

THE TEACHER AND THE PEOPLE

By MOKGOANANE

THE Greek philosopher Plato provided for three classes in his "ideal state": the Class of Workers, the Class of Warriors and the Class of Philosopher-Kings. It was the last-mentioned class that was to rule the land and assume control of all political authority, while the other two were to become mere functionaries, ever at the beck and call of the ruling caste. This was a shameless plan to keep the underdog in perpetual servitude, yet its author concluded: "If the philosophical class should rule; the soldier class protect and defend according to the direction of the first; the artisan class obey and support the other two,—then social justice would be attained."

Readers will not fail to be struck by the remarkable parallel between this grotesque conception of "social justice" under a perpetual caste system, and the outlook of the rulers of "White South Africa" today. This is exactly what the white South African educationist teaches. It is precisely this idea which is behind the ignominious Bantu Education Act. African children are to be taught that "social justice" consists in their obeying and supporting their hereditary-white masters. And the one selected to do this dirty job is the African teacher. Whether the scheme will work or not depends, in the last analysis, whether or not the teacher will become a willing tool for the plans of the Government. Here, as in all its plans, the weakness and fallacy of the Government's vision of a permanent caste society are to be found in its failure to provide for the advancing national consciousness and aspirations of the African people.

What, then, should be the role of the African teacher? The primary aim of the African teacher should be to liberate his pupils from the clutches of mental enslavement. If this is well done, it must count as his main contribution towards the liberatory movement.

How can this be carried out in practice? In South Africa this is very easy: "And the truth shall save you." Therefore the first absolute requirement is: Teach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Let me for a moment assume the role of a pedagogue whose special function it is to instruct and train the new type of African teacher whose aim it is to contribute his own brick towards the liberation of his people. My teacher must be pragmatic. His approach must be the practical one in which he not only seeks to expand on theories of liberation or how others served as

tools of the masters, but how the present day teacher, as a member of a subject people, can play his part towards the liberation of his people. Such a teacher must first and foremost have a vision—the vision of a new Africa, free in every respect. He must have implicit faith in himself; faith in the African people; faith in the mass-struggle; and faith in the leaders of the struggle. He must be loyal to the cause. He must be well acquainted with the efforts of the National Liberation Movement in South Africa and always seek to present these efforts in a salutary manner to his pupils. Where he is critical he must be careful not to criticise the National Liberatory Movement or its methods to the pupils or their parents, for that amounts to sabotage of the struggle. In the eyes of the Liberatory Movement such an action may quite justifiably be regarded as high treason. Rather he must seek to consult secretly and privately with the leaders of the people. More than that he must be prepared to bow down to their decisions even when he totally disagrees with them. Fools will say he is bowing down to dictatorship. Far from it. It is sound leadership and loyalty to the movement. After all the politician is nothing but a practical man in the sense that, not only does he preach certain ideas or cry out certain reforms but he tries to put what he preaches into practice. For instance, not only can he criticise a law openly; he can also defy it. On the other hand, the teacher, by reason of his occupation, cannot always do that. Therefore wherever and whenever a difference of opinion arises between the intellectuals and the politicians, the intellectuals must be ready and prepared to give the politicians the benefit of the doubt—or else come into the open and compete for the leadership of the struggle. In other words, I hate the type of teacher who makes use of his opportunity in class to criticise the leaders of the people when he knows the leaders cannot reply. This applies primarily to the secondary school teacher.

The teacher must be purposive. He must regard himself as a tool of liberation. He must regard his work as a means to an end. And in order to achieve his end he must teach the truth. Now let us get to the classroom to test out my theory. The first subject is scripture. Lesson: "And God made man in His own image." Explain to the children what is MAN: a human being irrespective of colour. Emphasise that all human beings are images of God. And if we are all "images of God," then we must be equal, said the philosophers during the French Revolution: "All men are equal in the sight of God." Brought down to mother-earth all people in South Africa are equal in the sight of God. To deny this inexorable law of nature and agree that Black and White are not equal is to deny the story of creation. To deny the story of creation is to deny the existence of God. To deny the existence of God is to declare oneself an atheist. Yet Dr. H. F. Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs, introducing the Bantu Education Bill to the South African White Parliament, was quoted as saying: "People who believed in equality were not desirable teachers for

Natives." On the basis of our argument Verwoerd is an atheist. If he represents the view of the Nationalist Party, then the whole party consists of atheists. You say, "All men are equal in the sight of God," then all men belong to one community, the community of God. Yet in the same speech Verwoerd is quoted saying: "It would discourage the educated Native from thinking of himself as a member of a 'broader community' and would teach him to think of himself as a member of the Bantu community." When you teach like this you are not teaching politics. You are merely teaching the truth; the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Or to take another example from the New Testament: Christ said: "Those who are not with us are against us." There are some Africans who are ~~not~~ with us in the struggle. They accept the position of inferiority without any qualms. They agree with the government that we should be segregated. They say: we accept the apartheid policy of the government. We realise we were wrong all the time. In future when an election for Native Representatives is held, we shall take care to send an Afrikaner to Parliament. They criticise the stand of our leaders. They, like the government, deplored the Defiance Campaign. Are they with us? If not, they are against us." Again, almost all Whites in South Africa are generally agreed on the principle of apartheid. The United Party calls it segregation. J. H. Hofmeyr was wont to speak of Christian Trusteeship. Now, Hofmeyr was generally regarded as Liberal. Perhaps the members of the present Liberal Party were once his followers. Then they believed in Christian Trusteeship. If they did, they denied that "all men are equal in the sight of God." Today the leaders of the people are unanimous in demanding a universal franchise irrespective of colour or creed. The Liberal Party disagrees. Therefore members of this Party are not with us. If they are not with us, then according to Christ's own words, they are against us."

