditable. The education of a secondary school child costs substantially more than that of a primary school child. In 1975 35.5% of white children were in secondary classes, and only 6% of African children. That in itself would cause the average black cost to be much lower.

In the 1974 Survey the following figures are given of children over 15 with no schooling, in the year 1970.

They are:	White	0.9%
	Coloured	23.6%
	Asian	16.7%
	African	51.8%

One can be grateful for the fact that these figures show a marked improvement for those of 1960. The following are the figures calculated as at May 6th 1970 of persons over the age of 18 years who had not passed St. II

White	32,273
Coloured	303,108
Asians	72,671
Africans	4,606,756

In this account of African education, no mention has been made of teachers' salaries or of expenditure on buildings.

The same disparity prevails. The new white schools can only be described as magnificent buildings; the new African schools can not.

But one cannot close such an account without recording that white schools are free, black schools are not. White books are free, black books are not. Black parents are levied for the building of new classrooms, white parents are not. Black parents are levied for the payment of salaries to auxiliary teachers, in white schools there are no auxiliary teachers. The burden on black parents with 3 or 4 children at school is immense.

The buying of books for black children is another immense burden. Some schools ask the parents to buy the books, and this means long journeys to the cities. Some schools buy the books; the bulk buyer receives a handsome discount but there is no guarantee whatever that the individual buyer, the parent, will receive anything. Children copy down the lists from the blackboard, and mistakes, sometimes crippling are made. All this work must be supervised by the head teachers, who have no secretaries, no typewriters often no telephones. The burden on teachers is immense also.

Such is the depressing story of African education. Yet these schools are educating the administrators of the new homelands. The South African government is pledged to grant independence to the homelands, and it spends some R30 per annum on the education of each child. A prominent homeland citizen has said that the tasks of administration are enough to break one's heart. Most of the ministers of his homeland have never administered anything before.

The call to patriotism is being sounded loudly now. We are asked to be ready to fight for our country. Many wish there were better things to fight for, not least of them African education, the enduring scandal of what used to be called white trusteeship. □