

EDUCATION

"The Education of Johannesburg's Children"

A MULTI-RACIAL FORUM

(Photograph on Page 20)

THE Multi-Racial Forum organized by Mrs. Jeannette Davidoff on behalf of the Black Sash, and held in the Rheinallt Jones Memorial Hall on the 26th May, was the second part of the one held last year in the same hall, "Johannesburg, a Multi-Racial City." On that occasion, we attempted to show members of the different racial groups how the other sections lived; this time, we examined the educational opportunities open to our children.

As Mrs. Davidoff explained during the course of the discussion, it was not the intention of the Black Sash to place the people of Johannesburg in separate racial compartments, but the programme took the form it did because education is provided in South Africa along racial lines, and we wished to show up the differences.

Again this year all groups learned a good deal about their fellow citizens and their lives and problems, and again the White people were appalled at the disparity between the opportunities enjoyed by the Whites and those open to Non-Whites. The bitterness of the Non-Whites, especially the Africans, came through again and again, as they gave details of their struggle to obtain an education of any sort, and the travesty of education that is offered to them.

The speakers were the Rev. B. L. E. Sigamoney, formerly a school principal in Natal and the Transvaal, who spoke for the Indian community; Mr. B. L. Leshoai, formerly headmaster of Lady Selborne School, Pretoria, who gave the African point of view; Mrs. C. Alexander, who read a paper prepared by Mr. D. Mateman, a former schoolteacher, on Coloured education, as Mr. Mateman was unable to attend the Forum; and Mr. R. Tunmer, Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of the Witwatersrand, who spoke on White education. Mrs. Sylvia Nell, a prominent educationist, summed up. Mrs. Dora Hill, Transvaal Regional Chairman of the Black Sash, was in the Chair, and Mrs. Jean Sinclair, the National President, opened the Forum.

Opening Address by Mrs. Sinclair

Mrs. Sinclair said that the purpose of this gathering was for the citizens of Johannesburg to get to know each other, for only by getting together could we obtain a better understanding of the different problems which confront us all day by day.

Education was a matter which was the concern of all citizens, as a nation which was ill-educated could not succeed in the present world. It was a matter for concern that different types of education were provided for the different racial groups—we were all one society, all part of the

same economy, and should have the same educational opportunities. The White standards of education were very low indeed—as a mother of South Africa she had hung her head in shame during the events of the past two weeks to see some of the people we have bred over the last generation.

Father Sigamoney—Education for the Indian Community.

Father Sigamoney opened his address by telling us something about himself. He commenced teaching in Durban in 1903, and retired from active teaching in 1948. In 1922 he went to England to study for the Church, and returned to South Africa in 1927 inspired by the English educational system, which he considers one of the best in the world. After visiting the Indian Government School in Newtown, Johannesburg, he persuaded the Education Department to change the medium of instruction from Gujerati to English. He also pointed out that the standard of training of many Indian and Coloured teachers was too low, and the Government opened an Indian Teachers' Training College. The raising of the salaries of Indian teachers was another matter that occupied his attention — teachers' salaries, he says, are regulated according to the colour of their skin.

At present, there are six primary schools for Indian and Coloured children in Johannesburg with approximately 6,045 pupils and 126 teachers. There are two high schools and an Indian Girls' School. The syllabus and the books used are the same as those in White schools. Education and books are free, but there are no playgrounds, no sports facilities, no libraries, no clinics, as provided for the White children.

Father Sigamoney considered that there should be equality of opportunity for all races in education, and compulsory education for all. It was quite wrong that education should be considered in terms of race and colour, but the educational system was interwoven with the whole racial situation in South Africa. He blamed the White people for this, and especially the English-speaking, who had enjoyed political power for many years and had done nothing about it. He hoped that the present discussions would not be a matter merely of talking and doing nothing.

