

The WORKER

WE FIGHT IDEAS WITH IDEAS

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IN THE HUB OF THE "SILLY SEASON"?

The quinquennial National and Provincial elections are upon us again. Promises and launches of manifestos by political parties abound as they scamper to outdo each other. Politicians are urging the people of South Africa and particularly the youth to participate in the upcoming elections. They have been duping the people since 1994, so once again they feel they can get away with it.

According to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), more than 350 political parties have to date registered to participate in the upcoming elections. In addition, this time around, individuals will also be allowed to stand as candidates in the parliamentary and provincial elections.

The voting system is, however, biased in favour of parties. SA's citizens, ever hopeful, will be asked to make their crosses on the ballot paper (or booklet) based on the promises made to them by specifically the parties (the ANC, DA, EFF, PA, IFP etc.). Don't be fooled by the adage, "Rome was not built in a day" claptrap. They have had thirty years in which they could have fulfilled their promises.

The National Health Insurance (NHI) fund, recently resurrected, clean drinking water, sanitation, electricity (the elimination of loadshedding is now seen as a plus for the SA ruling elite), provision of housing, waste removal and roads - are basic human rights, essential components of the right to dignity enshrined in our Constitution and the Bill of Rights. These basic human rights, including, jobs for all, and the eradication of inequality, so ably mentioned by Ministers and Opposition parties alike, are the tools of the game that politicians will use in the coming months, to entice the masses into voting for one or other party or individual.

The point is clear: we are divided into "nations" but exploited globally as a class. We, the Working Class must seize hold of state power. Does this mean we should participate

in the elections? Does this mean that we should enter parliament and contest power in the very core of ruling class politics?

The bourgeoise parliament is not our parliament.

Political participation brings the expectation of common benefit and improvement in the lives of all citizens. As currently structured, this present parliament has, over the last thirty years of democracy, achieved very little in the way of improving the lives of the poor of this country. Whilst the apartheid laws have been scrapped from the statute books, the lack of finances in the pockets of most people has created barriers in education, in health and in fact, in society. We deserve better.

Why are we in this situation?

In the period leading up to negotiations, it seemed that the ANC and its sworn enemy, the Apartheid-era National Party, had reached common ground. Of course, the ANC had never stood for the removal of the oppressive and barbaric capitalist system and therefore this collaboration was to be expected. To be a player in that set-up, the ANC had to follow the dictates of their capitalist masters. It does so not unwillingly, but as an enthusiastic protagonist. The demands of international capitalist agencies for the liberalisation of trade policies are eagerly followed – free trade agreements, the elimination of import tariffs, low company taxes and other benefits to foreign investors. As a result, billions of rands flow out of the country annually. The

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consequence is the large-scale unemployment and inequality in our country.

As an example, company tax in the mid-eighties (under apartheid rule) ranged between 40% - 47%, this was to finance SA's internal war machine. Company tax has now been reduced to 27%, ostensibly to attract investors, with Personal Income Tax, on a sliding scale, reaching 45%.

SA was incorporated into the global capitalist system as an enclave economy (that is, as one which was developed not for the needs of its people, but to serve the interests of the imperialist rulers). This was done with the intention of international exploitation of South Africa's mineral wealth, chiefly gold and diamonds. The country's entire economy was based on "ultra-cheap," "ultra-exploitable" labour that was still living in the large labour reserves, the "homelands", with their installed collaborators as headmen to efficiently further exploit cheap labour.

ANC government officials and apologists never dared to consider the demolishing of the entire social economic structure in SA as from 1994 onwards. The transition from "apartheid to democracy" would be achieved in a seamless movement in which old and new political structures would rapidly be replaced by new persons in parliament, provincial and local government. A plethora of auxiliary political and cultural organisations grew that brought in the new administrative strata. A "better life for all" had been promised. No one can doubt that money has been found to fill the pockets of an effective minority of black persons.

The strange thing is that two disturbing features of this situation stood out:

the number of the poor together with the quality of poverty was worsening daily;

racialism both at the centre of economic life and in the daily lives of the people was growing apace.

