

Huddleston,

DEATH OF A SCHOOL

BY

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Emse 2:3

ONE of the fallacies that dies hard in South Africa today is that which thinks of 'apartheid' as an abstract and airy theory which cannot possibly work. It is easy enough for the European to believe this for, except indirectly, he is not immediately affected. He can still, though with more difficulty, obtain labour in his home and in his factory, in his shop and in his garage. And if he is a farmer he can probably think with satisfaction of a policy which aims at driving labour away from the urban areas.

To the non-European, however, and particularly to the African, 'apartheid' has begun to work with immense power through the various legislative enactments of the past few years. It is altering the whole pattern of his life by creating a sense of paralysing insecurity and tension; it is based, amongst other principles, on that of the absolute impermanence of his urban life. In the words of the Minister of Native Affairs: "There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour."

Now, clearly, if "apartheid" is to be made permanent; if "white supremacy" is to endure in South Africa forever; if the African is to remain always within his own cultural and social milieu, it is essential that he should not share in the traditions of western culture. That would "create a class (again in the words of Dr. Verwoerd) of educated and semi-educated persons without the corresponding socio-economic development which should accompany it. 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 civilised community of South Africa, i.e. the Europeans." The Bantu Education Act is an attempt to secure that the African people shall never make its home among the civilised community of South Africa." It is designed to perpetuate 'apartheid' and

'white supremacy' by ensuring that every African child shall be taught from earliest years that there is 'no place for him . . . above the level of certain forms of labour' in what Dr. Verwoerd describes as "the civilised community."

One of the chief objects of the Bantu Education Act is to secure uniformity of control over all schools presently existing in the Union. As the vast majority of schools have in fact been built and superintended by the missionary societies this involves taking control of all mission schools. Circular No 252/302 of August 2nd 1954 states how this is to be done. In effect it presents the missions with a simple choice, and gives them five months (until December 31st. 1954) in which to make up their minds. They can either accept complete government control or a cut of 25% in their existing subsidies. If they accept the latter "they will be informed that this can only be a provisional arrangement which may be terminated when the Department is convinced that the transfer of control to the Bantu community is desirable or should be begun." Teacher-training colleges have no choice at all. They must either submit to complete Government control, or go out of existence as teacher-training colleges.

Now it is certain that most missionary bodies will be unable to face the vast reduction in subsidy involved in a cut of 25%. At best they will be able to retain one or two institutions and only then "for the time being."

In other words the Bantu Education Act is so framed as to bring death and destruction to all mission schools. It is "part of a wider scheme of social development. . ." namely total apartheid. And in this scheme there is no room for those who believe education to be the opening of the door to the widest culture attainable. There is no room for those ideals which—however inadequately—the mission schools have stood for throughout the years. There is only one path open to the African—it is the path back to tribal culture and tradition: to ethnic groups: to the reserves: to anywhere other than the privileged places

habited by the master-race. It is because we cannot accept such principles that we are closing St. Peter's School, Rosettenville.

It has been a decision made in anguish and only after the most careful thought and prayer. For it means the end of forty years of labour and devotion, and it means the break-up of a tradition of which we are unashamedly proud. Yet we believe that it is not only the right decision but the most convincing proof we can give of our opposition to Government policy. We have made it because we are entirely convinced that this policy, enshrined in the Bantu Education Act, is contrary to all Christian principles in that it desires to prevent the full and free development of human personality. Any educational plan based on the conception that one race is and must always remain inferior to another is abhorrent to us. We would sooner die with honour than exist through the years with so heavy a burden on our conscience.

What then of the future? Is there a future?

"I tell you nought for your comfort,

Yea, nought for your desire,

Save that the sky grows darker yet

And the sea rises higher."

This is not pessimism. It is realism. The day will of course come when, once more, the spirit and ideals of St. Peter's can come into their own. But the time is not yet. We can only hope and pray that for the sake of South Africa and of the generations of Africans yet unborn, it may not be too long delayed.



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