In the discussion that followed, some excellent speakers from the floor added to the information given. One stressed the fact that overcrowding in the schools had led to the double-session system, whereby half the pupils attended in the morning and half in the afternoon, a most unsatisfactory system. Another deplored the fact that not only was there no compulsory education for Indians but there was actual discouragement

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of the use of the facilities provided in Johannesburg, in an effort to force the Indians to go to Lenasia. The Indian High School was in the process of being closed down, and the old Booyens School which had briefly been made available to Indian students, had been closed again. The only response to the plea that it be re-opened had been the provision of bus fares to Lenasia.

Miss M. McLarty, M.P.C., explained that the reason for the inadequacy of accommodation and the non-provision of recreational facilities for Indian and Coloured children was that the terms of the Group Areas Act made it impossible to find suitable permanent building sites. The education of White, Coloured and Indian children in the Transvaal came under the control of the Provincial Council. Education was compulsory up to the age of 16 for White children only, but exactly the same education, in terms of syllabus, books and examinations, was provided free for each of the three groups.

Mr. B. L. Leshoai—Education for the African Community.

Mr. Leshoai said that he could never speak of the education of Africans without acute pain, because he knew that only education could liberate the minds of men no matter what their colour. After expressing his deep gratitude to the many White people who had unselfishly sacrificed much time and labour in efforts to provide education for the Africans, and condemning those who sought to halt it, he said that Africans wanted real education. Only education that developed the mental, spiritual and physical powers of man would be acceptable, education that would make them leaders of their people, and they rejected the education that would make them cheap labourers. "After that brief outline of the educational aspirations of the African," said Mr. Leshoai, "let us see how those aspirations have been provided for."

The African population in the 32 townships surrounding Johannesburg is nearly 600,000 — more than half the total population of the city. For the hundreds of pre-school children left at home when their mothers go to work there are 35 nursery schools and creches, mostly belonging to the African Women's Self-Help Association. Two belong to the Johannesburg City Council. These are poorly staffed by almost untrained teachers. There are 52 lower primary schools, 13 higher primary schools, 20 "combined" schools, with a total of 54,700 pupils and 2,000 teachers; and 6 high and secondary schools accommodating 3,600 pupils, with 97 teachers. There are no European teachers.

The poor matric. results are not surprising—they are due to bad teaching. The best teachers are going to Ghana, Nigeria and the Protectorates, drawn by better salaries, freedom from fear and overwork, and from having to teach against conscience.

Africans are no longer admitted to Witwatersrand University, and the African "University colleges" are run on ethnic lines—Fort Hare now admits only Xosas, Ngwenya only Zulus and Swazis, and Turfloop, Basuto. There is not a single teachers training college in Johannesburg, and teachers in training have to travel long distances at considerable cost. (Teachers qualify with a Standard VI certificate plus three years' training.)

There is one technical college in Johannesburg, and four adult night schools. All such schools are now registered and controlled by the Bantu Education Department. There are certain typewriting and dressmaking schools with bad reputations, but although the people know the training is inadequate, their desire for education and training for professions drives them there.

Sports facilities are paid for from the proceeds of the 25 beerhalls run by the City Council, a fact which Mr. Leshoai commented upon with some bitterness. There are two cultural centres which provide training in music and the arts, a nurses training centre for young girls, one big hospital which trains 500 nurses, and one centre for the training of midwives.

There is a great deal of overcrowding in the schools, especially in the lower primary schools, where there are classes of 100 children taught in two sessions by the same teacher. Education in these circumstances must be poor.

From lower primary school upwards students have to pay for their education in school fees and books. In the high schools the fees are £2 per year. A child who fails Standard 2 is given one more chance. If he fails again, no more education! Hence hundreds of children run wild and become tsotsis. Two certificates are issued in the primary schools—a first grade certificate which enables the child to proceed to High school, and a third grade, which permits him to leave school and seek work—it is no entry to any higher education centre. As children pass Standard VI at a very early age, no employer has work for them, and again they run the streets.

In regard to curriculum, more emphasis is laid on tree-planting, soil conservation, etc., than on academic subjects. In the lower primary schools, all instruction is in the vernacular, but in the higher schools some English and Afrikaans is used. There is a move to allow matriculation students, who at present write the normal Joint Board examinations, to write in the vernacular.