The ANC was never fundamentally revolutionary in theory or in practice. It viewed itself as always being included in ruling class structures, a structure that was aimed at exploiting the black labour force.

Do we vote in the upcoming elections?

For the people, for the workers and the poor in urban and rural areas, for the destitute, for the thousands living in informal settlements, the vote has no value. If the ANC gets the majority vote, it will not bring about radical fundamental change in the daily lives of workers and the poor. The ANC's empowerment policies are geared to benefiting an emerging middle class. The ANC will therefore continue to heed and yield to the demands of the governments of the major industrial countries, to the IMF, World Bank and the WTO. Any parties of the left in South Africa who aspire to

enter parliament will be trapped inside a system of global and national exploitation that work against the interest of workers, the jobless and the poor.

Instead of waiting to cast a vote every 5 years and then to imagine that that is democracy and will lead to a better life, the people of South Africa should commit themselves to working for radical, fundamental change to the present system of capitalist oppression. We should work for a system that is genuinely based on the need of all people to have employment that gives them an income with which they can have comfortable homes, are able to feed and clothe themselves and their children; a system in which there will not be the extraordinarily rich and the miserably poor. A VOTE UNDER THE CURRENT POLITICO-ECONOMIC SYSTEM CONTINUES THE ECONOMIC IMPOVERISHMENT OF THE MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE. The NUM calls on the people to vote only for a system that genuinely guarantees a better life for all in a free South Africa, and not by the false promises of the politicians which we've had 6 times already in the 30 years of 'democracy'. .

Education for Servitude

Formal classroom education in South Africa occurred for the first time on the 17th April 1658. The school was founded by Jan van Riebeeck for the slave children brought to the Cape in the Dutch ship, the Amersfoort, which had captured them off a Portuguese slaver. But this "education" was not for the betterment of the slaves as human beings. The aim of the schooling was to increase the "usefulness" of the slaves to their owners

They were taught Dutch, the language of the slave masters and indoctrinated in the cultural norms of Christianity as it related to the Dutch culture. In short, it was education for slavery. In the regimented environment of that time where elementary academic matter had to be imbibed by rote and where "respect" for superiors and authority was beaten in, the slaves were supposed to learn obedience and discipline.¹

A second school, attended by 12 European children, 4 slaves and one Koi-Khoin child was opened in 1661. But by the mid-1660's priority attention shifted to the educational needs of the growing number of European children at the Cape. In her 1984 doctoral thesis Ingrid Babb tells of a typical curriculum of the school at the time consisting of reading, writing, some arithmetic and prayers and catechism.

(Christian) Education for servitude

During the 150 years of Dutch rule at the Cape, schooling consisted primarily of religious training for conversion to Christianity. The Dutch East India Company (DEIC) was "motivated by a mercantile capitalist greed for the accumulation of profits, often leading to the annihilation or exploitation of those who stood in its way". (Babb: 44) but it was animated by liberal principles, in terms of which personal wealth was seen as God's reward for a good life here on earth. They might have been the first, but certainly not the last rapacious profit-hungry capitalists to link wealth creation with the noble cause of converting heathen souls to Christianity. This is well-illustrated in a document motivating the Company to establish a refreshment station at the Cape:

By maintaining a good correspondence with them [Khoikhoin], we shall be able in time to employ some of their children as boys and servants, and to educate them in the Christian religion, by which means, if it pleases God Almighty, to bless this good cause, as at Tayouan and Formosa, many souls will be brought to God, and to the Christian Reformed Religion, so that the formation of the said fort and garden will not only tend to the gain and profit of the Honourable Company, but to the preservation and saving of many men's lives and what is more to the magnifying of God's Holy Name, and to the propagation of His Gospel, whereby, beyond all doubt your Honours' trade over all India will be more and more blessed. (Quoted by Babb: 46)

In this is encapsulated the essential motivation for the education of the oppressed – to be servants of their oppressors, and thereby to have secured a ticket to Heaven.

