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THE EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL

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THE EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL

Vol 69, No 4

Official Organ of the Teachers' League of South Africa

July - August 1999

The 1999 Elections: Before - and After?

The 1999 General Elections have come - and gone? The run-up to these elections saw its share of drama, intrigue, controversies ending in law-suits, party-hopping by ambitious candidates, blatantly shameless and opportunistic vote-catching strategies mainly on the part of the ANC Alliance out to harvest two-thirds of the votes that would be cast, and a display of scepticism by a significant number of the electorate who withheld their votes, reluctant to be duped again as after the 1994 elections.

The first scenes in the election drama involved the government ruling that only a bar-coded identity document (or a certificate proving that such a document had been applied for) would be valid to register for voting and for identification at the polling booths. The New National Party (NNP) and the Democratic Party (DP), who devised their own manoeuvres, saw the advantages for the Alliance in this strategy. The NNP and the DP argued that most potential Alliance voters would have applied for their ID documents only after bar-coded documents had been introduced whereas NNP and DP (largely white voters still had the uncoded books. Their court challenge on the constitutionality of such a ruling failed, but had delayed the naming of an election date. There was the dramatic resignation of Mr Justice Kriegler as head of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), on the grounds of inadequate government funding, and an inability to complete the arrangements for voting by April/May. His deputy Ms Brigalia Bam took over and saw the process through to 2 June, the election date proclaimed by Pres Mandela before the rise of parliament in May.

The ANC Alliance went into the election campaign with almost all the cards stacked in its favour. Of the R53m of State funds allocated proportionally to only those parties already in parliament, the Alliance received R30m. The other 11 parties shared the remaining R23m to run their campaigns. Donations from local and foreign interests brought the Alliance total to a reported R1 billion. This enabled it to pay 130 000 election field-workers; hire helicopters, cars, buses; print thousands of election placards, T-shirts, flags and photographs, and propaganda literature.

Further assistance came from Tony Blair's Labour Party-who put the expertise of its election manager and his team at the ANC's disposal. In addition the local press, radio, TV, the Internet went all out in their efforts to punt the ANC Alliance. The press bosses and the

lords of international capitalism-imperialism were determined to have the ANC back. President Mandela and his government had in their first period of office in no way endangered capitalist interests. In the face of threats by major South African conglomerates to move overseas the ANC had acted swiftly to show its commitment to creating an investor-friendly milieu in the country. This despite the potentially adverse consequences of such a move to the SA economy and the workers. At the same time, though, the capitalist puppet-masters had to guard against the ANC's gaining almost total power and had probably funded other parties - the United Democratic Party (UDM) - that could dilute this possibility.

To further strengthen their chances the ANC Alliance indulged in the kind of vote-catching manoeuvres that are now quite common to political parties in government. They had saved for just the right moment pieces of evidence of how they were keeping their 1994 election promises - how they were "delivering" to the people. Just before the elections monetary compensation was given to a handful of those whose houses had been stolen during Group Area removals; people were "resettled" on "their own" land; people were seen smiling their gratitude to a Minister who had provided their homes with taps or electricity, or handed over to them a house or clinic or school. And of course the media were there to ensure that people throughout the country saw and hoped.

At another ceremony President Mandela gave formal recognition to the Traditional Leaders, oiled their palms with hefty salaries and was sure he would receive the votes of the people they controlled. In his wooing of the "Coloured" Western Cape vote Mandela stooped again to exhibiting the two "Coloured" ministers in his Cabinet to prove that the ANC had nothing against the "Coloured people".

The Madiba Magic was a major factor, with vast numbers of people coming in their thousands to the roadshows to wonder, worship and

render unto Caesar... With all this going for them how could the ANC Alliance not win the elections? They believed that they would gain clear victories in KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. But these victories eluded them.

On the lighter side there was the comic opera shufflings and dartings between parties by those greedy, ambitious, self-serving MPs whose sole reason for entering parliament was what they could get out of it. Many of them were disappointed in their hopes that their new party would ensure their stay in or entry into national or provincial government.

And then there was the election itself - the votes that were cast and those that were not. The opposition parties that had naively challenged the government's bar-coded ID books/certificate requirement had been right in smelling a rat. But while they were wasting time on lawsuits the Alliance embarked on a vigorous campaign to ensure that potential voters would register. The 1996 census figures had revealed an estimated 25 million eligible to vote. This number was later reduced to 20 million. By June 2 the IEC declared 18 million persons duly registered and expected to vote. Reducing the total number of registered voters to 18 million of those most likely to vote would raise the percentage poll; create the impression that the Alliance had overwhelming support and that the mass of the electorate accepted the constitutional framework. This would suggest, too, that the prospect of revolt against the present rulers was remote - which would reassure both the local bourgeoisie and the imperialist bosses. This tampering with and adjusting the numbers of the registered voters would serve also to mask any evidence of a voter stay-away or boycott.

Very significant in voting patterns was the fact (revealed in a *Cape Times* voting summary) that fewer votes were cast in 1999 than in 1994 although this time there were more persons over the age of 18. Newspaper and other reports indicated that in all the provinces large numbers had not registered and so had not voted. Even registered voters stayed away from the polls. Many had indicated in press, radio and TV surveys that they were uncertain about whether to vote.

