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WORKSHOP ON THE CONSTITUTIONAL PROPOSALS ORGANISED BY THE
UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (WESTERN AREAS BRANCH) HELD ON
SUNDAY, 6TH AUGUST, 1983 AT THE DAVID LANDAU COMMUNITY CENTRE.

TOPIC: EDUCATION

SPEAKER: YACOOB KHAN

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Education has been defined in various terms by different authorities, but most agree that the primary aim of education is to ensure the attainment of specific goals which are determined by the nature of a particular society and the purposes of its members. In a society that is not structured, and in which the majority of people have some say in determining the goals to be attained, there can be little argument against that system of education from a socio-political point of view, though from a philosophical point of view, the system may or may not be condemned.

However, South Africa is a highly structured society, and the basis of its structuring is purely a racial one. It is a fact that all structured societies organise people into groups and these groups are arranged in some form of status hierarchy. In the Republic of South Africa the White group enjoys the highest status, followed by the Coloureds and Indians, and finally the Blacks in the lowest status. This type of structuring is due to a political ideology which has as its primary aim the controlling of the way people behave and their expectations. The more rigid the structure, the more clearly defined is the type of behaviour and expectations to be tolerated. New ideas and innovations are not encouraged thus ensuring that there is little or no social change.

At this point it becomes necessary to mention briefly the philosophy of education of the Nationalist Government. This is the so called Christian National Education. First mooted at a Conference of Dutch Reformed Churches held in Bloemfontein soon after the last World War, it was adopted by the Nationalist Government shortly after it came into power in 1948. It is not my intention to discuss at length this philosophy except to state that its aim is the attainment of goals as determined by that organisation, aims which are diametrically opposed to those of the majority of the people in South Africa for whom it is intended. In a nut shell it means the maintenance of the status quo and to ensure that the darker skinned people of this country will forever be hewers of wood and drawers of water - an attitude that is neither Christian, nor National nor is it education.

To put this philosophy into effect the authorities took control of all education pertaining to Indians, Coloureds and Blacks. For example, schools under the control of private organisations, churches and missionaries and the Provincial Authorities was brought under the control of the Ministry of Education. Bantu Education, Coloured Education and Indian Education was introduced by Acts of Parliament. Separate universities were established for the various groups, and to make sure that proper control was exercised over these different educational bodies known members of the Broederbond were appointed to top administrative posts. Recently, some control of a token nature has been delegated to organisations such as the S.A.I.C. which are really Government created and controlled bodies and not representative of the community no matter which way you look at it. You can fool some of the people some of the time but the S.A.I.C you can fool all of the time.

This now brings me to the Constitutional Proposals. Previous speakers have outlined for you the salient features of the Proposals and it remains for me to draw your attention to some of its implications for education. Many people are grossly misinformed when they believe that each Chamber will be totally in control of education affecting its own community. For example, many believe that the Indian Chamber (Deputies) will be in control of Indian Education. This is not so. In terms of the Proposal a body called the Committee of Educational Structures will be set up. Its members will be appointed and will be mainly drawn from conservative Afrikaner Teacher organisations, people clinging to the philosophy of Christian National Education. This body will determine all educational policy for the country such as conditions of service, teachers salaries, curriculum planning and syllabi. This Committee will advise each of the three Chambers on educational matters. The various Chambers will have no alternative but accept the advice and carry out their policy. It should be obvious that the educational system will become more rigid and the objectives of Christian National Education will be more speedily realised.

The type of education proposed will result in:-

- (1) Much of every day life of every individual will take place in situations mapped out by this Committee.
- (2) An important aspect of this mapped out system will be the existence of rules and procedures which will govern relationships at every level. A colossal bureaucracy will be created.
- (3) As a result there will be a lot of conflict within groups and between groups.
- (4) It will result in the preservation of certain social, political and economic activities, in other words the preservation of the status quo.
- (5) The granting of "symbolic power" to the various Chambers, more so to the Indian and Coloured Chambers, will result in the distortion of reality for many people. As it is we have people acting like little Hitlers and Napoleons since the creation of the S.A.I.C. When the Afrikaner first tasted power he believed and still believes that God specially created him to civilise everybody else in this part of the world.
- (6) Power, especially coercive power in the form of the police and the military will be deployed whenever necessary to ensure that the system works.

Concerned people in the Country want a change in the way South African society is structured. The Nationalist Government is determined that changes do not take place. Changes in any society are promoted by some of the following factors:-

- (1) Technology: Technology and technological advancement promotes change. The authorities ensure that very limited training and exposure is provided, especially to Blacks.
- (2) Modernisation: In a preliterate society there were some 50 task classification and in a modern highly literate society there are some 50 000. Literacy of a high standard (secondary and tertiary levels) for the majority is something that is not and will not be encouraged.
- (3) Mass Media: Heavy censorship of what is seen, written and read ensures that this avenue that promotes change is controlled.

- (4) Industrialisation: Training of a specialist nature is limited for everyone except the dominant group. Poorly trained personnel will be poorly paid and thus eternally fixed in their poverty.
- (5) Population Movement: This too can promote change so movement is strictly controlled. Homelands, Group Areas Act, Influx Control are all designed to check this change promoting factor.
- (6) Outside Pressure and Influence: This is ignored and, in any case, it is so wishy washy-merely of a token nature to placate Black African States. Vested interests in the Republic of countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, France and West Germany precludes them from exerting effective pressure and is thus safely ignored.
- (7) Collective Behaviour: By keeping people apart into racial and ethnic compartments this change producing factor is successfully neutralised.
- (8) Wars: In the two World Wars, Blacks, Coloureds and Indians were recruited to serve an auxiliary role. Membership of the Defence Force is denied to the majority except at the lowest levels.
- (9) Political Revolution: Bannings, House Arrests, Detentions without Trial, Exiling and Deaths in Detention have seen to it that social and political changes do not come about.

To conclude, let me state that, amongst other things, education mainly influences and shapes the quality of life one enjoys. It affects ones status and rights, the character and kind of life one leads and the type of relationships one establishes with ones fellow human beings. It is too important an institution in any society to be tampered with by politicians and vested interests or groups. The people as a whole must decide what its goals should be and education must be so designed as to attain these goals for the benefit of all. Apathy on our part will result in values which we prize most being butchered and demolished.

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