Missionary Education

Although the first mission station to be established in South Africa was that of the Moravian Church at Genadendal in the 1730s, the "real missionary movement" according to Dora Taylor (1952) ... led by the London Missionary Society, was a British one and was in full force during the period of military conquest in the first half of the 19th century.⁶

According to Taylor, the missionary movement was "one of several agents, each of whom played their part in the subjugation of [the country's] inhabitants" for the purpose of furthering British supremacy. British supremacy meant one thing, the establishment of the new economic system, capitalism, into which both the Dutch and all Non-Europeans had to be fitted, the one as partners, the other as the exploited. To sustain this system, the toil of the Black man was imperative. In its insatiable need for profits, the tentacles of this system extended to the farthest corners of the colonial world ... sucking the blood of the Black man, relentlessly, without ceasing. (Taylor: 6).

The nineteenth century: British imperialism takes over

George Grey, who was appointed governor of the Cape Colony in 1854, supported the missionaries financially in the running of their mission stations and schools. He cautioned the missionaries against "too bookish" an approach to the education of the indigenous people and encouraged the establishment of industrial training centres for training in the "more mechanical arts." (Ibid: 68). However, Grey also instructed the missionaries to "give higher education to a portion of the native youths to raise up among them what might be called an educated class." (Ibid: 69).

Of this policy, Taylor observes that it . . . recognised the necessity for creating a special, privileged "class" of educated Africans . . . which, like the headmen and chiefs, would tend to owe allegiance, not to their own people, but to the Government of the White man.

In short, overall educational policy embodied a two-fold purpose: for preparing the "Black man for his particular place" in society and for cultivating a Quisling layer. (Ibid: 69)

This extended beyond the Cape. The wars of dispossession between 1779 and 1879 which led to the subjugation of the Nguni - and Sotho-speaking people of South Africa saw the establishment in 1799 of the first school specifically for Africans near the area which later became known as King William's Town. The first school in the Orange Free State was founded in 1823, and the first ones in Natal and what became the Transvaal, in 1835 and 1842, respectively. (Molteno: 27)

The importance of this Quisling layer should not be underestimated. In the words of Molteno (page 28) . . . part of the effect

which this early schooling had was the emergence of a new elite which was from the start potentially at odds with the traditional tribal leadership. With their newly acquired knowledge, they represented a threat to the traditional authorities, and even a possible challenge to their leadership. Molteno quotes the SG of Education in 1891:

Steeped in the conquerors' ways of seeing, converted to their religion, and generally accepting of the new order, the schooled corps could help disseminate a system of ideas, values, loyalties and authorities which were consistent with the colonists' interests and which contradicted and helped to undermine, the framework that had given the people an independent ideological base in their struggle to retain their land and livelihood. (Molteno: 28)

Education during the Rise of Industrial Capital in SA

The main drivers of the SA economy throughout the first three-quarters of the twentieth-century were mining and agriculture, and the needs of both sectors were for large masses of "ultracheap," "ultra-exploitable" labour-power. South Africa was incorporated into the global (largely colonial) economy as an enclave — that is, as a low-cost supplier of raw material for export to the metropolitan centres. Throughout this period, educational policy for the oppressed was aimed at supporting the economic interests of the rulers. In this regard, multiple considerations needed to be balanced, including the following:

- Education had to create wants among the oppressed. This would induce the latter to seek wage labour on the White-owned mines and farms to satisfy those wants.
- The education of the oppressed had to place sufficient emphasis on Christian norms, since Christianization was considered a control measure against rebelliousness and disobedience.
- The education of the oppressed also had to focus on imparting appropriate skill-sets. "Too much" education in industrial skills would threaten the White ⁸ workers' monopoly-access to highly-skilled jobs. In addition, "too much book-learning" was considered inappropriate, since this ran counter to the economy's needs for "ultracheap," "ultra-exploitable" masses of labour power.
- o However, there was a role for the thin layer of "teachers and preachers" which the system produced. This was largely to serve as an intermediate "bufferzone" between the colonial authorities and the oppressed masses.