In the Western Cape 700 000 fewer votes were cast - 30 000 in Manenberg alone - despite the high-power campaigning by the Alliance's top officials. In the Eastern Cape there was a drop of 102 000 on the 1994 poll. The majority of the non-voters gave as the reason for their decision the fact that nothing had changed in their lives. They were highly sceptical that a Government that had not kept their 1994 promises would do any better after the 1999 elections.

One of the shameful roles in the election

campaign was that of the ANC's partners in government - the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) and the South African Communist Party (SACP). The people who run this trade union congress do not deserve the title of union leaders. Theirs was a total neglect of workers' interests, their main concern being to keep their seats in parliament or, in the case of some candidates, to ensure their "getting-in". They did not challenge the ANC's failure to improve the lives of the workers, to eliminate poverty, to provide houses. They did not explain on whose instructions the Finance Minister refuses to allocate a bigger percentage of the budget for vital social services - health, social grants and pensions, education. There was no voter-education on the role played by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank - creatures of international Capitalism-Imperialism - to keep the poor poor, the exploited exploited. There was no reference even to the failure of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (Gear) strategy or the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).

After the ANC's election victory congratulations poured in from G7 country leaders. But there were none from liberation movements anywhere in the world - recognition that the ANC liberation movement government have put behind them what the liberation struggle was about.

Lots of rancour, anger, energy were expended over who was "to rule" in the Western Cape, the formation of a coalition, the failed attempt to get them the compromise in KwaZulu-Natal that would see an ANC Premier in that province.

New Ministerial brooms have swept into action. Tshwete is going to pull the police service into line and solve the horrendous crime problem quick, quick. Minister of Education Kader Asmal is horrified at his 'discovery' that the education system is in crisis, and is going to change everything even more quickly.

The mass of people still regard as their first priorities jobs, housing, education, health services, security, clean piped water, electricity. The ANC again promised these would be provided. But in less than two months after the elections scores of thousands of jobs have been lost and thousands more threaten to go. Corruption in government departments continues unabated with no comment at all from Mbeki, possibly because he depends on the loyal support of the culprits. Crime is on the increase.

Will all the dust disturbed by the new brooms again merely hang in the air to blind people to the non-fulfilment of what were the government's 1999 election promises?

Racism, 'Racial Integration' and Desegregation in South African Public Secondary Schools

The South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) recently conducted a research study on racism in South African Public Secondary Schools. The Draft report on the study - Racism, 'Racial Integration' and Desegregation in South African Public Secondary Schools - is co-authored by Salim Vally and Yolisa Dalamba and was published in February 1999. Two questionnaires, one for senior learners and the other for school managements, were drawn up in English and Afrikaans. The learner questionnaire "elicited information on human rights, racism, racial integration and discipline in schools." The management questionnaire "revolved around the school profile." It included questions on the number of learners by grade, gender and colour, staff and school governing body profiles, the profiles of learners in positions of responsibility, the language and admissions policy of the school, disciplinary measures and the academic performance of learners 'disaggregated by colour and grade'. The two questionnaires enabled the researchers to arrive at both quantitative and qualitative analyses.

Methodology, Terminology and Reason for Study

The SAHRC attempted to be as thorough as possible in this project. The data obtained was supplemented by interviews. Schools' mission statements, codes of conduct, and mission policies, yearbooks and fee structures were also gathered. Ten schools from each of the nine provinces were included and the schools were drawn from the former Houses of Delegates, Assembly and Representatives and the Department of Education and Training (DET) schools.

The authors of the report signal their sensitivity on the matter of terminology by devoting two and a half pages to the matter. They explain their use of certain group categories-

While we retain categories used by the SAHRC, it should not be misconstrued as lending legitimacy or credibility to the many stereotypes and caricatures that accompany the group descriptors. We do, however, signal our suspicion and ambivalence of the use of various terms by tediously placing inverted commas around them.

The Report states in its introduction that the SAHRC embarked upon the study because it had been confronted with 'sporadic eruptions of covert prejudice and faced with persistent reports of a pervasive and insidious racism in many schools, including formal complaints from eight provinces.'

It mentions the well-publicised racial tensions in places like Vryburg, Groblersdal, Trompsburg, Christiana, Richmond (Northern Cape), Potgietersrus, Dalmas, Linpark High in Pietermaritzburg, Voortrekker High in Pretoria and Vorentoe Skool in Johannesburg.

Context of Study

The study set out to establish whether and/or

to what extent incidents of racism, sexism, prejudice, stereotyping and other forms of discrimination in student to student, student to teacher and teacher to student relationships occurred in Public (State) Secondary Schools. It researched how school admission policies and school ethos negatively prejudiced or affected students who gained admission after schools were 'opened to other racial groups'. The researchers looked at whether there were schools that had admission policies that militated against the enrolment of certain categories of students, what those policies were and how they were implemented.

After commenting on the Legacy of Apartheid, the study looks at what is contained in the New Constitution and at Post-1994 Government policies on the question of racial and gender equality, non-racism and non-sexism.

On the relevance of Curriculum 2005 and Outcomes-based Education (OBE) to the questions raised in the study, the authors say-

The importance of Curriculum 2005 for this study relates to whether the list of outcomes encompasses the development of an understanding of structural inequalities along the lines of 'race', gender, class, ability and sexual orientation and the need to eradicate these inequalities. Questions we need to ponder include whether the new curriculum promotes human rights and social justice values essential for transforming the education system in particular and society in general. Do the Learning Areas have clear and explicit anti-racist and anti-sexist commitments? (p 17)

Chapter 5 of the Report - Examining Assimilation, Multiculturalism and Anti-Racism - reveals present social attitudes and

relationships in Public Secondary Schools. But the patterns suggest that they may well become the inter-personal relationships of the future in both youth and adult society. Through rather clever subheadings the authors convey current attitudes and relationships in some schools in the study.

