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THE PLACE OF EDUCATION IN THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM.

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I

The first prerequisite in a serious discussion of education is clarity on the ends in view. It is the goals we shall have before us which must determine our strategy. In the survey which follows I have attempted not to lay down an expert plan of how to achieve what I consider should be our ends. I have merely collected my thoughts and put them together in the belief that the best that a layman can do in a subject so highly technicalised is to outline his goals and leave the job of working out details to the educational strategists; to the men and women who are adequately equipped to opine on these matters.

To me, Education is only a means to an end; a vital and decisive means. Perhaps I should make this statement clearer. By Education I mean the formal training of the child from the lowest to the highest schools in the country. I mean the process of infusing new ideas into the young mind. I exclude research; the pursuit of the truth- which is an end in itself.

My own goal is full citizenship. I am not setting up any particular race of men as my model; not even the whiteman who has so much to say about his virtues. I want to see the African a balanced citizen, with an outlook on life which is ready at all times to recognise and learn the truth no matter from what source it might come; a human being who will not adhere obstinately to my particular "Isim"; one who will approach men and events from the eclectic standpoint and who will, as a result, find joy in the variety of God's creatures; one to whom the diverse races and cultures that exist in our country will be a source of constant gratitude because it is this variety which is one of our chief sources of real wealth.

I have mentioned a balanced citizen who will feel at home in God's wide world and in the variety and abundance of all that is in it. In order to have that feeling of ease and comfort in the world; in order to develop his own personality fully and make his distinctive contribution to human advancement, the African requires to be free. A slave cannot develop his personality freely. He has to grow in a way to please his masters. We are slave in revolt. We see no future for ourselves and our children in a society ordered as ours is. And to create the world we desire we need education. That is why education is so vital in our struggle to be free.

Allow me to develop the freedom theme a little further, just to make my point clearer. By freedom, I do not mean just a few concessions made by the whiteman to silence the more vocal among us. We want to feel that we are rulers of this land; that we determine our own destiny in ways we consider best for ourselves. If partnership with other races is good for us, we must adopt it. If we think it is harmful, we must be free to reject it and in doing that we must not in any way be influenced by the frowns on the face of anybody. Our own conscience alone must be our guide in these things. It has been my guide. And in my own view I have seen brighter prospects of a fuller life for myself and my children in a living and real partnership with my countrymen of all races. The wider the variety of our intercourse with our fellowmen of all colours the richer will our life be and the fuller the measure of freedom.

The second goal, then, is equal partnership with the other races.

There are, however, very serious obstacles on the way to my two goals. Those which are germane to our discussion to-night are confined largely to education. Quite inevitably in a discussion of Education our attention must be turned to the present system, if to see where it falls short of our expectations. Incidentally, Africa education is a subject of heated

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controversy at the moment. If I throw a few more pieces of firewood into the raging fire it is because the subject affects me so vitally, both as an African and as a parent. But we must always be on guard against being aroused emotionally and being stirred into purely emotional reactions to a situation which we should approach with all possible calm and clear-headedness.

In viewing the present system of African Education, then, we need to see where it is bad and at the same time never cock an eye on its merits. The goal of the white people who have forced the present system on us is obviously to produce a type of African who will be sufficiently educated to be a useful instrument in the whiteman's employ- one who will not, however, be so educated as to attain complete equality with the whiteman.

No man has the right to set a ceiling beyond which the human personality might not grow. The present system falls flat here. What is more, it is immoral because it seeks to defeat the whole purpose of Creation.

The principle which underlies the present system is wrong, fundamentally. Segregation cannot be convincingly defended. Learned men throughout history have tried to work out a case for it. That this case crumbles down from century to century is proof enough to me that it is inherently against mankind's interests.

In our own special circumstances, segregation of any kind is a dangerous incitement to chauvinism. If Africa becomes free in my own lifetime, I shall give my life itself to see to it that discrimination based on race becomes a crime. It can be seen how wrong it is to build a society on a foundation as dangerous as segregation. It shows how lacking in the qualities of true leadership and statesmanship the white ruling minority is. How can you boast of giving good leadership in a situation where you have built what you call a nation on foundations packed with dynamite? Why should you be surprised if others lose confidence as much in your intentions as in your capacity to lead?

You see, ladies and gentlemen, we want to build up a civilisation that will weather the storms of Time; something that will shine without blemish for thousands of years. The tyranny under which we suffer is but a training ground for this higher duty we owe ourselves and mankind. If the whiteman wants to dynamite his own civilisation by treating us as though we were his enemies, that is his own business. In so far as we are concerned, we must never lose sight of our own destiny. Not even when we are saddled with wicked systems of segregation in Education.

The third evil in the present system is the emphases that it lays on men and events to give a distorted picture of relations with one another as South Africans. The books which our children read at schools have been written and prescribed to create the impression that in three hundred years of white injustice to us, virtue has always been on the white side and vice on ours. Consequently I am never surprised when the Union Parliament passes laws which, in effect, suggest that a white lunatic is considered superior to an African philosopher!

As I said at the beginning, it is the goals which determine strategy. Once the goals are wrong, the strategies will be wrong. I am not surprised then to find that our own education has so many fatal weaknesses.