EDUCATION UNDER NATIONAL PARTY RULE

The Turn to Fascism in South Africa

The hard-line, right-wing National Party came to power in 1948

on the back of a nationalist class alliance, which included agricultural capitalists, white workers (especially newly proletarianised Afrikaners), layers of the growing Afrikaner middle classes and fledgling manufacturing capital. (Marais: 30)

It came to power in a period characterised by growing class conflict, as workers and communities both rural and urban began to organise and deepen their rebellion against the conditions of life under extreme capitalist exploitation.

The immediate task of fascist rule was to subdue rising pressure "from below." The objective historical role of a fascist regime has always been to crush working class resistance in the interests of Big Capital. This is exactly what the NP did. Arming itself with a battery of oppressive legislation, chief of which were the Suppression of Communism Act (44:1950) and the General Laws Amendment Act (37:1963) it went on the offensive against the organisations of the people (in particular, the NEUM and its affiliates, and the ANC)

As Hobart Houghton (1976) put it:

Undoubtedly, the stern measures adopted by the South African government for the maintenance of law and order played their part in restoring [investor] confidence... Many investors who feared political instability in newly independent countries, were reassured by these measures. (Page 213)

At a global level, the post-war period was one of sustained economic growth up to the 1970s, as the European countries and Japan set about rebuilding their shattered economies. As an export-centred economy, SA benefited from this boom; between 1961 and 1970, it enjoyed one of the highest growth rates in the world (Hobart Houghton, Ibid).

National Party rule ensured that the benefits of this "golden age of capitalism" were restricted to those classified "white."

The party's ideological basis was apartheid – involving Herrenvolkism ("masterracism" or white supremacy), which it implemented on the already-existing foundations of social control established in the colonial era. This is clearly to be seen in its education policies.

The Introduction and Development of Bantu, Coloured and Indian Education

The National Party took ruling class educational policy to a new low. Immediately on coming to power, it appointed its Commission on Native Education in 1949, leading to the passing of the Bantu Education Act in 1953.

With equal indecent haste, it created its Commission on Coloured Education in 1953, and passed the Coloured Persons Education Act ten years later. This Act provided for control of education for children classified Coloured to be transferred from the provinces

to a Division of Education within the Department of Coloured Affairs.

Then came the Indian Education Act of 1965 which similarly, provided for the transfer of the control of education for people classified Indian from the provinces to the Department of Indian Affairs. (Molteno: 79)

Against this background, Bantu Education (and this includes its "Colouredised" and "Indianised" variants) played its role in keeping the non-White section of the working class in a state of ongoing thrall – in a state of cheap, right-less wage-slavery whose surplus value continued to be force-appropriated by not only the capitalist owners (foreign and local) of the means of production, but also by the (white) labour aristocracy.

A consequence of the country's industrial growth from about the mid-twentieth century was the increasing urbanisation of the rural working class. As Molteno puts it:

Accelerated capital accumulation—as a result of the expansion of the manufacturing industry and the opening up of the new gold fields in the Orange Free State and uranium mines in the West Rand and Klerksdorp areas—meant a growing need for labour. Taxes imposed to smoke the people off the remnants of their land combined with an accelerated rate of economic collapse in the reserves to produce an ever faster flow of Black workers to the urban areas. The potential political consequences of the development of a massive oppressed and ultra-exploited Black proletariat concentrated around the cities were recognised by the National Party ... and feared. (Page 81)

These "political consequences" to which Molteno refers revolved mainly around the anti-apartheid struggle for full political rights within a unified, non-racial, democratic South Africa.

The Bantuisation of Education was part of the broader plan to balkanise the country into a host of race-based, tribalised labour reserves to be known as "independent¹⁰ states" or "Homelands." The rationale was thereby created to deny "urban Africans" any rights to citizenship in South Africa, and in effect, to continue to starve education and other social necessities of sufficient funding to ensure anything approaching decency. It is within this context that one has to view Verwoerd's infamous statement:

There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour ... for that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community where he cannot be absorbed. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze. (Verwoerd, 1954: 24)

And

Bantu Education should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society ... The basis of the provision and organisation of education in a Bantu Community should, where possible, be the tribal organisation. (Verwoerd, 1954: 23)

Ironically, in earlier periods, the role of Education was detribalisation. Under the Nationalists, it became re-tribalisation!

