

The Aims of Native Education.

[1940s?]

In discussing the aims of Native education we must be on our guard against several obvious temptations. Some of these are:-

- (a) losing sight of the special needs of the Bantu as a group in South Africa. These special needs include the creation of a healthy and intelligent public opinion in Native communities in matters of health and sanitation, the improvement of the material and economic ~~xxxxxxxx~~ of the Native people, the development of those habits of industry and persistence in work, either on his own account or in the service of others, which modern conditions demand, training in the better use of leisure time, and the general development of the character of the people
- (b) the belief that the ordinary school is the best place for the undertaking of the task indicated by needs referred to above. The school life of the bulk of Native children is so short that it seems to me hopeless to expect much to be achieved by the school as such. Without suggesting that elementary education should be neglected, I submit that one of the most urgent needs of the Native is the development of schemes for adult education. What is being done with agriculture through agricultural demonstrators might with profit be done with all those other aspects of Native life which are in desperate need of development--health and sanitation, recreation, the improvement of home life, child welfare, even reading and writing, better use of money, etc. What is needed urgently is a Training School for Social Workers in Native Community who will be able to tackle the problem of Adult education and thus bring the out-of school population more into line more into line with the general purposes of the education of the young.
- (c) losing sight of the fact that the Native forms part of the South Africa population. Native education must take account of the presence of the white man and other races in this country and the problems created by this juxtaposition, while they need not receive direct attention in every type of school, must form part of the background of all those who have to do with Native education. In this connection while we should do all we can to interest the Native child in the culture of his own people and in the heritage which has come down to him from the past, we must not forget that today the white man and all that he stands for forms a vital factor in the heritage of the Native child of today and tomorrow.
- (d) making too much of quantity both as regards schools and pupils. The multiplication of badly equipped, poorly run, overcrowded and understaffed is to my mind not in the interest of the people. Our slogan ought to be "Better Schools" rather than more schools--better school buildings, richer course, better qualified ~~xxxxxxxx~~ and better paid teachers, smaller classes, better results.
- (e) good schools cost money to run. It is idle for us to devise grand educational schemes or to bemoan the defects of the existing system of native education if the Government is not prepared to support liberally an educational programme more in line with the needs of the Native people.
- (f) mistaking the requirements of the European population for the actual needs of the Native people. The European population requires good farm hands, reliable servants, natives who respect the white man and recognise his superiority, but much as one may be sympathetic with some of these objectives, they represent the needs of the white man and not those of the Native.

## The Control of Native Education.

Education is the task of Government. It is of such vital importance in the life and thought of a people that it ought not to be left entirely to private or philanthropic agencies. Missions have played a great part in the development of Native education not only by way of running schools but also because they have endeavoured to keep their educational work free from the tendency of neglecting ultimate values and the special needs of minority groups in the Native population such as the detribalised and the urbanised. They have always looked ahead and have laid the foundations of the higher education which is now being demanded on every hand by the Bantu. Thus from practically every point of view their contribution to Native education has been of great value.

But the control of Native education ought to remain in their hands so largely as it is today. On every hand one finds that those Native leaders who dare say so are dissatisfied with the fact that almost all their education is in the hands of the churches. For the Christian Native permanent Mission control of Native education is beginning to smack too much of patronage and the acceptance of undeserved favours. It is making it difficult for the Native communities to feel that the schools are theirs and thus hindering the development of social responsibility in this matter. The denominational factor is also a serious handicap in Mission control. For the non-Christian Native it must be definite disadvantage that in most parts of the country he cannot send his children to a school that will not influence them directly or indirectly in favour of one or other Christian Church. While it is desirable that those who wish it should be able to attend Christian schools, it does seem a pity that it is almost impossible for those who ~~xxxx~~ do not wish this there are no schools under the present system. It is the earnest hope of every Christian that ultimately all the Native people will embrace Christianity, but it is not inconceivable that a section of the population may find Christianity permanently unacceptable, and to my mind there is no reason why there should be penalised for what may be an honest belief in the superiority of some other system of religious life. As already indicated even where mission influence is desired, mission control is being questioned more and more in Native circles today. Therefore it is suggested that gradually the control of Native education should pass into the hands of Government. Even where mission control is retained, greater insistence should be laid upon the necessity for getting School Committees to be associated with the Grantee or Manager in the control of the schools to which they make so large a contribution, and that no merely as rubber stamps for decisions arrived at without reference to them.

As between the Union Government and the Provincial Administrations I should favour provincial control of Native education. Education must take account of local factors, and especially is this the case with elementary education. Therefore local agencies under the control of the Provinces would to my mind deal more effectively with the control of the schools. In any case the Union Government, if it took over the control, would have to set up such local agencies and Provincial headquarters, and we might be saddled with a distinction without a difference. But in order to bring about uniformity in objectives in the general content of education, in the conditions of service of teachers etc., is no far as these are desirable, a Committee consisting of the heads of the Provincial Departments of Native education ~~xxxx~~ with power to co-opt other educational officers likely to be of use in such matters might be set up.

## The Use of the Vernacular

The importance of language as a means of communication, an instrument of thought and a vehicle of social tradition and therefore a means of cultural determinism is recognised by all educationists. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the vernacular should receive its proper place in Native Schools. And yet nothing ought to be done to give the Native the impression that he is to be denied the opportunity of learning the official languages. Nothing is <sup>more</sup> calculated to destroy interest in the Native languages among them <sup>rather</sup> than an attempt to ~~minimise~~ minimise the importance of learning English and Afrikaans and to disparage their efforts in this direction. There is a growing interest in the study of the Native languages among the Bantu, but any European or Governmental attempt to force the pace would defeat its own object. The present system under which the vernacular is the medium of instruction in lower classes and a subject of study in the higher classes seems to me highly commendable. Interest in the study of the Native languages would be increased tremendously by the production of better and more numerous books in the various languages. Some of the languages are very poor as far as literature is concerned with the result that in the course of his school the Native pupil is forced to read the same books over and over again, to say nothing of the fact the contents of the books are not always of as good a quality as the language in which they are written. And would that the day might be long delayed when the Native pupil might be required to analyse and dissect the literary masterpieces of his language in the same way as English pupils have to do ! The Government would well to spend a sum of money regularly on the publication of suitable textbooks and other reading material in the native languages, special writers being commissioned to do this under the guidance of the Education Departments and perhaps a body such as the Inter-University Committee on Research in African Studies.

## Teachers in Native Schools.

Teachers represent the most important part of the Native educational system. For this reason every effort should be made to improve their conditions of service. The present ~~scale~~ scale of ~~salaries~~ salaries paid to teachers in Native schools, especially Native teachers, are no inducement for any ambitious Native to devote his life to this most important work. It is only the fact that other openings for Natives are so limited in the Union that we have any good teachers at all in Native schools. The teacher should be, as he indeed is at the moment, the most highly respected member of the Native community. This status of the teacher is undermined by the unsatisfactory conditions under which he has to work, with a low salary, without leave and pension privileges, without ~~xxx~~ facilities for refresher courses and with a kind of master-and-servant relationship between himself and the Grantee. The entrance qualifications and the length of the period of training for teachers have been increased, but the improvements in the conditions of service and emoluments have not made a commensurate advance.