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ON THE HOME FRONT

BIG BROTHER has spoken: steps will be taken to enforce a national education policy, since a situation in which different ideals are pursued in different parts of the Union can no longer be tolerated.

Dr. Verwoerd's announcement was followed by an angry protest, in which the Black Sash joined, based on the fear that parents will lose control over their children's education and that an alien philosophy will be imposed on them.

Nationalist Party spokesmen in Durban have since denied that the new policy has any connection with Christian National Education — on which an article appears in this issue. But this does not wholly allay our anxiety. There are too many people in influential positions who believe in C.N.E. and would like to condition the child mind into acceptance of a narrow fundamentalist religious creed and an arrogant Nationalist outlook.

It is useful to reflect for a moment on how parents control education in a free society. They do so by exercising pressure on the educational authorities through their elected representatives — members of Parliament, councillors and others — and by democratic participation in the actual conduct of schools through school committees and parents' associations. They also usually have the right to choose to which school they shall send their children.

OP DIE TUISFRONT

GROOT BROEDER het gepraat: stappe sal gedoen word om 'n nasionale onderwys-beleid af te dwing, aangesien 'n stelsel waarin verskeie ideale in verskeie dele van die Unie gevolg word, nie langer geduld kan word nie.

'n Kwaai protes, waaraan die Swart Serp deelgeneem het, het op dr. Verwoerd se aankondiging gevolg — 'n protes wat op die vrees gegrond word dat ouers beheer oor die opvoeding van hulle kinders sal verloor en dat 'n vreemde lewensaanskouing op hulle afgedwing sal word.

Woordvoerders van die Nasionale Party te Durban het sedertdien ontken dat die nuwe beleid enige verband het met die Christelike Nasionale Onderwys — waaroor daar in hierdie uitgawe 'n artikel verskyn. Maar dit verdryf nie heeltemal ons besorgdheid nie. Daar is te veel mense in invloedryke poste wat aan die C.N.O. geheg is en wat graag die kinder-verstand so wil brei dat dit 'n nougesette, fundamentalistiese godsdiensteer en 'n verwaande Nasionalistiese uitsig aanvaar.

Dit is behulpsaam om vir 'n oomblik na te dink hoe ouers in 'n vrye samelewing beheer oor onderwys uitoefen. Hulle doen dit deur druk op die onderwysowerhede uit te oefen deur bemiddeling van verteenwoordigers wat hulle verkies het — parlamentslede, raadslede en ander — en deur op demokratiese wyse deel

But in South Africa parents have been gradually losing control of the educational system. In the Transvaal, for example, children must attend the school nearest their place of residence (unless they go to a private school). Throughout South Africa there is too little choice of curricula, or of textbooks. There is also virtually no competition for ordinary teaching posts, a fact of the gravest significance, because it narrows the extent of local option.

The standard of school education is falling because the human material on which it is based is descending into the second and third

It is possible that a child can make his way through South Africa without mathematics, or Latin, or bookkeeping, but not without a thorough understanding of race relations.

— *Die Transvaler.*

rate. This is no reflection on those devoted, highly competent teachers still to be found in our schools: they would be the first to admit that the teaching profession is in decline. There are several reasons for this: one of them is economic — the authorities assume that the South African public is unwilling to be more heavily taxed in order to pay teachers more attractive salaries. Another reason is that many able people have been excluded from the teaching profession through fear of the political constraints that might be imposed on them.

THE main threat, as we see it, is not an explicit programme of indoctrination. We do not expect to see large photographs of Dr. Verwoerd appearing in every classroom. We do, indeed, fear the advent of textbooks that have the C.N.E. "slant", of distorted history teaching and racially biased "social studies". But the gravest threat lies in the transmission of attitudes that might well not be explicitly formulated. In the land of the cannibals the children are not *taught* that it is a good thing to roast their enemies: they grow up accepting the practice as natural and proper.