But a truly eclectic view of life will not see only the bad points in anything devised by the human mind. It will be on the look-out for the Truth, no matter how faintly it might glow; no matter how it might be surrounded with darkness and lies. No does the truly eclectic outlook seek to pull down everything which has been build by man. On the contrary, it seeks to be constructive; to weed out evil and replace it with good. It is for this reason that I have not left out some of the points I consider good in the present system. I am sure all present to-night will agree that a system which produces world figures like Mr. A.J. Lutuli or Professor/.....

or Professor Matthews cannot be without any good in it. I want us to build on its virtues.

The first and most important of these, in my view, is its emphasis on mother-tongue instruction. Now, this is a subject which is rather explosive in the Africa community. As searchers for the truth, let us have our minds quite clear on the principle behind mother-tongue instruction. The principle itself is sound. It has been acclaimed by leading educationalists right round the world. We must draw the line between the good and the bad in mother-tongue instruction.

But the validity of the principle rests as much on the mother tongue's being convenient for the child as on the assumption that when the child grows up he will do his business in his language; read literature written in it; be tried by judges speaking it and, all in all, use it as his country's official language.

In South Africa, however, African languages have no official status. And there is no clear intention that the rulers are thinking in the direction of recognising African languages as official languages. No has much been done to raise these languages to parity with the other languages- to say in the variety of studies which can be successfully pursued through the medium of African languages.

It is clear to me that the intention is to impoverish African education and undermine the foundations which the African pupil needs to stand on a footing of intellectual equality with the other races when it comes to university grade. Viewed from this angle, the present emphasis on mother-tongue instruction might very well be meant to pave the way for introducing the colour bar in university education. For, how can you have a uniform university education where there have been fundamental differences in the primary and secondary stages ?

It is clear to me that the turn that African education has taken is for the worst. It is designed to stamp the mark of inferiority permanently on the African's forehead.

There is so much wickedness in segregation that even where it tries to do good, its evil motivation crops up. A case in point is the one I have just mentioned.

The second good point in the present system is its emphasis on a thorough study of the English language. We are an oppressed people, seeking to create for itself a world after its own design. To do that successfully, we need to be able to have one language which will make us understand each other as Africans. We need, also, a language which will facilitate communication between ourselves and our friends beyond the seas. That language is English. English, then, is a vital link of survival for us and we can never say that we have had too much English.

I must not be misunderstood here. As a good South Africa, I want to feel that Afrikaans is my own language. I want it studied in our schools, just as I want the Afrikaner child to study Zulu, Xhosa and Sesuto very thoroughly.

If we add the good and the bad points in the present system, it is clear to me that the latter outweigh the former heavily. It becomes our business, as creators of an Africa after our own design, to evolve a system which will bring us near our goals.

I now propose to outline that system in very broad terms. I shall divide it into two sections- the ideal and the immediately practicable. Let me start with the ideal. We must set out to create a fully

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integrated society where neither colour nor language will be a consideration. We must have common schools for our children from the kindergarten to the universities. If there has to be any segregation, it might have to be on purely religious grounds and, even then, only where it is desired.

Next, all the major languages of the Union must be recognised as official. I must go to Court and have my case conducted in Zulu, by a Judge who speaks Zulu.

Thirdly, we must avoid the narrower type of nationalism with its heavy emphasis on race. The concept to which we must be loyal must be the broader one which embraces all the peoples of our country. In our ideal South Africa, there will be no distinctive national destiny for any of the national groups in our life; the only destiny we shall have shall be the destiny of us all as members sharing a corporate life.

Fourthly, we must have a system which will strive to bring into being a truly South African culture. There is no such a thing at present. We have Zulu culture, Afrikaans culture, English culture but no South Africa culture. To be truly South Africa, a South Africa culture will be a merger of all the virtues of the other cultures. These will have to be blended together to produce something wholly new in Africa and in the world. Let me show what I mean.

I should be the happiest man if, one day, I met a distinguished African lady wearing the sari with the ease shown when she puts on a costume. I should be delighted to see Indian or European teams of young massed in the Ndlamu dance. The whites almost did it during the war; they adopted Zulu battle-cries and I am informed that they were formidable. I should like to see mixed congregations in Durban, the most English of all English-speaking cities, where Afrikaans was freely used. I am proud that I can address a gathering in the language of my English countrymen. So, you see the pattern before you.

But then to turn it into reality is the work of statesmen. And I am afraid we must face the fact that they will come from us simply because we are the group everybody fears most. We are too many for the other people and it is for us to lead them to the paths of peace.

I must say, moreover, that the pattern of life I would like; that is, the incidents I have mentioned, would not be mere concessions to the various groups. They would be part of our heritage; the result of intergrating our cultures in a way to produce a new and distinctively South African culture; something we shall be born into; something in which we shall express our genius fully; something which shall be truly our own, neither artificial nor imposed on us.

There will be formidable odds to this ideal. To overcome them for they must be, because this ideal is the only guarantee of racial peace we need to sit down now and work out a master-plan to turn our dream into reality over a certain period. Accordingly I suggest that the African National Congress should appoint a best-brains-commission to work out this master-plan; something which will co-ordinate our political, cultural, economic and other activities in order to give direction to our struggle for freedom.

