



University apartheid in South Africa

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UNIVERSITY APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA

In November, 1953, the South African Government appointed a commission to investigate the practicability of applying ^{the} Apartheid policy of the country to Universities. This was the Holloway Commission. It reported unfavourably, mentioning among other things that the cost alone would be prohibitive, especially as the existing universities already suffer from a chronic lack of funds. The Government cannot cope with the ever-growing financial needs of the existing universities, so that it would be impossible to start new segregated universities with any prospect of approaching the standard of the existing ones. The Government thereupon brushed aside the findings of its own Commission and instituted a Departmental Committee, composed of civil servants, to work out methods of applying Apartheid in universities. This report was never made public, but a Bill has been brought in to establish University Apartheid throughout the Union of South Africa.

This Bill purports to close the existing White universities to all Non-Europeans and to provide for the establishment of segregated universities which will not only separate Black from White, but African from Indian and Coloured. The African universities will be further divided into Zulu, Xhosa and ^{Setho} ~~Sutho~~ universities, in other words, tribal universities. This concept of tribal universities is a very far-reaching one. It affects the question not only who shall attend them but what shall be taught in them. It concerns particularly the content of education in the segregated universities. ~~For the Whites~~ For the Whites, it ~~shall~~ ^{will} be university education as it is generally understood the world over. But for the Blacks it will be tribal education. Thus the proposed University Apartheid in effect means shutting out the Non-Europeans from University education. It means robbing them of it altogether. This will become abundantly clear when we look into the whole system of education for the Blacks, as mapped out by the architects of Apartheid.

When the Nationalist Government came into power, it declared that a wrong policy of education for the Non-Whites had hitherto been followed. It did not prepare them for their proper position in society. It aroused in them ambitions for white-collar jobs, which in this country are reserved for Europeans only. It fell to the lot of the indefatigable ^{and all-powerful} Minister of Native Affairs, Dr. Verwoerd, to work out a whole system of ~~education~~ education for the Blacks/...

Blacks that would conform to the ~~the~~ Apartheid policy of the country, whereby the Black man administers to the ~~needs~~ needs of the White. Unfortunately for him, Dr. Verwoerd comes on to the scene in the second half of the 20th century ~~when~~ even S. Africa stands on the brink of the automation of industry. The whole population, Black and White, is involved and is inseparably bound up with the industrial processes of the country. Millions of Black people are born ~~and~~ live in urban areas, and know no other life. But, nothing ~~undaunted~~, the Minister would put back the clock of history. He set about reorganising the Blacks into a separate community cut off from the life of the country socially, politically, culturally and spiritually; deprived of all rights of citizenship and maintained only as chattels of labour. He drew up elaborate plans which have materialised into Acts of Parliament, the most notorious being the Bantu Authorities Act and the Bantu Education Act. ("Bantu" means the Blacks or Africans, or "Natives" as they are most often called by the Europeans.) The former Act seeks to reorganise the whole Black population into tribal units, each with a chief at its head, appointed by the Minister. Every village ~~and in the~~ rural areas in the "Native Reserves," has to have a local authority, known as a Bantu authority under a chief. In the towns the Africans, who live in segregated locations, will be settled according to tribal groupings, each with a chief at the head. A tribal mode of life has to be re-established, with old tribal customs and practices; all this, in spite of the fact that modern industry has shattered tribalism. Education, too, is being fitted into this scheme of re-tribalisation, and used as an active agent to bring it about. Thus Bantu education is education for barbarism.

In outlining his policy for Bantu Education, in 1954, the Minister stated: "My Department's policy is that education (i.e. for Africans) should stand with both feet in the Reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society." In this comprehensive ^{scheme} ~~plan~~ for re-tribalisation, he has planned for education as a whole, from the lowest to the highest levels. "Steps will be taken," he said, "deliberately to keep institutions ^{for} ~~of~~ higher ~~learning~~ education...away from ~~the~~ urban areas and to establish them ...in the Native Reserves." It becomes clear that the proposed Apartheid Universities are part and parcel of this whole scheme, and indeed follows logically from it. He goes on: "The basis of the provision and organisation of education in a Bantu community should, where possible, be the tribal organisation." Elsewhere he comments that in the past "education has served to create a class of educated and.../

and semi-educated persons...This is the class which has learnt to believe that it is above its own people and feels that its spiritual, economic and political home is among the civilized community of South Africa, i.e. the Europeans." And again: "There is no place for him in the European community, above the level of certain forms of labour...Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not to graze." The Minister leaves no doubt as to his aims, fantastic as they may seem. He sets out to stifle the mind, strangulate the intellectual development and smother the aspirations of a whole people.