Speaking from the floor, Mrs. Sylvia Nell commented on the use of the vernacular, pointing out that it provided no gateway to higher education. She also commented on the absurd importance attached to tree-planting, for children who would live their lives in congested urban areas. This activity was carried to such great lengths, she said, that trees were planted, dug up again and replanted.

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Asked what the masses of the people thought about **Bantu Education**, Mr. Leshoai said that they did not accept it, but were glad to have the children off the streets. The Bantu Education Act was the worst ever piece of legislation. Syllabuses were censored, especially history, in case the African got the "wrong" ideas; "civics" was information about reference books. The children had to be taught that they were citizens, but could not vote because they were black. In defence of African teachers, Mr. Leshoai said that many of them stuck to their posts, although they did not agree with the system, as they felt the children must be given some sort of education.

Mrs. C. Alexander—Education for the Coloured Community.

On behalf of Mr. Mateman, Mrs. Alexander read a paper prepared by him. Mr. Mateman defines education as being the training and development of the mind and personality of the child to equip him for his place in the community. What is the place of the Coloured child in the community? Here, again, the bitterness comes through—the place of an inferior and second-class citizen, says Mr. Mateman. The education of the Coloured child is kept separate and segregated from that of the White and African child, as if there was a different kind of knowledge for each racial group.

Starting from the top, there is in Johannesburg a college for the training of Coloured teachers, with about 150 teachers in training. The entrance requirement for men is Standard X Certificate, and for women Standard VIII or IX Certificate, a lower standard than that required for White women students. The staff is entirely White, but presumably in time Coloureds will be allowed to staff their own college.

At present, the only University in the Transvaal at which Coloureds can be trained for such positions is the Witwatersrand University, and a limited number of non-Whites are admitted by the Minister of Education. Few Coloureds can afford the cost of University training, however, and of those who do manage it, some elect to train for other professions, and thus there are few trained educationists. In the near future, a special "Coloured" University will probably be established, and Witwatersrand University will be completely closed to non-Whites.

There are two High schools for Coloureds, with a total of nearly 1,000 pupils. Accommodation is inadequate, consisting mostly of pre-fab. buildings, and the schools are scantily staffed, partly by semi-qualified teachers. There are a number of Primary schools, but again accommodation is quite inadequate. There is overcrowding and again the unsatisfactory system of double sessions, in this case with a different teacher for each session. There is one Junior school, so sorely in need of accommodation that a great many children were turned away at the beginning

of the year. It must be borne in mind that education for the Coloured community is not compulsory, and hundreds of Coloured children are deprived of all education. There are no preparatory or nursery schools.

At present, as pointed out by previous speakers, there is no difference in the syllabus for Coloured and White children, but there is a proposal to transfer the control of Coloured Education from the Provincial Councils to a Government Department of Coloured Affairs, and, Mr. Mateman says, there is a real fear that children will be indoctrinated to believe that they are inferior.

Like the two previous speakers, Mr. Mateman ended his address with a plea for the ending of separate systems of education based on race, and the establishment of a general system of education for all children, with minimum compulsory standards.

Speakers from the floor commented on the tremendous disparity between the salaries paid to Coloured teachers and those earned by Whites.

Dr. Ellen Hellman gave some illuminating figures in regard to expenditure on education for Africans and other racial groups. African education comes under the control of the central Government, and since 1955, when the amount was "frozen," the Government has spent £6½ million per year on Bantu Education for the whole country, as compared with £17½ million voted by Transvaal province alone for White, Coloured and Indian education. The balance of the money required for Bantu education is found by direct taxation on Africans.

Mr. R. Tunmer—Education for the White Community.

To illustrate the kind of education that is offered to White children, Mr. Tunmer quoted some interesting figures from the Transvaal Education Department's Report for 1959—the latest, said Mr. Tunmer with some asperity.

