

In his recent declaration in which he outlined the policy and platform of the African National Congress, the President-General, Dr A.B. Xuma, indicated that this national organisation stands "for the improvement of the African people politically, economically, socially, educationally and industrially". The object of this paper is to give a brief exposition of the standpoint of Congress as far as the claims of the African people upon the South African Nation in the matter of education are concerned.

The Significance of Education. It is hardly necessary for one to point out that education, understood in the broadest sense of the term, is the greatest single factor among those making for the improvement and development of any people. In every civilised country education is rightly regarded as a national undertaking of fundamental importance, and no effort is spared to ensure that sound education is placed within the reach of every potential citizen of the country. Especially is this the case in countries which lay claim to being democratic, because the democratic form of government in which every adult citizen is expected to take an intelligent interest in the way in which he is governed cannot be operated successfully or satisfactorily in a land the majority of whose population is steeped in ignorance and superstition. To all people, but more particularly to subject races, education is a matter of vital concern, because the general enlightenment it provides and the critical attitude it engenders constitutes one of the best weapons of the downtrodden and the oppressed against exploitation and domination. It is a much simpler and safer thing to keep in subjection an ignorant and illiterate population than it is to dominate a community which is in possession of the instruments of learning and the materials for forming sound judgements. It is for that reason that so-called imperialisms and dictatorships always either deny those subject to them the right to a free system of education, or, if they do not withhold this right altogether, do as little as they can to promote the development of a complete system of education for their subject race or races.

The Heritage of the African Child. The African National Congress as the mouthpiece of the African people of the Union in so far as their political rights are concerned is determined to see that the right of the African child to share to the fullest extent in the educational system of the

country of his birth is accorded more general recognition than is the case in South Africa. Although much has been achieved in the field of Native education in South Africa in the last century, the position ~~is~~ remains far from satisfactory. While all white children of school-going age are provided with educational facilities by the State, only about 20 % of the African children of similar age are catered for by the Native educational system. Again while the State assumes full financial responsibility for the education of every white child, as far as the African child is concerned the State has only gone so far as to undertake to assist, and even then to a limited extent, those who, like the Missions, undertake to conduct schools for the African people. Consequently while in 1939 the State spent over 10½ million pounds on the education of 417000 white children (and £965,000 on the education of 165,000 Coloured and Indian children, only £934,000 was spent on the education of over 450,000 African children. The position becomes even more deplorable when it is remembered that the bulk of the money spent on African education is derived from a special tax imposed on the African people to finance their own development, while no similar tax is imposed on other sections of the population. In other words in South African political theory education is looked upon as a necessity and a right for the white child, while for the African child it is regarded as a luxury and a privilege. Congress will not rest satisfied until this anomalous position has been remedied. By every constitutional means at its disposal Congress will demand and agitate for the assumption by the State of full responsibility for the education of the African child, and for the financing of African education in a manner which will make possible adequate educational facilities for every child, whose parents make a contribution, directly or indirectly, to the national wealth of South Africa.

The Type of Education. It is not sufficient for any people to demand the right to education. With this must be coupled the demand for the best type of education. We are only too familiar with the fact that while many people in South Africa are prepared to concede the point that the African is entitled to education, they contend that a special kind of ~~an~~ education suitable for him alone should be given to him. These attempts at discriminating against the African in matters educational are usually put forward under the guise of all kinds of specious arguments such as

the special needs of the African or the different environment of the African child or the short stay of the African child in school or the urgent need for a large number of African workers or the uselessness of certain subjects for the African. The African National Congress does not stand for the slavish imitation of the educational programme of other sections of the population, but it is determined to exercise the utmost vigilance to ensure that the African people are not fopped off with something inferior as far as education is concerned, and that African money is not spent on fruitless educational experiments calculated to divert them from the main stream of the educational development of other sections of the population. As a rule the people who suffer as a result of dabbling with these new-fangled ~~ideas~~ and half-baked ideas are the Africans and not the experimenters. We reserve to ourselves the right to choose the kind of education which is going to be given to our children and again and again the African people have shown that they will not tolerate any tinkering with the educational system by means of ill-advised experiments in which they have no say. At the present time a number of educational experiments which are being carefully watched by the African people. We refer to the Medical Aid Scheme at Fort Hare, the School Farms which have been established in different parts of the Cape Province, the School of Social Work in Johannesburg and the new Domestic Science course for teachers to be established at Healdtown in 1942. If these courses do not come up to the expectations of the African people--and we are not suggesting that they will not--they will not get our support, and even if attempts are made to bolster them up by means of liberal bursaries as a tempting bait to an admittedly poverty-stricken people in due course the African people will decide whether their genuine interests will be served by them.

Like other sections of the population the African people desire to have an educational system with different types of schools in which African youth will be trained to take their place in all the various types of services intended for their benefit. At present Native services rely far too much upon the products of the European educational system. In our view far too many Europeans are employed in Native services in situations which could quite well be held by Africans. But the African educational system has so many gaps in it that it is not able to produce