One of the things the commission might consider very seriously and give immediate guidance thereon is the diversification of our struggle. We cannot and must not all be politicians. Politics alone will not win the struggle for us. We must be on the march on all fronts. And not in a random manner. We must be in step. The Church must be brought into line. We must bring it in as a matter of vital interest. So must be the professions; labour and what not. We must make better use of our resources- numerical, material, spiritual and cultural. We must be able to place a man in a position where his talents qualify him to give the best service. We must not take square pegs and fit them into round holes/.....

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holes. The scarcity of manpower we complain of springs from our inability to make a more intelligent use of our resources. We are an army marching up the road to freedom. An army needs discipline and method to win.

But these are things over which we need to sit down and think. There are others which are readily practicable. It is to these that we must now come.

Education for our children is being turned into a political instrument to wreck everything that we have built up within the last three hundred years. That is one thing we must never, never allow to happen. We might as well start considering our first line of defence. And in this respect we might begin thinking seriously of national schools. We must counteract the Bantu Education poison by vigorous efforts to orientate the outlook of the African child in the direction of our own choice; we must make him realise that South Africa is his own, too.

Secondly, we must insist on specialisation in our ranks. We must not lump all our best men in one form of activity. The point has been reached where the struggle must be more diversified. We are approaching the end of the road for mass meetings, platform addresses and popular demonstrations. We have entered a new phase in our struggle—where the written word will prove mightier than the mightiest sword.

There is nothing unique in all this. All emancipation movements have had to face this reality. When the oppressor has leaders banned and meetings, the only answer any serious struggle can give is the written word. For this reason, I feel that we should now be on the look-out for talent and make better use of it in our struggle. We must make it our policy to give active support and encouragement to the African artist, writer, poet, singer, etc., as a matter of policy. These people can carry across to the masses and to our friends, messages which can no longer be effectively conveyed by our political leaders.

It must be part of our educational policy to search for, encourage and support African talent in every field. In the final reckoning, these people are some of the most valuable weapons we have in our hands.

Above everything, we must foster mother-tongue instruction and literature. Congress leaders must themselves set the examples of showing their pride in their own languages. We must carry on conversation in our own languages, whether in private or in the buses and elsewhere. We must buy and read books in our own languages. A good Congressman must be able to speak, read and write Zulu, Xhosa and Sesutho, at least. That will bring us closer to our people and we shall cease to be regarded by them as, or to feel in ourselves that we are, a privileged group.

The educated African betrays the struggle here rather unconsciously. The popular fashion is to speak English and to encourage little children to speak English or Afrikaans and not an African language. People who do this imagine that to overburden their children with a "foreign" language shows up the little kids' intellectual brightness when, in fact it crushes the young and growing mind in two ways. It overloads the child's mind. It forces him to think in two languages and tends to confuse him. But the most cruel aspect of all this is that the child is forced to speak a language which is foreign to his parents; which they themselves do not know very well. When they are angry and wish to express themselves forcefully; or when they rejoice, or when they address those whom they respect, they invariably use the mother-tongue. The little one finds it hard to understand precisely why he must use a special language; and children do not like things especially reserved for them.

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This burden is also injurious to the self-respect of the parent who insists that his little child must speak English or Afrikaans because it is a false value. Snobs are people who adhere to false values in life. We ourselves are producing African snobs who think it is great if their children speak English. No African Nationalist must allow a thing of that sort to happen to himself or his children if he understands fully what he is doing in the national struggle.

In the foregoing I have tried to present in very broad outline the picture of what I consider the best education for citizenship. I have confined myself necessarily to broad principles. But I have also confined myself to only the intellectual angle of education. I want a balanced education which will produce men and women who will be fit to be free.

For this reason, while we must insist on training the mind in reading for the hour of victory, the hands also must be trained to enable us to produce the wherewithal to create the world after our own design.

In this connection I want to make only two proposals. We must insist on developing in our people a very strong sense of social responsibility. We must not only convince our wealthy men of the need to give our cause material assistance; we must produce young men and women who will give up every joy in life and dedicate themselves wholly to doing Congress work; to educating the masses; to relieving suffering and similar work.

Our education must produce such men and women. People who will do what we tell them for no profit whatsoever; but for the joy of serving Africa.

Finally, we must plan to make better use of our wealth- the land, water, minerals and build up a system of economy which will stand the strains and stresses of the most violent reactions to our demands for freedom.

But to do all that we must be clear on our goals; on the principles along which we shall struggle and of the methods we shall use to attain our ends. When we have done that and applied ourselves without regard for sacrifices, we shall then be fit to be free.

M A Y I B U U Y B !

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Enandleni,  
P.O. INANDA.

*Handwritten signature*

M. T.

**Collection Number: AD1812**

**RECORDS RELATING TO THE 'TREASON TRIAL' (REGINA vs F. ADAMS AND OTHERS ON CHARGE OF HIGH TREASON, ETC.), 1956 1961**

**TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961**

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