5.2 Assimilation - 'assuming the ostrich position'

5.3 Segregation - 'Go back to apartheid'

5.4 Multiculturalism - of Samoosas, Saris and ... Zulu Dancing.

On the question of desegregation the study shows "that the 'African' township and ex-homeland schools (catering for the overwhelming majority of learners in South Africa) remain almost wholly racially exclusive and under-resourced" (p 17). And it further shows that-

While desegregation allows for the presence of learners from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds on the same school premises, these schools primarily accommodate the values, needs and aspirations of learners from the 'racial' group for which these schools were originally established by the previous apartheid government. Learners from the other 'racial' groups are simply expected to assimilate into the prevailing ethos of these schools. The racial values and practices of many communities still remain and are reflected in the various schools. (p 20)

At some schools the home and language background and orientation of the student population have changed dramatically since schools were 'opened' but not that of the teachers and members of the School Governing Body. The Report says of school 209-

School 209 has 1 329 'black' learners and 54 'white' learners, yet 45 of the 50 educators are 'white', 3 School Governing Body members are 'black' and the remaining 13 are 'white'.

Segregated whites-only schools still exist in South African education. In the sample taken by the study at least 15 of the schools either had no 'black' learners or merely a token few. These schools are primarily in conservative, Afrikaans-speaking rural areas. The Report states that the education authorities adopt a hands-off approach to the situation. In answer to a question in an interview a student at school 301 insisted that there was too much racial mixing and said, "I do not like this. Go back to Apartheid."

The research study further reveals that 'the predominant trend in school desegregation is the assimilationist approach'. 'Minority group'

pupils are expected to change and adjust to the culture and the norms of the school rather than the school's having to change 'in order to adapt to its new school population'. And there are students who feel strongly that schools should enrol only same colour groups.

The authors correctly devote much space to and perceptively comment on the policy of multiculturalism that many schools are adopting. Some principals and members of staff convey a feeling of pride in the fact that children from different cultural backgrounds are attending their school. But the authors comment "the glib references to 'culture' by proponents of multiculturalism interviewed for this study require closer analysis." They caution on the changes inherent in the multicultural ideology. They look at what quite a few respected researchers have had to say on the subject of culture. One of the authorities that they quote is Pam Christie:

Culture is not only a new name for 'race'. It is also a concept in terms of which a whole string of injustices are justified. This is especially true of sexism. In the name of culture, particularly, rape and child abuse are being justified. (p 37)

Observations and comments

Numbers of statements in the questionnaires made by students to the interviewers show that racial prejudice exists in the schools in the study. Not a single school has pursued the anti-racist perspective. Most schools are not moving proactively towards multilingualism. Management and educators see language diversity as a deficiency rather than a school or classroom resource.

The overwhelming finding in the study is that very little has changed in interpersonal social patterns of behaviour and relationships from those that characterised the worst features of the apartheid decades. The township-suburb shape of the old apartheid cities and towns continues to exist. The authors correctly suggest that unless there is a strong, honest commitment to move away from the principles behind apartheid group area housing complexes, schooling along racial lines will persist.

Government is scheduled to pass the Prevention and Prohibition of Unfair Discrimination Bill in February 2000. This Bill, known as the Equity Bill, has been drawn up by the Human Rights Commission and the Department of Justice. Government will also ratify a 1973 United Nations Convention declaring Apartheid a crime.

But laws are by their very nature punitive.

Trade Union Matters

The National Union of Public Service and Allied Workers (NUPSAW) is currently holding regional congresses. The Western Cape Regional Congress will be held in Cape Town on 30 and 31 July. The Teachers' League of South Africa will be represented at the Western Cape Congress.

Eighteen months ago nine Public Service Unions initiated consultative talks with a view to merging as one union, NUPSAW. Among the unions are the Health Workers' Union (HWU); the Institute of Public Servants (IPS); the SA Health and Public Service Workers' Union (SAHPSWU); the National Public Service Association (NAPSA); the Public Service Union (PSU); the S A Court Interpretation Officers and Allied Workers' Union (SACIOAWU) and other unions in the Public service.

At a NUPSAW Indaba held at Naboomspruit, Northern Province, from 19 to 22 May it was proposed that an Educators Sector be established and that educators be recruited into NUPSAW. There are teachers in at least three provinces who wish to join a NUPSAW teachers' union. NUPSAW will soon organise a national meeting (Legotla) of educators.

NUPSAW comprises unions that are independent of any Party Political affiliations. This characteristic distinguishes it from the unions inside COSATU. These are members of the Tripartite Alliance of COSATU, African National Congress (ANC) and SA Communist Party (SACP). Individual members of NUPSAW unions may belong to any political party of their choice but the unions themselves are independent of party political affiliation. The binding principles of NUPSAW are spelled out in its Vision and Mission statements:

OUR VISION

TO BECOME THE BIGGEST AND MOST PROGRESSIVE TRADE UNION IN THE

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS OUR MISSION

To create structures and infrastructures to serve the best interests of members.

To use these structures to defend, at all times, the job security of members and to use all resources at our disposal to fight unfair dismissals, retrenchments, redeployment and other mechanisms used by employers that could affect job security.