In the Transvaal, there are 100 registered nursery schools, although attendance at nursery schools is not compulsory. There are 675 primary schools, 131 high schools, 6 agricultural schools, and 15 special schools for handicapped and backward children, making a total of between 800 and 900 schools for 308,000 pupils, with about 11,500 teachers. Education is compulsory and free in Government schools.

There are four teachers' training colleges, with about 4,000 teachers in training.

Analysed on a language basis, these figures give a ratio of 2 Afrikaans schools to 1 English-speaking, 2½ Afrikaans-speaking pupils to 1 English-speaking, while the ratio of teachers and also teachers in training is 4 to 1. This indicates quite clearly that the English-speaking community is simply not providing enough teachers for its own children.

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Figures indicate that there are not enough teachers with higher University degrees to cope with post-Matric. training to prepare pupils for the Universities. It is difficult for a teacher to improve his academic qualifications. The emphasis in all countries in the 20th Century is on secondary and higher education, and in other countries teachers are encouraged to take terms off on full pay to enable them to improve their qualifications.

The majority of our women teachers are married, and, being married, are temporary and ineligible for permanent appointment.

Compared with non-White schools, figures indicate that classes in the White primary schools average 30 pupils per teacher, in the secondary schools, 21 per teacher.

There are large numbers of adaptation classes for children who have not quite made the grade in primary schools.

Results have shown that compulsory education up to the age of 16 can produce a demand from the pupils themselves that they stay on at school after the period of compulsory education is over. This has particularly been the case with Afrikaans-speaking children.

The cost of educating one White child for a year was £45 to £50 in the primary schools and £67 to £70 in the high schools, compared with £31 per year spent on each Indian or Coloured child at school. There were 24,000 places in hostels provided for White children, half of these subsidized by the Province. Library facilities are provided for almost every White school in the Transvaal.

In conclusion, Mr. Tunmer said, "If we were a uni-racial White community, we could be extremely proud of many of the things we have offered to the White children. We have poured money into their education. It is when we compare what is in fact a very rosy picture with what we have been hearing for the rest of the day, that we cannot help feeling just a little ashamed."

But it was not only in statistics that one could see how an educational system was working, he said. The events in Johannesburg for the last two weeks suggested that the education system had failed. In some of the free books provided for the White children there were statements of a kind to produce a rigidity of mind that made it difficult for a teacher to develop the children as he or she would like to do, which probably accounted for the drain on bad eggs in the last few days. "But because there are hooligans in every country no matter how good or bad the education system is, we cannot condemn the Transvaal education system

because a few people are rather proud of their not-too-accurate egg-throwing aim. No, the education system has failed because there have been sufficient people in this country to back the legislation, not only that introduced this session, but that introduced in the last twelve years and possibly even further back than that."

Asked from the floor to account for the disparity between the numbers of English- and Afrikaans-speaking people entering the teaching profession, Mr. Tunmer said that it had been suggested that people who are attracted to the teaching profession in any generation are usually climbing the status scale. He offered this suggestion without snobbery.

There was a shortage of teachers in every country, but we were trying to run a country of 16,000,000 people on the abilities of 3,000,000, he said. When compulsory education came for all South Africans, teachers would have to be found for the Africans from among the White community.

In reply to a question as to what could be done to raise the status of the profession in the eyes of the community, Mr. Tunmer said that we must start from the beginning and try to persuade people that education is important.

Summing-up by Mrs. Sylvia Nell.

Mrs. Nell opened her remarks by quoting the words of Disraeli spoken one hundred years ago: "Upon the education of the children of this nation depends the future of this nation."

She said we had all sustained such an assault upon our minds and consciences that she, for one, felt somewhat baffled and beaten. However, certain points had emerged unmistakably.

Mrs. Nell said that we were all wedded to the proposition of free compulsory education for all South African children. There must be equality of educational opportunity, and every child should be educated to his full maximum potential. Education was the transmission of the body of accumulated knowledge from one generation to another, not purely mechanical transmission, but translation through the deepest-held values of the people.

We held dear the principle of freedom of conscience a basic part of our thinking, the main difference between the path of education of Western countries and that of totalitarian countries. We must educate people to think for themselves, to find freely their own answers to their problems; not ask them to accept the ready-made answers of Government officials.