Let us take a glance at the type of ~~education~~ school he is at present forcing on the Africans. First of all, education has been taken out of the control of the Education Department and placed under the Native Affairs Department - that Department which has to do with labour requirements, agriculture, the culling and dipping of cattle, and the issuing of passes to Africans. Dr. Verwoerd makes it quite plain that education must be ~~linked~~ linked ^{up} with these activities. "The inspector of schools, the Native Commissioner and the Agricultural Extension officer will remain in close contact with one another," he says. And again: "A community, for example, will not be able to claim advantages of education and at the same time ignore or even oppose guidance in regard to care of the soil." In plain fact, this means that when the people object to the confiscation of their cattle, their school is closed down.

There are three main categories of tribal schools: the community school, the Government Bantu school and the farm school. All the existing schools have had to apply for registration and those mission schools which, in the opinion of the Minister, were not sympathetic to the Government policy of apartheid, were simply closed down. No new schools ~~may~~ may be opened without his permission, and it is a criminal offence, punishable by fine and imprisonment, for anyone to teach any African children without this permission. The schools are to be managed by tribal school committees and school boards, which must work under the Bantu Authorities, with an illiterate chief at the head. The management of the farm schools is handed over to the White farm owners, who engage, and dismiss, the teachers. The farmer pays the teacher in the same way and at the same time as he pays his farm labourers. No doubt this is one of the ways the Minister.../

Minister would bring home to the African teacher that "he must learn not to feel above his community"...or presume to feel that "his spiritual, economic and political home is with the civilized community of South Africa, i.e. the Europeans." These farm schools belong to the farmer, lock, stock and barrel. Let us hear the Minister on the subject: "To permit the establishment of farm-schools, the transfer of land for the building of expensive schools will no longer be required. Bantu mothers can...erect walls where farmers allow and the Department will provide the windows, doors and roof. If the farmer withdraws his ~~permission~~ permission, these can be removed."

The curriculum of the new Bantu schools leaves no doubt as to the regimentation and indoctrination ^{of the children} envisaged by the Minister. Their horizon is bounded by the tribal community and the Native Affairs Department. They must know the names of tribal chiefs and be able to recite the names of the important officials of the Native Affairs Department. Beyond that, they must learn just sufficient of the White man's languages to enable them to understand orders in their future menial jobs. In the primary schools, the longest teaching time per subject is devoted to manual training. And there is plenty of practice; for the Minister has decreed that "the daily cleaning of the school building and grounds will naturally be the work of the pupils under the supervision of the teachers." More than that, there is a compulsory school fund to which every child must contribute on pain of expulsion. This has to pay for such items as: the wages of a night watchman; supply of light to school buildings; supply of water for laying out ^{of} gardens; insurance of school buildings; for chalk, ink, stationery, books, etc. And with a truly remarkable attention to the meanest detail, characteristic of all his legislation, the Minister does not forget to charge the toddlers for "disinfectants, toilet paper, buckets, soap, brushes and brooms." Such is the basis of a whole ~~structure~~ ^{system} of education designed to turn a population of about ten million ~~people~~ Africans back to an outmoded way of life and prevent them from enjoying the fruits of the modern civilization they are helping to build.