To endeavour at all times to have worker participation in decision making.

To ensure a culture of democratic decision making and accountability at all levels.

To eradicate all forms of oppression, exploitation and discrimination of workers.

To ensure a living wage for all workers.

To ensure that all conditions of service such as hours of work, leave, pension, home owners' allowance and other benefits are in the best interests of members.

To provide the best and most competitive funeral benefits, medical aid, loan schemes and discount benefits for members.

To create an organisational structure free of racism, tribalism, ethnicism, sexism, gender, disability and class discrimination.

To promote unity among workers and the working class irrespective of party political affiliations.

To fight political injustice, corruption and nepotism at all levels and to ensure the proper distribution of social and economic resources in a just, equitable and humane manner.

They contribute very little towards radically changing the mindsets and behavioural patterns of people. What is needed is programmes that project and emphasise those social tendencies and practices that are common to all human beings. The enjoyment by a people of sport, music, art and drama forms. People who for many generations have lived in specific regions or countries inevitably develop specific customs, practices, religions, beliefs, art, drama and music forms. And when over time they migrate to other regions or countries, they will continue to adhere to those customs and traditions. But when these people all live together

in one geographical area those features that are common or similar should be emphasised not the differences. It is out of the perception or deliberate emphasis of the differences in people that pride in one's customs and the denigration of the others' customs arise. That leads to acceptance of race, racial prejudice, stereotyping and all the other evils that then result in active discrimination. So government and all institutions in civil society must have programmes that promote, propagate and encourage people to live together, to become multilingual, to see and accept what is good and fine in all people.

Europe's Intrusion into Africa (IV)

In this series, which aims at a clearer understanding of what an "African Renaissance" entails, we hope to show how factors from outside Africa, in particular from Europe and also from Africa itself, have reduced the African continent to its parlous condition at the approach of the Third Millennium.

Articles in the Jan-March, April-May and June issues described the foundation years, the spread of Islam, the dominance of the Roman Catholic Church and the birth and decline of the Feudal System with the burgeoning of Science and the Humanities during the Renaissance in Europe. The desire to break into the Arab trading system provoked the search for the alternative route round Africa to the spice trade with the East. This article focuses on the completion of the route round the southernmost point of Africa and the effects on East and Central Africa.

Slaves and Gold

It was to be 40 years after Henry had established his academy at St Vincent that a trading centre, El Mina on the Gold Coast (Ghana), became the centre of the Portuguese gold exports. Within a few years a small fishing village became transformed into a principal supplier of the world bullion market. At first the Portuguese had a problem paying for the gold as horses could not survive the equatorial climate and the papal edict forbade the sale of weapons to non-Christians. The Akan people were, however, engaged in expansion of their own and required labour for forest clearance and agriculture. The Benin and Igbo people of the Niger delta were willing to sell captives taken in military and territorial raids. Thus this became the slave coast from where the Portuguese could obtain slaves to trade for the gold, ivory and pepper that brought rich rewards in Europe. During the 1470s the islands of Fernando Po, Príncipe and São Tomé in the Gulf of Guinea were reached and a stone fort was erected at El Mina despite strenuous opposition from the indigenous population. While the majority of the fleet and its crews were engaged in building the fort at El Mina, Diogo Cão sailed off to discover what lay beyond Cape Santa Catarina. He set up a stone cross, a padrao, on the south eastern shore of the estuary of the Zaire River and another at Cape Santa Maria (Luanda) to extend Portugal's claims to 8 000 km of coast since 1441. Further crosses were erected at Cape Negro, about 100 km north of the border between modern Angola and Namibia. A cross was also erected at Cape Cross on the southern fringe of the Skeleton Coast but this was removed by German officials during the colonial period for display in the Museum of Berlin University's oceanographic institute.

An expedition was entrusted to Bartolomeu Dias in August 1487 for further exploration of the sea route to India. Two male slaves from Angola and four females from the Slave Coast

were dressed in European clothing and with samples of gold, silver and spices were set ashore at unspecified points beyond Luderitz Bay where a padrao was raised. Contrary winds blew Dias southward and a few days later, after sailing north again, he found that he had rounded the southernmost point of Africa. He made landfall in a bay that he called Bahia dos Vaqueiros (Bay of Cattle) on account of the large numbers of cattle and herdsmen seen on the surrounding grassland. He found fresh water at Cape Saint Blaize and on 3 February 1488 his men were the first Europeans to set foot in South Africa. Forced by a hostile welcome from the local herdsmen and the urgings of his scurvy-stricken crew, Dias returned to anchor beside the attractive and well-watered cape which he had missed on the outward voyage. He named it Cabo de Boa Esperanza - Cape of Good Hope. The fate of the Africans who had been set ashore, dressed in European clothes and bearing samples of gold, silver and spices, is not known.