The rise of neoliberalism

But, by the 1970s, the Afrikaner nationalists were caught in a time warp. Their approach to suppression and control of the working class had become "old school." The turn to neoliberalism of the major capitalist economies of the world demanded a façade of "democracy," in which all citizens should be seen to be politically free "once every few years to decide which particular representatives of the oppressing class are to represent and repress them." (Karl Marx)

The broad historical consequences of the emergence and shift towards neoliberalism had the effect – whether intended or unintended – of shifting the focus of struggle away from the conquest of power by the working class to one where anti-apartheid became an end in itself. And so, the basis was laid for the sell-out at CODESA.

Conclusion

The successive oppressors of the indigenous people of South Africa, as elsewhere in the world, knew the value of education as a tool of oppression and made full use of it in simultaneously innovative, humiliating and crude fashion. Of course, the oppressed masses did not meekly acquiesce in the process of their enslavement. Far from it. While every era threw up its share of sell-outs and collaborators, each era was also characterised by fierce and determined struggles to resist and subvert the established exploitative order. This was so across every sphere of life, not least the education sphere of which more in a follow-up article.

We wish to credit Ingrid Babb for information garnered from her research for her Doctoral Thesis awarded in 1984 titled "The Development of Educational Policy for Black Africans in South Africa: 1652-1948", as well as Frank Molteno for information taken from his Masters Thesis published in 1983 titled "The Schooling of Black South Africans and the 1980's Cape Town Students' Boycott: A Sociological Interpretation". We also quote from Dora Taylor, under the pseudonym Nosipho Majeke, in her classic, "The Role of te Missionaries in Conquest" (1952). Published by APDUSA.

Old Garbage in New Bags – Education still racist?

It will be 70 years in May since the ruling in the Supreme Court (USA) of Brown vs Education Board that concluded that segregation in schooling was "inherently unequal". The court overturned decades of legal precedent that kept Black Americans in separate and unequal schools. This ruling was partly because the court concluded that access to equitable, non-segregated schooling played a critical role in creating informed citizens.

The Brown vs Board of Education decision did not immediately change the status quo in public schools. In the USA, it at times necessitated federal troops to accompany learners to schools. In SA, it has taken time for schools to become desegregated. The only schools that have become desegregated are the former "white" schools. Many "White" learners are now enrolled in private schools, very expensive former Model C schools or do home schooling.

The harm that segregated schooling did to children across the board was incalculable. A desegregated school teaches children to work more effectively with others, reduces prejudices and enhances critical thinking.

Segregated schools in SA reflect society in that it mirrors the neighbourhood from which the children come. This is so because, whilst apartheid has been removed from the statute books, spatial apartheid has remained intact. In addition, the money-determinant has remained a dominant factor in where people live and also where they school.

In SA, there is a two-tier schooling system; this system is however not based on former racial classification but rather on class. The schools in the townships have remained under resourced, lack laboratories, libraries, and school halls and sports fields. These schools are mostly under-staffed and consequently cannot cope with the number of learners per class. Often classes are packed to capacity with more than fifty learners per class. In the former Model-C schools the school can afford to appoint additional teachers so that classes remain small and manageable. It is also a fact that township schools are often without specialist teachers in mathematics, physical science and the like whilst offering these courses. The result is that parents make big sacrifices to send their children to these former Model-C schools.

Further division exists as the private school industry writes an Independent Examination Board examination (IEB). This is an assessment body that is mostly used by private schools in South Africa. The learners at these schools pay exorbitant school fees to attend these schools. Only the very rich can attend these schools. It is not a coincidence that these schools, collectively, produce the leadership in society and business today. It is also not surprising that these schools, with smaller classes, the better-paid teachers, and adequate resources regularly produce close to a 100% pass rate. In 2024, the IEB schools produced a pass rate of

98.46% with 88.59% of pupils who passed having achieved a Bachelor's pass.