Arithmetic: Here is a simple problem:

The total area of South Africa is 472,000 sq. miles. According to the last census, there are approximately 2,000,000 Whites and 10,000,000 non-whites living in South Africa. The Land Act of 1913 gave 87% of the land to the Whites. Now calculate :

- (a) What per cent. is occupied by the non-whites?
- (b) What is the density of population per square mile for the Whites and non-Whites respectively?
- (c) All things being equal, which area is likely to suffer from the evil effects of overpopulation, overstocking, soil erosion and unemployment, and why? Can you suggest a solution?

If such a sum is well explained, the teacher need not draw any moral from it. The children will complete the rest. There is such a thing as "correlation of subjects" in teaching. In his next lesson in History the teacher will make full use of this sum in teaching the so-called Kaffir-wars. Some people call them "wars of dispossession." My dear teacher, master the "law of cause and effect." In your next Hygiene lesson, say on "Contagious Diseases," show how such diseases are easily spread among our people. Refer to conditions of overcrowding. If you are in Johannesburg make full use of the notorious slum areas like the Orlando Shelters, Vrededorp, etc. In fact remember the principle of activity, take the class on an inspection tour of the areas discussed. You will not need to revise this section of the syllabus. It will remain indelible in the minds of the pupils concerned. If you do that very well, you will not get into trouble, either with your Principal or the Circuit Inspector. I add this assurance because I often hear teachers say: **We do not like to be dubbed political teachers.** There is no such thing. The Department will dub you a political teacher whenever it suits them to do so. In any case the choice before you remains: "Those who are not with us are against us," so says Jesus Christ, our Lord and Master.

Now let us briefly review the role of the teacher outside the classroom. First, as I have already said, he must identify himself with the masses. Their problems must be his problems. He must share in their common lot. The policy of divide and rule is a known technique of domination. Very often in South Africa the White rulers moderate their attitude towards the educated African. They invite him to their houses. He has tea or lunch with them. He is told he is a different type of "native" quite unlike his illiterate, uncultured and backward brother. He is carefully led to see the folly and stupidity of his own leaders 'who seek freedom for such undeveloped, simple and barbaric folks.' He finds himself nodding his agreement, not so much because he is in full agreement with them as much as he is afraid of "these superior beings." This type of African teacher is an enemy of the people. The new African teacher must be proud of himself and his people. He must not feel inferior to any man just because of his colour. He must remember that many people, both young and old, look towards him for guidance. If he adopts a bellycrawling and submissive attitude to every white man, he is actively helping to enslave the minds of those who believe in him.

Finally, the African teacher must join the struggle of the people. You live in a town location. Rent is arbitrarily increased. Teacher, don't sit down and grouse inwardly. Join the people and fight against the increase of the rent. In the same way join the people in the struggle against the Pass and Liquor raids, Group Areas Act where your loyalty is affected, stock-culling and the government rehabilitation scheme if you live in the rural areas. Assume

the role of adviser to the people. Help them draft letters, statements and resolutions. Where legal defence is necessary, get them into touch with the best legal advisers in the country. Draw attention to your own African lawyers. Popularise their names remembering that their rise or down-fall is the rise and downfall of the African people. This is not politics. It is life itself. Let me give you an example.

Administrator's Notice No. 311 of 19th April, 1950 lays down that any teacher who "becomes a member of any political organisation or takes an active part in political matters" shall be deemed to have been guilty of misconduct and may be dealt with under the Disciplinary Regulations. The question is: When you do what I am asking you to do, are you "guilty of misconduct?" The answer is: it all depends on what the Department means by "political organisation" and by "active part in political matters." It is wellknown that the Institute of Race Relations discusses all these matters; so does the Joint Council and the Advisory Boards. Now all three bodies include teachers. Are these teachers "guilty of misconduct?" Has any one of them been dismissed because he "takes an active part in political matters?" Let us take the Advisory Board as an example. I know of teachers who sit on these bodies as nominees of their respective city councils. The city councils work under the direction of the Union Government. Therefore we may regard these teachers as government nominees. And what are they nominated to do if not to "take an active part in political matters?" Some of these teachers attend meetings of the Union Advisory Boards Congress and are addressed by government officials on some of these subjects. Hitherto nobody has accused them of taking "an active part in political matters." Therefore don't be scared into inactivity because of such circulars. Only remember you are not necessarily serving the cause of liberation when you expose yourself unnecessarily and find yourself in trouble before you have done anything for the people.

The struggle is there. There is no middle of the road solution. "Those who are not with us are against us."

SUBSCRIBE TO "LIBERATION"

You can have "Liberation" sent to you by post. Send ten shillings for one year, or five shillings for six months to:—
"Liberation," P.O. Box 10120, Johannesburg.