

WITS STUDENTS

WE DONT NEED
UNIFORM
TO THINK

NOT OUT OF SCHOOL
TO SUPPLY CHEAP
LABOUR

THE SYSTEM
STINKS!

BE REALISTIC
NOT RATIONALISTIC

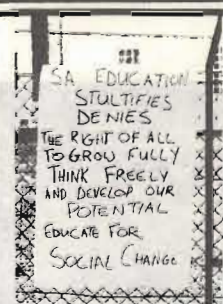
WE DO
NEED
UNIFORM
TO TA

MEET
DEMANDS



AL 2446/1244

100,000 against the system



The action initiated by more than 100,000 Coloured pupils in the Cape and the Transvaal against the Coloured education system cannot be seen as a superficial response to isolated problems.

Rather it should be seen as a concerted attempt by those on the receiving-end of a racial, inferior and disadvantageous education, to bring to the attention of those responsible for administering this education and those responsible for the political system that sustains it, that Coloured pupils want change. Genuine change and not mere cosmetic touches of solemn promises and more textbooks.

Despite the clarity for the pupils' demands, government response until now indicates that the lessons of 1976 have not been learned. The message behind the boycott is clear enough: 'better' education in the context of the present political system is not the answer sought. What is sought, as the boycotters have stated, is 'education for social change', accompanied by social change itself.

In February this year, students at Mount View (Hanover Park) in the Cape began boycotting classes. Several mass meetings were held to protest conditions at schools, lack of school books and alleged contraventions of regulations by principals and teachers.

On March 13th, pupils on the Cape Flats called a meeting to discuss grievances against what they termed 'the gutter education' being provided them. One week later, a second meeting was held at St Dominic's Church Hall, attended by 800 pupils and parents. Here the students cited their grievances publicly. These included:

- * chronic shortage of textbooks
- * students compelled to purchase their own stationery and writing materials
- * wearing of expensively-priced uniforms strictly enforced
- * shortage of teaching staff and what staff there is, is poorly paid
- * corporal punishment harshly and regularly applied
- * formation of SRC's at many schools vetoed by principals
- * content of subjects irrelevant
- * poor facilities as well as damaged classrooms left unrepaired.

"It is realised that we are not fighting for a better Coloured Education as Minister Steyn states. We have grievances and demands and these grievances are products of the racist education we are receiving... We reject, and therefore protest against racist education to co-opt us into the system."
Cape pamphlet headed 'Join the Boycott'

A move towards a mass boycott was stayed, pending further proposals at a report-back meeting:

"We call upon all students to stand in solidarity against the irregularities that exist in education" a pamphlet advertising the St Dominic's meeting exhorted. "As students we sympathise with our parents. They earn very little. They have to take us out of school. There is a boom and an increase in the price of gold. The businessmen need cheap labour. They need young children to work as cheap labour". In this way the students contextualised the huge disparities in state expenditure on education.

"... The unrest in 1976 was caused by resentment of the present political system. The position of South African students remains unchanged."
Statement issued by Cape students on 7th April 1980.

At the report-back meeting, redress of grievances was demanded, failing which the mobilization of a general boycott would begin. Students set a deadline of Friday 11th April for effective redress to begin. Their immediate demands included:

Express solidarity with the boycott

Watch noticeboards for details



Student demonstrators from the Christiaan J Botha School in Bosmont marched 4km to Coronation High, where they gathered on Friday.

- * the unconditional reinstatement of three teachers at Crystal High, dismissed on March 28th for 'allegedly indoctrinating pupils against the school system'
- * more books to be made available immediately
- * immediate pay increases for all teachers.

"We are living under the system of apartheid and constantly receiving racial education."

Johannesburg pamphlet headed 'Awake students'

On Saturday 12th April (the day after the deadline set for effective redress to begin) 100 representatives of twenty schools on the Cape Flats met. They decided to further suspend mobilization of a general boycott until all pupils had been made aware of the issues involved.

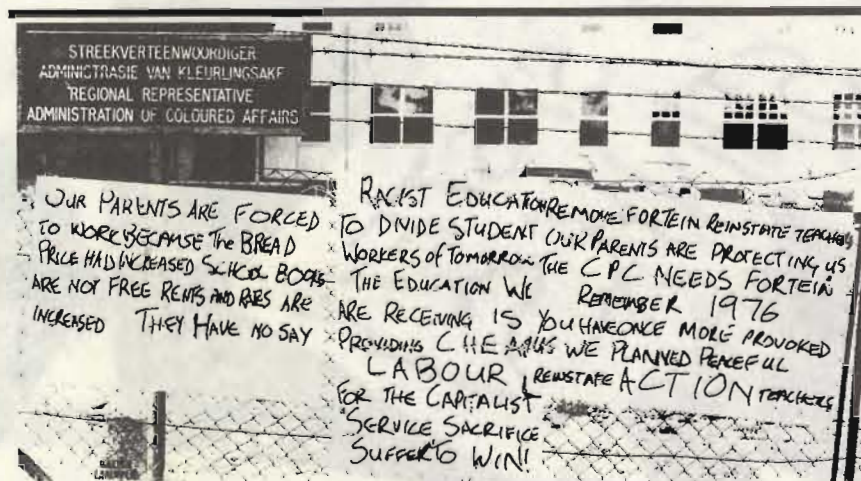
In a statement issued after the meeting, the students pledged to 'fight the system on all levels'. 'It should be realised that the dismissal of teachers and parents would not decrease resentment but would intensify the struggle for a free education'. Placards stating grievances were placed on a fence at the Coloured Affairs Administration regional office the following day.