The Education department has not done its best in desegregation of the schools. At the opening of the schools in 2024, the Free State MEC for Education, Makalo Mohale stated on national TV (Morning Live) that he had paid an unannounced visit to a "Coloured" high school. Can we thus infer that schools are now classified as "Coloured", "Indian" or "Black"? Did this show that the ANC government is fundamentally and inherently racist? No further comment was elicited from either this MEC, the national Minister or any official of the Education Department.

The 2024 Matric Results

All the 9 provinces improved on their pass rates of 2022. According to Michael La Cordeur of Stellenbosch University, the pass rate has also increased from 60% in 2009 to the 80.1% in 2024. The release of the results focussed a great deal on the numbers. La Cordeur warns against the hype around the results. He points out that whilst the education department may be striving for quantity it may be sacrificing quality. In 2012, 1 208 973 learners were admitted to Grade.

1. Of these only 928 050 learners were in Gr. 11 and only 740 566 were enrolled to write the matric examination in 2023. Thus 468 407 learners, almost 40% disappeared from the system. With this in mind the actual pass rate drops to 55%. Are learners being culled to increase the pass rate.

What is happening in Gr. 11?

The dropout rate in schools in 2018, mostly amongst the poor, is a staggering 42% - 56%. The census 2022 revealed that the number of people not attending school aged 5 – 24 increased from 5.09 million to 5.4 million. This is 26.6% of the population. The School Fee Exemption policy allows for learners from low-income families to be exempted from paying school fees. The National School Nutrition Programme and scholar transport, while in some cases inefficient, provide some social protection, ensuring that a learner's economic situation does not hinder their access to education. However, in the Eastern Cape the Premier, Oscar Mabuyane, announced that 130 thousand learners need scholar transport, but the province is only able to cater in the transport needs of 90 thousand learners. This has resulted in learners in a specific area having to walk 22 km to get to a

school. This is particularly prevalent in areas of the poor and the rural areas. This is going to increase the dropout rate in the province.

Privatisation of Education

In an extract from an article in the *Mail and Guardian* in 2013 academics, Salim Vally and Enver Motala raise a damning point of view on the pressure exerted by keeneyed business hawks to continue commodifying education

... Public education has developed over more than a century to become a core part of the work of governments, especially because it is very much a part of their democratising mandate in providing a basic human right to all members of society. Nowhere is there an example of a country with high educational outcomes where the provision has been in private hands ...

This has ridden roughshod over the Constitution of SA mandate to government that states in part, as follows in point 29 on Education ...

Everyone has the right -

to a basic education, including adult basic education, and

to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures must make progressively available and accessible ...

How then, are these fundamental provisions upheld for children from vulnerable, impoverished families, who can barely afford to preserve shelter and health?

Neglect and Corruption

The public education system has been fraught with unscrupulous practices and a variety of actors keen to cash-in on a sector to which is attributed a huge chunk of the fiscus. *Corruption Watch* has received more than 26 thousand reports from members of the public alleging corruption. 22% of these relate to corruption and maladministration in the schools.

The adoption of austerity measures in education is an inhibiting factor to progress. This affects the schools in the vulnerable areas of the poor in particular. The influence on the pupil-teacher ratio is devastating. The former Model-C schools with their vast financial resources are able appoint teachers to lower the pupil-teacher ratio to an acceptable level

Our Demands

Compulsory, free and equal unsegregated education for all.

The twin scourges of illiteracy and innumeracymust be eliminated as a matter of urgency. Provision must be made for Adult Basic Education and to ensure special education for inclusive education.

All racialism at schools and all other educational institutions shall be removed. These institutions shall be open to all who seek an education.

Schools shall be free of tuition fees. It must be the duty of the state to provide such education, with free textbooks and stationery as well as school equipment. Transport to and from schools as well as meals must be provided for all learners. Schools must have well-stocked libraries, computer rooms, laboratories, school halls and sports facilities.

The learner-teacher ratio should be at an acceptable level with the provision of teacher-assistants.

It shall be the duty of the state to ensure the safety and security of all learners and staff, both teaching and non-teaching.

Thus, how are we to develop an education model, equipped with holistic cultural and progressive foundations? This is what the Working Class must demand and urgently strive to create.

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