What are we going to do about the mounting assault on the minds of our children? The first requirement is to ensure that we, ourselves, transmit the right attitudes — and by that we mean the great Western tradition of free thought and enquiry, as opposed to the closed

te neem aan die eintlike administrasie van die skole deur skoolkomitees en ouers-verenigings. Hulle beskik ook gewoonlik oor die reg om self te besluit op die skool waarna hulle hul kinders wil stuur. Maar in Suid-Afrika het ouers geleidelik beheer oor die onderwysstelsel verloor. In die Transvaal moet kinders bv. die skool bywoon wat naaste aan hul woning is (tensy hulle 'n privaatskool bywoon). Dwarsdeur Suid-Afrika is die keuse in verband met leerplanne en skoolboeke onvoldoende. Daar bestaan ook feitlik geen mededinging ten opsigte van gewone onderwysposte nie — 'n besonder ernstige toestand, aangesien dit die omvang van plaaslike keuse inkort.

Die peil van skoolonderwys is aan die daal — omdat die menslike materiaal waarop dit rus tot 'n minderwaardige peil sak. Dit is geen beoordeling van die gewyde, hoogs bekwame onderwysers wat nog in ons skole aangestref word nie: hulle sal die eerste wees om te erken dat die onderwysberoep agteruitgaan. Daar is verskeie redes hiervoor: een is ekonomies — die owerhede neem aan dat die Suid-Afrikaanse publiek onwillig is om hoër belastinge te betaal ten einde meer aantreklike salarisse aan onderwysers aan te bied. Nog 'n rede is dat menige bekwame mense uit die onderwysberoep gehou is deur vrees oor die politieke dwang wat op hulle gelê mag word.

DIE grootste dreigement, soos ons die saak sien, is nie 'n uitdruklike program van indoktrinering nie. Ons verwag nie om groot portrette van dr. Verwoerd in elke klaskamer te sien nie. Wat ons wel vrees is die gebruik van skoolboeke wat die C.N.O.-„inslag” het, van verdraaide geskiedenis, en van „sosiale studies” wat op rassegebied bevooroordeel is. Die grootste dreigement bestaan egter in houdings wat bes moontlik nie uitdruklik geformuleer sal word nie. Onder die mensvreterers word kinders nie *geleer* dat dit iets goeds is om hul vyande in die kookpot te stop nie: hulle word groot met die gedagte dat hierdie gebruik natuurlik en reg is.

Wat gaan ons doen in verband met die toenemende aanslag op die verstand van ons kinders? Die eerste vereiste is om toe te sien dat ons, die ouers, self die regte houdings aan hulle oordra — en hierdeur bedoel ons die groot Westerse tradisie van vrye gedagte en navraag, in teenstelling met die geslote verstand:

mind, respect for the opinions of others, as opposed to blind adherence to a sectional viewpoint; racial tolerance, as opposed to racial arrogance; and acknowledgment of the rights of man, as opposed to a supreme regard for the rights of the white man. These attitudes can be transmitted — but only if we possess them ourselves.

The second requirement is vigilance against indoctrination and the exercise of that rare South African virtue — willingness to protest, to “make a fuss” when little Tommy comes home and repeats what his teacher has told him. The battle of Christian National Education may be fought in the classroom by a few noble souls, but it will be lost or won on the home front.

eerbied vir die menings van ander mense, in teenstelling met 'n blinde gekleef aan 'n seksionele oogpunt; rasse-verdraagsaamheid in teenstelling met rasse-verwaandheid; 'n erkenning van die regte van die mens, in teenstelling met 'n oorheersende respek vir die regte van die Witman. Hierdie houdings kan oorgedra word — maar alleenlik as ons dit self besit.

Die tweede vereiste is waaksaamheid teen indoktrinering, en die toepassing van daardie seldsame Suid-Afrikaanse deug — bereidwilligheid om protes aan te teken, om „'n bohaai te maak” as Jannie by die huis herhaal wat sy onderwyser aan hom vertel het. Die stryd oor C.N.O. sal miskien deur 'n paar edele mense in die klaskamer gevoer word, maar sal op die tuisfront gewen of verloor word.



“And so, as a lasting proof that Bantu education is in no way inferior to White education, I have decided to extend the system throughout my land. Sign it: ‘I have spoken’.”

—Courtesy Cape Times.