Prester John

Following the pioneering voyage of Dias, efforts were made by the Portuguese to collect as much information as was available on Prester John and the lands that he ruled. Although the Portuguese knew of many Europeans who had travelled to Ethiopia, they were not privy to the maps and reports to which the Pope might have had access. Indeed, Ethiopians had made several journeys to Europe from as early as 1306. They conducted much research and waited for reports from two spies. Both spoke Arabic and travelled as merchants through Alexandria, Cairo to the Red Sea and India. A fleet of four well-provisioned ships eventually set sail under Vasco da Gama on 8 July 1497, with letters to various potentates. After meeting groups of Khoisan and a little skirmish at St Helena's Bay on 4 November, Da Gama's Party eventually reached Moçambique where they found Arab

ships in the harbour and heard reports of the gold, silver, pearls, rubies, cloves, pepper and ginger available for trade. Further along the Swahili coast their reception was much less friendly, and after picking up a pilot in Malindi harbour Da Gama set out for Calcutta in India, which his fleet reached in April 1498. On his return to Lisbon in August 1499 Vasco da Gama was rapturously received for having opened the sea-route to India and the East and having proved that there was gold in South-East Africa. He had also succeeded in making enemies of Islam and the people of East Africa. Fellow-countrymen and co-religionists were to curse the memory of Ahmad Ibn-Madjid, the pilot who had guided Da Gama across the Indian Ocean.

Justifying their actions as battles in the Christian war against Islam, the Portuguese proceeded to consolidate their position on the East African coast by attacks from heavily-armed ships on Zanzibar, Mombasa, Barawa, Kilwa, Moçambique and Sofala by 1503. They demanded submission to the rule of Portugal and payments of large annual tributes. Towns that refused were attacked, their possessions seized and resistant Muslims killed. The historian Eric Axelson records Da Gama encountering a ship laden with pilgrims going to Mecca with 380 men and many women and children aboard. The ship was primed with gunpowder and then blown up with the pilgrims on board.

To defend Portuguese interests, forts were built at Sofala, Moçambique, Kilwa and Mombasa but the East African gold trade never amounted to more than a fraction of its alleged potential. However, the Portuguese unquestionably harnessed Africa to Europe. The coastline had become known and the dimensions of the interior established. In West Africa a significant portion of the trans-Saharan gold trade had been diverted to Portuguese outlets at the coast, while in East Africa Arab and Swahili dominance had been challenged.

Urbanisation and "Kingdoms"

In the absence of either archaeological evidence or reliable historical documents, human ecology provides the surest means of reconstructing a broad picture of society throughout the interior of Africa by the time Vasco da Gama added a last padrao to the necklace of European influence that Portugal had strung around the continent. Demographers have calculated that the total population of sub-Saharan Africa in 1500 was in the order of 47 million. The majority of people lived in small villages and it is improbable that large and permanent

urban centres were a common feature of the African landscape in 1500 AD. Francisco Alvares noted that few communities in Ethiopia consisted of more than 1600 households in 1520-26. Ethiopia at the time was a large Christian state with regional authorities with a uniquely productive food supply, and had been exposed to the urbanising influences of literacy, religion and foreign trade for more than a thousand years.

Elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa the opportunities for urbanisation were even more limited. Low population growth rates, problems of food production and the threat of disease inhibited the formation of urban centres. Relatively large urban-style communities at Jenne-jeno and Great Zimbabwe were exceptions due to special conditions such as the availability of foreign trade, for example. Roland Oliver, a pioneer of the modern study of African history, argues that "monarchies are an idea which seems to have occurred naturally to the human mind the world over and were an ancient feature of indigenous African society". This view is, however, contested. In the Baganda language, for instance, the only word which approximates to the European understanding of the word "reign" is "mirembe" which actually means a period of peace between succession struggles. In most systems several members of the "royal" family were eligible to become monarch when the throne became vacant. European adventurers named co-operative rulers "kings" and lent them power, creating a progression that often led to disaster.

Mbaza Kongo attracted Portuguese attention in the late 15th century. The Bakongo were migrants from the lower Congo River basin who settled in the Uplands beyond in a loose confederation of villages linked by language, kinship and trade. After a visit by Diogo Cão, the region had commended itself to the Portuguese for its trading and evangelical prospects. Missionaries, masons, carpenters and other skilled artisans joined Portuguese traders, and two German printers set up a press in São Tomé in 1492 presumably to work for the Kongo kingdom. Several Portuguese women were also sent to teach the local ladies the art of domestic economy as practised in Portugal. A town of stone called São Salvador was built among the mudbrick and thatch villages, the ruling élite were converted to Christianity and Nzinga Mbemba was baptised as Alfonso in 1491 and took the throne as King Alfonso I of Kongo in 1506. Alfonso adopted Portuguese dress and manners, organised his

continued on p12

NOTES IN SCHOOL

INVIGILATOR

I

FOR A LONG TIME THE EDUCATIONAL JOURNAL HAS WARNED that Education in South Africa is in a state of collapse. It came as no surprise, therefore, that the recent President Education Initiative Research Project showed that South Africa has one of the least efficient schooling systems in the world. (*Cape Argus* 15 June '99). Educationists like Dr Nick Taylor, Professor Peter Kallaway, Prof Michael Ashley and others have expressed grave concern that the present system is not able to meet the needs of pupils in the new millennium.

Amongst the solutions offered they see teacher upgrading, a review of Curriculum 2005 and better teaching materials as top priorities.

Most teachers, themselves victims of separate, inferior education, need to have their qualifications and expertise upgraded as a matter of urgency, yet scores of teacher-training colleges are being closed down. Where, when and how will teachers be able to improve their skills? How will the government policy of giving 80 hours of in-service training to each teacher annually be implemented?