By Wednesday 16th April, pupils of Hewatt, Spes Bona and Bridgetown presented their principal with a list of demands. Parkwood school had experienced a total stay-away and Wynberg Senior Secondary was boycotted on Monday and Tuesday. Schools in Mannenberg, Bonteheuwel, Steenberg,

"The government is really serious about giving all communities the best education. This is the key to a peaceful future for South Africa... one cannot do it overnight..."
Marais Steyn, Minister of Coloured Relations

On Friday April 18th, over 2,000 Coloured schoolchildren from three schools in Johannesburg marched in protest against 'inferior education' and in solidarity with pupils in the Cape.

By Saturday April 19th, 25,000 pupils had joined the boycott in the Cape. Student Representation of 61 Coloured educational institutions met at the Hewatt Training College and called for a blanket boycott to be observed this week.



Cape pupils make their grievances known. These posters appeared at the Wynberg offices of the Administration of Coloured Affairs.

Landsdowne, Hanover Park and Bellville were the scenes of similar action.

"We reject apartheid and the economic system it is maintaining. Every student in South Africa should realise that they are the workers of tomorrow and they will be exploited like their parents..."

Cape pamphlet headed 'Resistance against racist education'

The organizational format employed by students was one in which all pupils moved out into the grounds to discuss the issues involved and decide on courses of action.



Police and dogs disperse the crowd at Westbury High School in Johannesburg.



Pupils congregate outside the Bosmont Park to decide on course of action.

Friday April 18:

Johannesburg pupils initiate action

As student action against the Coloured education system gathered momentum in the Cape, pupils at schools in Bosmont, Coronationville and Westbury (Johannesburg) initiated their own action on Friday.

2,000 pupils marched through Coronationville bearing placards denouncing the Coloured Affairs Department, the Coloured Education system as well as articulating various demands. The march was intercepted by security branch and Flying Squad police and dispersed with the aid of police dogs.

Pupils at Christiaan Botha High School where the march was initiated, returned to the school grounds and convened a meeting to discuss further action. *Wits Student* reporters on the scene were struck by the quiet though firm resolve displayed by the students as they went about their organization. The group at Christiaan Botha High undertook to reconvene on Monday morning (yesterday) in their uniforms but without schoolbooks or cases. In a pamphlet read out to a meeting prior to the march, the students called on authorities to 'not only appreciate our display of concern and earnestness in our protest against inferior education, but to also act sincerely on our demands for better education.'

If these are not met with shortly we will continue our protests and school boycotts irrespective of the inevitable jeopardy of our future'.



The situation is reflected in a schoolboy's face as police vans move out of Bosmont.

The State reacts

The state responded to the situation in Coloured schools. Marais Steyn, Minister of Coloured Relations has acknowledged that the pupils' grievances, in certain instances, are valid eg lack of schools, classrooms etc.

The principals of the two schools where the grievances originated, Mountview Senior Secondary and Crystal Senior Secondary, have been transferred. Mr CJK Fortuin of Crystal was appointed to an 'educational research project for Administration of Coloured Affairs' while Mr Anyster of Mountview was transferred to a school in Mitchells Plain. However, the pupils demands to have the three teachers who were expelled reinstated, have not yet been met. The teachers were told that they were dismissed to make way for 'suitably qualified coloured teachers'. Two of the teachers re-applied for posts with the Administration of Coloured Affairs which inadvertently offered them their old posts as they had not been filled. Both teachers said that the reasons for their dismissal were obviously untrue. The teachers were instrumental in exposing excessive corporal punishment: despite regulations expressly forbidding it, some girls had been caned. Pupils also complained to the teachers that other teachers sent them to the tote office to pay their jackpots.

Government spokesmen also responded to the boycotts by blaming 'agitators'. Steyn called on the Cape Town English papers 'not to act as propaganda agents for these people who are causing unrest and trouble'. Furthermore he accused Curtis Nkondo, chairman of Soweto Teachers Action Committee of 'coming from the Transvaal to incite people here in the Cape'. Because of the presence of plainclothes police the meeting Nkondo was due to have addressed was cancelled. Steyn also claimed that 'agitators' had distributed pamphlets saying that strikes continued on an almost daily basis or that more than 3,000 SA soldiers were absent without leave. He did not explain the link between the pamphlets and the pupils' grievances about school conditions.