Some conception of the debasement of education under the Bantu Education Act may be gleaned from the attitude to the African teacher as revealed in the savage conditions of his employment. He is completely deprived of professional status and belongs body and soul to the Native Affairs Department. All his time, i.e. 24 hours a day, "is at the disposal of the school committee," or the farm owner./

farm owner who employs him. He is hemmed in with a long list of regulations which would be more appropriate to the control of a criminal than a teacher. Under "misconduct" alone are listed 13 points. Annual increments are not claimable as of right. They are dependent on reports from the Native Affairs Department concerning the punctuality, discipline, industry, etc. of the teacher. ~~But~~ And ill betide him if he should become sick! Regulations forbid him to stay away from school more than three days. "Only in exceptional cases may sick leave be granted in cases of neurasthenia, dyspepsia, anaemia and similar ailments, and then only on production of a medical certificate giving full and detailed particulars of the ailment." The owner of the school may on occasion demand a second certificate from a doctor stipulated by him.

The teacher may not participate in political affairs of any kind. He may not "contribute to the press by interview or in any other manner or publish letters or articles criticizing or commenting on the Department of Native Affairs, or any other State Department, school committee, school board, or any Bantu Authority, or any official connected with one or more of the above-mentioned bodies." He is subject to severe punishment if he should treat with "discourtesy a member of the public or any official." The Act provides for the imprisonment of any teacher who breaks any one of the regulations. From all this it is clear that the Minister of Native Affairs wants to create a body of timid, cowed, docile slaves, prepared to dole out tribal education to ~~equally~~ docile children. In fact, ever since ~~the~~ Bantu Education was instituted, a reign of terror has been let loose on the teachers. Members of the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.) have swooped on the schools, interrogated teachers in front of their pupils and searched them. Their letters have been intercepted in the post, sometimes even before they were posted. Some of the finest teachers with long records of distinguished service have been summarily dismissed without any charge or trial; the only reason given was that they were "unsuitable under Bantu Education." Practically every member of the executive of the Cape African Teachers' Association, ^{which was} established nearly a quarter of a century ago, has been thrown out of the profession. Not content with that, the Government has pursued them relentlessly, wherever they have tried to get employment in some other sphere. Utilizing the iniquitous pass system, they have hounded them out of the Reserves where they had established their home, and out of the towns where they went to look for a job. Men were separated from their wives and families and deprived

of.../

of the means of supporting them. And all because their Association had expressed opposition to the Bantu Education Act. Teachers in Bantu schools are no longer appointed on educational grounds. Inspectors themselves are under the thumb of the Native Affairs Department and ^{can} no longer recommend a teacher for promotion on his merits; for the C.I.D.s come along and demand to know why such and such a recommendation was made. All this is in line with Dr. Verwoerd's dictum: "People who believe in equality are not desirable teachers for Natives." As he said during the parliamentary debate on the Act: "When I have control of Native Education I will reform it so that Natives will be taught from childhood to realise that equality with Europeans is not for them." One of the first things he did was to take over the teacher-training schools and place them under the rigorous control of the Native Affairs Department. The pupils are carefully screened and selected. For it is no longer the parents ~~who decide what students~~ but the Minister who decides what students shall take up the teacher-training course. Just as a school may be closed down if the people in a particular village refuse to participate in some soil reclamation work (so-called), so can a child be denied education ~~because~~ because his parents are not persona grata with some government official or other. All the time the people must be made to feel that they are ^{completely} at the mercy of a government authority. Education, which is the natural right of every modern civilized community, and which the Africans have always prized most highly, is now being used as a means of ~~making~~ cowing a whole population and violently retarding their progress.

It is against this background that the Bill for the establishment of complete University Apartheid must be viewed. All new university colleges for Africans are to be established according to tribal affiliations - a monstrous conception for a university to begin with. The existing College of Fort Hare, which is part of Rhodes University and has hitherto admitted all Non-Europeans, is to be wrenched off from Rhodes and placed under the Native Affairs Department. It will now be limited to Africans only and later to members of the Xhosa tribe only. In truth, race-baiting in South Africa would ~~have~~ seem to have reached the heights of madness. Likewise the young Medical School for Non-Europeans is to be wrenched from Natal University, to which it is at present attached. The training of Black doctors who are going to serve Black people must not in any way be associated ~~with~~ with the training of Whites. As it is, Black trainees may not touch or even see a White corpse, let alone examine./

the living body. Under the Bill, the Minister of Native Affairs is the
 p/h Ba over all Non-European colleges. He may establish or disestablish a
 University College by notice in the gazette. Such a University College shall
 consist of (a) a Council of three or more, appointed by the Governor-General,
 which means in effect by the Minister; (b) a Senate consisting of the Principal
 and "such other members as the Minister may from time to time appoint;"