Curriculum 2005 and OBE (Outcomes-Based

Education) have caused tremendous problems to teachers who were given very little assistance by the authorities. Many key officials in the departments of education had never taught in a classroom and were in no position to give teachers any guidance or help. From research there is evidence that pupils are not being taught to read and write because teachers are unsure about whether reading and writing are specified outcomes of Curriculum 2005! This lack of basic literacy and numeracy is aggravated by an absence of resources. Instead of providing the tools for meaningful learning, the education authorities have reduced the spending on books and material from R895 million in 1995-96 to R264 million in 1998-99.

Given such a dismal national education scenario what miracles can a Mrs Helen Zille perform in the Western Cape? The lady certainly talks tough, but can she deliver the kind of service required to lift schools out of the educational morass? Using the big stick on teachers who come late, stay absent or do not teach "effectively", without addressing the underlying causes of low teacher morale and ill discipline will be as useful as putting a fancy plaster on a cancerous sore.

Obituary - Abu Parker

The Teachers' League of South Africa salutes the memory of the late Abu Parker, who died peacefully on Saturday 31 July 1999 after a long illness.

Abu was one of the Educational Journal's most loyal advertisers and supporters. He advertised not because he expected or indeed received any returns but because he believed in the importance of helping to promote the ideals of the TLSA. He assisted many pupils who found it financially difficult to complete their studies, while always insisting that his donations should remain anonymous. This desire to help those less fortunate stemmed from his humble recognition of the influence of dedicated teachers on his life. He not only encouraged many young people to develop their

academic capacity, but urged them to plough their abilities back into the community once they had achieved their goals.

In the Unity Movement Northern Suburbs Branch, the Combined Elsie's River Ratepayers and Vigilance Society, as well as the Northern Suburbs Cultural Society Abu was a comrade in the struggle for full democratic rights for all South Africans.

Together with Dan Neethling, Jonie Bosch, Mrs Katie Erasmus among many others Abu took the civic and educational struggle to thousands of residents in Elsie's River, Matroosfontein and Cravenby.

We are truly saddened by Abu's passing and convey our heartfelt condolences to his family.

II

THE RATE AT WHICH JOBS ARE BEING LOST IN SOUTH AFRICA is alarming. The net job loss over the five years up to the end of 1998 is generally estimated at 500 000. And now comes the disturbing news that thousands more jobs will go as Telkom, Spoornet, East Rand Proprietary Mines and other corporations prepare to retrench. To get a full understanding of what this means, it is important to remember:

- that these job losses have occurred while more than 300 000 matriculants enter the labour market every year and

- that to this number of new work-seekers must be added those thousands who drop out of the schools at an earlier stage.

The most recent estimate of the total number of unemployed is 38% of the economically active population - about 6-7 million people. If one adds to this number those who are dependent on them for food, clothing, shelter, medical care, and education then a total of 15 to 20 million people have their lives severely affected by this curse. The scale and seriousness of the tragedy is enormous.

III

WE ARE ALL WELL AWARE OF THE IMPACT THAT THIS SCOURGE OF UNEMPLOYMENT has on the whole country. It is the original source of all our major problems: crimes of all kinds, from rape and murder to armed robbery to child abuse; injury and illness; drug addiction and prostitution; the breakdown through overload of the justice and health systems.

But one of the most detrimental consequences of unemployment for both our country and its population is the adverse impact it has on the quality of education of its victims.

- Reduced tax revenues-because so many citizens have no taxable income- lead to budgetary cuts, that in turn translate into overloaded classrooms with inadequate resources and over-worked educators.

- Hundreds of thousands of children don't even enter the school system, or drop out early because of their impoverished home circumstances.

- Hundreds of thousands of "more fortunate" ones, who enter the system, receive very little benefit for this fact because of their disadvantaged homes, disadvantaged communities and disadvantaged schools. They are unable to make something of their lives and eventually

are sucked down into the heavy, constantly growing, morass of unemployment, dehumanisation, crime, violence, decay and ruin - another twist in the beloved country's ever-downward spiral.

Surely the politicians, who were elected to parliament precisely because they promised, among other things, to solve the problem of unemployment, have the responsibility of doing something about this? Or can they wash their hands of it with a dismissive remark like the one allegedly made by former-President Mandela at the opening-of-parliament ceremony in 1997: "The government is not an employment agency."

IV

DISGUSTING? SHOCKING? DISGRACEFUL? SHAMELESS? INSENSITIVE? OBSCENE? Perhaps by the time you reach the end of this Note you will have found a word powerful enough to describe the latest moves to favour and advantage already overpaid MPs. The *Cape Argus* of 26 July carried a report of a contract award of R20 million to provide new cars for top politicians. These luxury cars will be bought for national and provincial cabinet ministers and their deputies and for provincial premiers. The State Tender Board, that granted the contract, will allow cabinet members to choose two cars (yes, TWO!) from a list of the most upmarket cars - BMW, Mercedes Benz, Audi Quattro, Alfa Romeo - each costing R280 000. No, your eyes are not deceiving you! Provincial premiers will choose one car from the list. Deputy Ministers will be allowed one car from a list of cars costing R230 000 each. Provincial MECs will be given one car from this second list. Conditions of the contract? Each car MUST HAVE leather upholstery, air-conditioning, a radio tape-deck and a CD shuttle. They'd hardly be worth the money if they didn't have all these, would they?

In addition the State will foot the bill of fuelling, maintaining and repairing these vehicles. Hold your breath, save the explosion. There's more to come. In a radio interview discussing opposition parties' outrage at this squandering of taxpayers' money, Minister Frazer-Moleketi's spokesman let a larger cat out of the bag. "You think this is a lot?" he said. "You should see what we spend on cars for directors-general."