the teachers, interpreters, civil servants, agricultural officers, engineers, surveyors, doctors, etc. required to carry on administrative work and social development in Native areas or in Native services. In a country like South Africa where practically every service for Africans is separated from similar services for Europeans, the continued use of Europeans in African services is not conducive to harmonious race relations. The majority of Europeans employed in Native services, probably because they regard their employment as humiliating, take every opportunity to inflict all kinds of insults on the public they are expected to serve. To us the obvious remedy would appear to be to relieve all these people who have been brought up in the tradition of white superiority of their posts and employ Africans instead. Moreover no people can be expected to be satisfied forever to have others do for them what they feel able to do for themselves. Facilities must be provided by the State for the training of Africans for all types of work carried out in their midst, especially where the funds for such services are derived from Native sources. No post in the African educational service ought to be closed either by law ~~me~~ or by convention to Africans, and where the proper facilities for the training of such people do not exist they must be created. In this connection Congress will exercise special vigilance and will not hesitate to condemn any direct or indirect attempt to confine Africans to inferior positions in the African educational system. A new development in this regard is the inclusion in the curricula of native secondary schools of subjects like woodwork and domestic science for which there are no African teachers available, because training facilities for them do not exist and to employ European teachers for these subjects. Once this has been done it becomes impossible to appoint African principal to that school, because South African white opinion will not tolerate a situation in which a European is assistant to an African. Any European who thinks it is below his dignity to serve as an assistant to a qualified African principal ought not to be employed in an African school. How can sound education be carried on in an atmosphere in which both African teachers and pupils are made to realise, however subtly, that in their own schools Europeans must always be present not only as teachers but as masters? The rising tide of African national consciousness will not tolerate these attempts to make African schools into instruments for the carrying out of the so-called 'civilised' labour policy.

Teachers' Salaries. It is a cardinal principle of Congress policy that African teachers in all types of schools must be adequately remunerated for the onerous duties that devolve upon them. The present position in which the average primary school teacher is paid a salary below that of many an unskilled African worker does no credit to a body of men and women who yield to none in the solidity of the contribution which they have made to African social development. The unskilled worker who has no special outlay in preparing himself for his work has of course the advantage of a Wage Board which can adjudicate upon his claims and in desperation he may even resort to the strike weapon. The teacher on the other hand is entirely at the mercy of the Education Departments which lay down salary scales which they put into effect as far as European teachers are concerned but not as far as African teachers are concerned. African teachers represent the vanguard of African progress; they are expected to maintain standards of living much higher in every respect than those of unskilled and yet since 1928 there has been no appreciable improvement in the emoluments of the majority of African teachers.

So far as African teachers in post-primary schools are concerned there is a wide disparity between their salaries and those of European teachers with similar qualifications and doing the same type of work in Native schools. There is a special scale for European principals of Native Secondary and Training Schools rising to a maximum of £900 in the case of some schools, but as far as African principals of such schools are concerned there seems to be no intention on the part of the Departments to have a special scale. As was pointed out by the Native Affairs Commission in its last Report over 66% of the cost of native post-primary education is accounted for by the salaries of European teachers in such schools. The Commission went on to advocate the gradual but planned replacement of these European teachers by African teachers and the re-absorption of the former into the European educational system. Native public opinion does not often agree with the Native Affairs Commission in its interpretation of Union Native Policy, but in this matter the Native Affairs Commission's scheme has at least the merit of consistency. The African people have consistently opposed the Union policy of segregation and separation, but as long as this is the official policy of the Union we cannot permit the advocates of segregation to have it both ways by allowing them all the advantages of their policy while we have its

disadvantages.

• Finally one of the most important aims of Congress in the field of education is to secure for the African people the right to be represented directly by Africans in all bodies charged with the management of African schools or with the shaping of policy in regard to such schools. In all the Provinces we have at present Native Education Advisory Boards in which African opinion is either inadequately represented or represented indirectly or not at all, whereas these Boards are packed with Mission and Government representatives. The management of African schools has come to be looked upon in South Africa as a sort of partnership between the Government and the Missions, the African people themselves having no share in the concern. One Province has decided on the creation of an African Advisory Board on Native Education to advise the European Advisory Board on Native Education. In other words the so-called European 'friends' of the Africans are to meet in a special conclave of their own where they can give vent to any anti-native feelings they may harbour without being embarrassed by the presence of Native representatives. That is how Native opinion looks upon these bodies which want to hold their meetings in camera as far as the African people are concerned.

It may be argued that in so far as the Missions represent churches of which Africans are members Mission representation is synonymous with African representation. To show the futility of that argument it is only necessary to ask whether Missions are ever represented by Africans in these Boards or whether purely African churches are always represented or whether white Mission representatives on these bodies ever consult the opinion of the African members of their churches about matters which come up for discussion. The fact that these questions have in the main to be answered in the negative will suffice to show that Mission representation is not synonymous with African representation.

Similarly in the management of individual schools African parents have in the main no voice at all. The manager of the school acts as a sort of infallible dictator who is under no obligation to consult the wishes of the people for whom the school is intended and who have a share in contributing towards its maintenance. The time is more than ripe for the creation of African School Boards for the management of African schools in which African public opinion, along with the Government, the Missions and other bodies interested in the education of the African might be adequately represented.

In fine it is the aim of Congress to work for the development in South Africa of a system of Africa education which will enable every African child to share in the common heritage of mankind as well as to make his peculiar contribution to South African civilization in particular and to world civilization in general, a system in which there shall be no artificial barriers or limits to the part which the African may play in its organisation or administration. With this aim in view Congress will seek to educate and mobilise African opinion through both local and national organisations to pursue these objectives consistently and with determination. In this work it will enlist the support of our Representatives in Parliament, in the Native Representative Council, in local and General Native Councils, in the Churches as well as support the various African Teachers' Associations in their endeavours to improve their conditions and to give leadership in purely professional matters. Only by making a determined effort along these lines shall be able to fulfill the motto of Congress, "Freedom, not Serfdom".

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