(c) "such other body or bodies as the Minister may from time to time establish;"
 (d) a principal appointed by the Minister; (e) Professors, lecturers and students,
 all of whom are under the control of the Minister. The Council itself ~~may acquire~~
 can only acquire stores and equipment "in such a manner and on such conditions
 as the Minister may determine." The all-powerful, all-seeing Minister must needs
 control ^{not only} the exact content of so-called university education, but the very stores
 of the respective colleges. Once more we see that niggling attention to detail,
 that remembered even the toilet paper and the buckets in the primary schools.

Here, too, the students are subjected to careful screening and rigid control. The
 Minister may refuse ^{them} admission "if he considers it in the interests of the university
 college concerned to do so." He also ^{has power to determine} ~~shall determine~~ where each student shall ~~receive~~
~~receive~~ instruction and where he shall reside.

^{Some of} the clauses concerning the appointment and ^{the teaching (and other)} control of ^{staff} make startling
 reading. There is the same cracking of the whip, the same contempt for the dignity
 of status, which ~~had~~ the Minister revealed towards the teacher in the schools.

"The power to appoint, promote, transfer or discharge persons employed at any
 university college shall... be vested in the Minister." These all-important
 powers controlling professors, lecturers and clerks alike, may be delegated by him
 to any officer of the Native Affairs Department. Once more, questions of discipline
 loom large in the Bill. Under "misconduct" alone there are 17 clauses, a number
 exceeding those governing the primary school teacher, and equally barbaric and
 designed to humiliate. A professor or lecturer in such colleges will be deemed
 guilty of misconduct if he "disobeys, disregards or makes wilful default in
 carrying out a lawful order... or by word or conduct displays insubordination;" or
 if he discloses information acquired in the course of his duties; ~~or~~ or if he
 "publicly comments adversely upon the administration of any department of the
 Government or of any province or of ^{the} territory of South-West Africa"; or if he
 "connives at any act which is prejudicial to the administration..."
 "propagates any idea or takes part in or identifies himself with any propaganda or
 activity... calculated to impede ... the activities of any Government department."

Thus we see with what diabolical thoroughness the architects of Apartheid have plotted out every detail of this monstrous travesty of education. Right from the lowest primary stage up to the so-called university level, cowed and servile teachers will be expected to indoctrinate the young in all the perversities of apartheid. Where in this scheme will there be room for the teachings of science? For Darwin? Or Rousseau, who declared that all men are born equal? And is there room for biology in this system? For a Black man might discover that the functions of his body are the same as those of a White man. Dare they teach archaeology and history that trace the development of civilization from pre-Christian times in China, India, Babylonia, Egypt? Or the true history of their own land and the contribution of Non-White peoples of Africa to ancient as well as modern civilization?

We repeat, Apartheid in university education ^{is not} will ~~not~~ simply be a matter of separating the races at the universities. It is an end result, the logical completion of a process, not only of robbing the Non-Whites of education, but of turning a whole population back to barbarism. It means stifling the development of their minds with the express purpose of denying them the fruits of modern civilization and keeping them in a state of enslavement - mere chattels to serve the needs of the White master. This is what the Nationalists call "baaskaap." This is the fantastic dream of a Dr. Verwoerd, who, like King Canute of old, would bid the waves roll back at his command. It is true, that dream is for the millions of Africans a nightmare - while it lasts. But no amount of legislation can stem the wider educative forces to which they are subject as an indispensable part of the modern industrial system in South Africa, forces which in their operation profoundly affect ~~his~~^{their} mode of life and ~~his~~^{their} ways of thinking. Moreover, the forces of world history are moving, and moving fast, in a direction exactly opposite to that of the Minister and his Apartheid schemes - those ingenious but futile fantasies.

April, 1957.