We'd certainly like to know!

V

THE SAME EDITION OF THE CAPE ARGUS REPORTED on something even more puzzling. The government is considering a Steyn Commission recommendation that all re-elected MPs be granted a 10% salary increase. Why? To distinguish them from those who are first-time MPs! "To put them on a different pay-scale to first-time office-bearers", according to National Assembly Speaker, Frene Ginwala. So will every election see previous MPs getting extra increases to indicate their superior status? Where will it all end?

Will we hear any of the potential beneficiaries crying out that they cannot possibly accept such huge amounts from the taxpayers' pockets? Will we hear any of them say, "We are telling striking workers there is no money to give them increases more than 6,15%. How can we possibly take such exorbitantly priced cars? Such a high salary increase? How can we, when there is such widespread poverty in the country, keep on filling our own pockets?"

We won't hear even an embarrassed whisper from our MPs. Because the hundreds of these "struggle" MPs and premiers have forgotten what, and to benefit whom, the struggle was all about. The majority of them have for five years sat on their bums, silent, working neither inside nor outside parliament, enjoying high salaries and perks, without any scruples about the amorality and immorality of their positions.

VI

THERE HAS BEEN A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY on the part of MPs who have been given new Cabinet posts. How long the enthusiasm will last or whether we'll see significant improvements, we don't know. But on the basis of his reputation for hard work as Minister of Water Affairs people have expectations of new Education Minister, Kader Asmal.

Well, to start off with, he has at least been able to see that South African education is in a state of crisis at all levels, the majority of schools dysfunctional - what this Journal has been saying, and teachers in the field have had to cope with, for the past five years at least! Asmal's predecessor, the unlamented Bengu, saw NOTHING wrong in the system he was running. NOTHING! Remember the hefty slap on the back that megalomaniac gave himself in his speech to parliament this year when he retired from inactive service? "I leave behind an Education Department that is well on the way to transformation, a vehicle that is well-

oiled, that is fully serviced and ready for the journey." (See Notes in School IV - VI in the April-May issue.)

Strange, though, that as a citizen of South Africa the new Minister is so overwhelmed by his "discovery". Can one say in his defence that when one has to deal with water problems one can hardly be expected to pay any attention to what is going on in education?

VII

WELL, NOW HE KNOWS. He has presented the nation with a five-year plan (doesn't that terrify those of us who had to live through all apartheid's five-year plans?), with nine priorities. But tackling those priorities is going to require money. Lots of it. And this Minister Asmal, like several government spokesmen, just won't accept. The "crisis at every level" in education is somehow going to go away without any additional funding from the annual budget? Interviewed on the same Radio SAFm programme, Professor Jonathan Jansen of the University Durban-Westville and Salim Vally of the Wits Education Policy Unit emphasised that at the root of any repair strategy must be a far larger education budget. Kader Asmal pooh-poohed this. So?

VIII

AMONG THE NINE PRIORITIES:

- The provincial systems must be made to work by making co-operative government work. Easy? With no additional funding?
- The back of illiteracy among adults and youths must be broken in five years. Very many of the NGOs working in the Adult Literacy field are no more. The lack of State funding killed them.
- Conditions of physical degradation in SA schools must be ended. Of course, this major, problem can be solved without money!
- The professional quality of the teaching force has to be developed. For example, by in-service training - which won't require any additional money either?
- A vibrant further education system needs to be developed.
- A rational, "seamless" higher education system must be developed.
- The HIV/Aids emergency will have to be dealt with urgently and purposefully in and through the education system.

The Minister surely cannot be so stupid or naïve as to hope that all this will be achieved without pumping a helluva lot more money into

the broken-down education system. Or does he have a fairy godmother in hiding waiting eagerly to wave that magic wand?

As for another priority,

• We must ensure the success of active learning through outcomes-based education. The sooner he takes a long, hard look at what OBE is doing to education in the schools of the poor - the majority of the country's schools - the sooner he will realise that it just cannot be implemented in dysfunctional schools in a state of crisis.

IX

THE TRUTH OF A SITUATION is often masked by media reports that highlight sensational aspects ... It was reported that a Chatsworth primary school was closed for two days last month when the entire teaching staff refused to teach after angry parents had demanded that "fighting teachers" be suspended. The punch-up in front of amazed pupils and parents had resulted in one of the combatants having to be hospitalised.

Understandably the incident was given extensive media coverage and elicited many frivolous comments, particularly from members of the older generation who were subjected to corporal punishment in the days when the cane was an indispensable teaching aid. There were jokes about the need to extend the ban on corporal punishment to staff level, teachers squaring up to challenges, the danger of free-for-all periods ...

These jests, however, tended to obscure the fact that government policy has turned thousands of schools into sites of stress and conflict. The incident at Chatsworth is symptomatic of the frustration and anger felt by thousands of teachers who are denied a sense of job security and satisfaction as they struggle to function as educators with an array of negative factors ranged against them. In this particular case the physical conflict was sparked by the refusal of a teacher to teach after he had been identified for redeployment. His friend and colleague on the staff told him that he was wasting taxpayers' money. The friends' coming to blows highlighted the stresses and strains placed not only on the teaching-learning process but also on human relations by the educationally and socially destructive policy of "rationalisation" dictated by capitalist exploiters.

