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THE CONTROL OF NATIVE EDUCATION

(By Mrs. Rheinallt Jones)

For many years past, the Education of Africans has been passing more and more under State control.

In all registered schools, salaries of teachers are paid from State Funds and superintendents of schools, missionary or other, are more or less restricted in the appointments of staff which they make, in their powers of discipline or dismissal of teachers and in the demands they may make on teachers for out-of-school duties.

Superintendents or grantees must be appointed or at least approved, by the State.

School hours, school terms and holidays, are determined or approved by the State.

The age of entry of pupils and ages beyond which they may not be trained at certain stages are determined by the State.

The curriculum, except in the matter of religious instruction, is laid down by the State; the examinations at primary school leaving stage, and to a certain extent, even in secondary schools, are controlled by the State.

The media of instruction are State-conducted. The inspectors and supervisors are State-appointed. The right of entry during school hours is carefully determined.

The school buildings used must receive State approval and in an increasing number of cases are State-owned. Even though the majority of buildings used are not State-owned, rent is in many cases paid for them by the State.

The equipment and books are now mostly State-provided. A school meal is to be provided at State expense.

Teacher training is considerably financed by the State and curricula are laid down by the State, though as most teacher training institutions are residential and denominational, the share of mission contribution, to both the cost and the cultural environment, is greater than is usual in the case of primary schools. The establishment and position of new schools, even in some cases when these are not immediately asking for State grants, is also a matter of State control.

Some regret the passing of the old mission control in these various ways, but feel that it is inevitable as mission finances can no longer bear the cost of the existing amount of Native Education and certainly cannot face the very large increase in costs which will come from greater efficiency and extension.

Others believe that the education of the Nation's children, black as well as white, is the concern of the Nation and that while the pioneering work of the missions in this field, as in many others, has been of inestimable value, there is greater possibility of uniformity and of expert educational direction under such state control.

In any case, as we have seen, this amount of State control is there and the main problem of the future is to ensure that systems of administration are established which ensure the maximum of expert educational guidance and the greatest economics of

personnel, time and material consonant with an efficient educational system.

When the numbers of pupils in school have risen by 300 per cent, it is of vital importance that those moral, cultural and stabilising influences for which superintendents or grantees, usually missionaries, have been responsible in the past, shall be assured in some way to the rapidly developing and increasing schools.

Up till now, the Provincial Governments have, through their Education Departments, been responsible for the increasing controls which we have discussed, and have administered the finance available for Native Education, though almost all of the actual money has been provided by the central Government—largely up to the present from the Native General Tax. This Provincial control has had its advantages. It has meant something of correlation of African Education with other non-European and with European education. It has ensured that the Administrating officers and inspectorial staff have not been too far removed from their schools. One would wish it were possible to say that it had meant a close interest on the part of the Provincial Administrations and the electorate in the problems and development of Native Education. This has not in general been the case; such interest has been spasmodic and inclined to concern itself with matters of political rather than true educational moment.

On the other hand, the Provincial Councils are except to a very limited degree in the Cape Province, out of touch with enlightened Native opinion. They are not free from political influences which may, for other than educational reasons, interfere in the conduct of Native Education.

The Provincial boundaries have little relation to Native tribal and linguistic grouping. There is no doubt that divergences of curriculum and provincial jealousies interfere with the efficient staffing of schools, and with the attendance of senior pupils at the most suitable higher institutions.

There is no doubt that Native Education has progressed under the Provincial control. There seems to be no reason to doubt that it could continue so to progress in the future.

There seems no sufficient reason why a Union Advisory Board should not be appointed even if Provincial control were retained and such a Board could assist the Provinces to a greater co-ordination with regard to curricula, examinations and teacher training.

In view, however, of the difficulties of the Provincial Administration of Native Education, there have long been suggestions that the Education of Africans should be placed under a Union Department. The Departments which have been discussed for this have been the Departments of Education and of Native Affairs.

The Interdepartmental Commission of 1935 recommended that the Union Department of Education should take control. The Secretary for Native Affairs

and many others had, in giving evidence, expressed this view. Under Union Education Department direction, Native Education would have the guidance of an expert Department, which, while it has not at present much concern with primary education, has shown in the reports and researches of its senior officers an understanding of, and concern with, the whole educational system. It has made indirectly available to Native Education some of the improvements which modern thought and experimentation have brought into play in the European schools. This Department could well co-ordinate the whole Native Educational system removing the Provincial discrepancies, while preserving the close contact with the whole field through regional officers. It would probably be necessary to have a special section of the Department to deal with the very large amount of work, work requiring special skill and knowledge which must be faced in the re-organisation and expansion of Native Education. There is no new principle or difficulty involved in the creation of such a section. A National Advisory Board could be appointed to arrange for co-ordination with other Departments of State (Native Affairs, Social Welfare, Health) and with missionary, tribal and municipal educational interests.

The Native Affairs Commission in its report of 1939 however stated its opinion that Native Education should be placed under the control of the Department of Native Affairs so as to be directed by the political policy of the country with regard to Native Affairs. This opinion, however, found little support from any of those deeply concerned. The Native Representative Council, African organisations, missionary bodies, Joint Councils have all stood against the subordination of the principles of educational developments to political expediency.

In December, 1943, the Native Representative Council again discussed this matter of control and opinion was divided, eight votes being cast for Union Education Department direction and six for the continuance of Provincial system.

This article does not propose to deal with the vexed question of the arrangements for religious education in schools except to say that the moral and religious training of the children in school under public control is of no less importance than that of those in denominational schools. We may hope that, for many years to come, the voluntary effort of missions in securing such training will be appreciated and used.

As an ever greater proportion of schools becomes established under other than missionary control, the whole question of the detailed local management of schools, by the appointment of suitable superintendents and committees becomes increasingly important. I should like to envisage the establishment of Local Education Boards with official and non-official members which could organise the whole of the education (primary, secondary, technical and adult) of the "district," meeting the needs in the most efficient and economical way.

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