We had heard how unequally education in South Africa was financed, how unequal were the salaries paid to the teachers and the amenities provided. A great deal of concern had been expressed about the content of education. The different groups were being divided and educated differently to fit a master plan, and the Africans were being sub-divided again into ethnic groups.

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"We reject this utterly," said Mrs. Nell, "because we believe we are members each of the other, and although we are a diversity of peoples, we believe that South Africans should at least share the things they have in common. This, I think, is political wisdom, and if we do not accept it in South Africa, we are doomed."

Speakers had stressed the narrowness and rigidity of the syllabuses. Vernacular education had been rejected, "the mystique of the mother tongue." To a child, said Mrs. Nell, it was child's play to learn another language.

Education for women had been touched upon. "If you educate a man," said Mrs. Nell, "you educate an individual; educate a woman, and you educate a family." African women in particular would have an increasingly important part to play in family, social and political life.

Teachers in all groups were not being paid salaries commensurate with the importance of the work they were doing. Teachers were the main architects of our society, and unless we could attract to the teaching profession a substantial proportion of the best brains and the best characters in the country, there would be a lowering of our social life.

Mrs. Nell said that she deeply regretted Mr. Leshoai's pain, but asked him to accept that prejudice exists everywhere, not only in South Africa. We must fight it and try to give our children better opportunities than we had had, so that they could see their fellow human beings not through the colour of their skins, but through their hearts and the quality of their characters. The profoundest education a child received was in his home, from his father and mother.

Mrs. Nell spoke of the reasons for the calling together of this forum, the need the organizers had felt for the people of Johannesburg, and of South Africa, to get to know one another. She quoted the words of Dr. Van der Ross, when she had asked him how we could build bridges between our children. "The bridges are there," he had said, "Cross them."

So, concluded Mrs. Nell, "Let us have the courage and goodwill to cross these bridges, us from our side, and you from yours. Let us start with our children. Let us try to teach them the way of goodwill, the way of self-knowledge, the way of self-respect and mutual respect, the way of friendship."

A State which is incompetent to satisfy different races condemns itself.

Lord Acton.

INTERVIEW WITH SELECT COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION ADVISORY COUNCIL BILL

THE Select Committee of Parliament on the Union Education Advisory Council Bill invited the Black Sash to give evidence before it in support of the memorandum it had submitted; so on February 14 the delegates presented themselves at the Committee Room in the Houses of Parliament. There were three of us—Mrs. W. F. Grant, wife of an ex-Professor of Education at the University of Cape Town, and herself sub-Convener of the Education Committee of the Cape Town branch of the National Council of Women; Miss N. Henshilwood, for thirteen years Principal of the Cape Town Teachers' Training College; and Mrs. L. Marquard, ex-University lecturer.

We were most courteously received by the Chairman, Mr. Mostert, and introduced to the rest of the Committee, who then questioned us on the views expressed in the Memorandum. As we agreed afterwards, it was a satisfactory interview in that the questions fairly enabled us to make and support our main arguments. We were told that ours was, until then, the only memorandum that totally rejected the proposed Council; all the others had suggested modification of various kinds.

The reasons we gave for emphatically rejecting the Bill were the following:

- (1) First and foremost there were no statutory limits set to the powers of the Minister in the Bill, and in a field so vaguely defined as "the basic principles of education", which could control the entire life of teacher and pupil, he was given virtually dictatorial powers. While most Acts of Parliament set statutory limits to the powers they confer, this Bill sets none.
- (2) The members of the Council were all, directly or indirectly, to be appointed by the Minister himself, and even then there was no guarantee that their advice would carry any weight, although the Minister might, before introducing legislation, consult with "any other interested Minister of State."
- (3) There was no guarantee that any member of the Council would be an educationist in any sense of the term, except that in each province one person was to be appointed, recommended by the Administrator concerned, "who has special knowledge of education matters in that province" — a definition that suggests administrative rather than educational knowledge.

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