X

THE RAPACITY OF THE CAPITALIST

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GIANTS is shown by a special report on the globalisation of the economy *Cape Times* (25.6.99) by such statistics as:

• A pair of Nike running shoes, which sells at up to 175 dollars in the US, is made in Indonesia for under 6 dollars by girls earning about 15 cents an hour.

• 80 % of the world's income is in the hands of 20 % of the population, while the world's poorest 20 % get less than 2 %.

• The turnover of the world's 10 biggest corporations is more than the total of the world's 100 smallest countries.

(Statistics from McLIBEL: BURGER CULTURE ON TRIAL by JOHN VIDAL)

There are many more sets of statistics that show that the wealth gap continues to grow. The report also suggests that "The Carnival against Capitalism" riots in London the week before could indicate "the emergence of a new movement of those at the fag-end of capitalism who are unleashing their frustrations in violent protests." One can only hope that the exploited masses of the world will soon gain an understanding of the parasitic system that impoverishes them on many levels, so that they may establish the organisational structures that will work for its elimination.

XI

THE SYSTEM OF ECONOMIC EXPLOITATION will not easily be eliminated, for it is buttressed by all sorts of individuals and groups in the commercial, political and media fields who benefit from this system and strive to preserve it.

One of the strategies employed against exploited workers is the type of propaganda being pursued in South Africa at present to undermine the struggle for a decent wage. The media that faithfully serve the investor-friendly politicians and their capitalist bosses characterise the workers' demands as irrational, reckless and unpatriotic. Reasonable, patriotic drones should it seems be satisfied to receive a pittance even though rampant price inflation of food, housing and transport is making it increasingly difficult for them and their families merely to survive!

The privatisation of utilities demanded by the capitalists, and duly enforced by pliant politicians, has resulted in widespread loss of jobs. Then those workers who have survived retrenchment are required to work even harder to generate huge profits for capitalists. They are often told that they should be grateful that

they have jobs, as if the employers are doing them a great favour, when in truth their sweat and blood enable huge profits to be raked in. But then it should not surprise anyone that gross lies are continually being disseminated to justify economic exploitation of the country's human and material resources. An evil system can continue to function only if its true nature is masked by complex layers of lies.

XII

MPUMALANGA'S NEW PREMIER Ndaweni Mahlungu recklessly proclaimed a self-evident but embarrassing truth when he told reporters that politicians all over the world lie about their actions. Lying to the public, according to him, is "a widespread and accepted political technique" and should not result in mendacious politicians' being disciplined. Premier Mahlungu was responding to criticism of his decision to reappoint three controversial MECs, two of whom are being investigated by Judge Heath's anti-corruption unit. The premier claimed that reappointed Finance MEC Jacques Modipane had privately admitted that he had lied when publicly denying that he had signed three illegal promissory notes worth R340 million.

The furore caused by the premier's statement necessitated a swift response from his party: the ANC characterised his statement as "inappropriate, unfortunate and unacceptable". The premier apologised profusely and was praised by an ANC spokesperson for his "mature manner". The premier stressed that while he did not believe lying is correct, he did not intend to exclude liars from his cabinet. The new premier is a fast learner: this time he prudently refrained from expressing another self-evident truth about political life, namely, that forming

a cabinet that excludes liars is an impossibility.

XIII

THE RECENT JOHN PILGER TV DOCUMENTARY Apartheid Didn't Die focused on the bitter truth that behind the facade of South African democracy an economic apartheid based on money power was still intact. One of the images illustrating the exploiters' relentless pursuit of profits at the expense of the majority was that of a miner dying of lung disease as a result of inhaling mine dust, a problem that is the cause of thousands of fatal illnesses but ignored by the mine magnates. The reluctance of capitalists to spend money on providing safe work conditions has been highlighted again in recent weeks by newspaper reports. About 2 000 victims of asbestosis are suing a mining company that operated in the Cape between 1930 and 1979. The company was first sued in 1997 by five asbestosis victims, two of whom have subsequently died. The lawsuit is still dragging on as the company continues its protracted battle to stave off culpability. Then there is the case of two workers killed at a furnace in Middleburg last month (June '99). The same furnace exploded in February of this year, killing three workers and seriously injuring 100 others. A spokesperson of NUMSA (National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa) said that "the company was more concerned with chasing profits than with human lives". The union demanded the right to veto management instructions to work in dangerous areas. It is often claimed that SA has the best labour law in the world. If that is true, then effective mechanisms should be set up to compel employers to provide a work environment that eliminates threats to workers' safety and health.

Continued from p7

court along the lines of the European monarchies, welcomed missionaries, traders and workers and even sent selected Kongolese to Portugal for their education - one of whom was in due course consecrated Bishop of Utica in Portugal in 1518. It seemed Kongo was destined to become a fully Westernised kingdom, and although Alfonso pleaded for more missionaries, instructors and artisans to replace the numbers killed by tropical diseases, there were never enough to turn that prospect into a reali-

ty. Even the firearms supplied by mercenary traders with which Alfonso was able to extend his influence over the region failed to secure the permanence of the kingdom. The demand for slaves to work on the sugar plantations of São Tomé, off the coast of modern Gabon, increased the slave trade from beyond the kingdom of Kongo to 5000 per year. It is recorded that the Portuguese even settled in São Tomé 2000 Jewish children taken from their parents after the expulsion of the Jews from Portugal in 1496.

To be continued

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