

## EDUCATION

Mrs. Doreen Rankin, Chairman of the Transvaal Education Vigilance Committee,  
comments on

# EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

**E**VERY child in Europe goes to primary school. Education is compulsory, free, and based on the three Rs, geography, history, one other language (sometimes three or four!) and, of course, physical training.

Every child in Europe and in Russia-in-Europe goes to school as a right.

In awakening Africa, millions of pounds are being spent, plans are being devised, and millions more will be spent to lift the people out of centuries-old illiteracy and ignorance, and pave the way to education of the people.

Only in Christian, civilized South Africa is education made free and compulsory for the richest, but not for the poorest, of the community.

Take one country in Europe—Rumania. Rumania has fifteen national minorities within her borders, and might offer some constructive suggestions to South Africa, which also has a multi-racial community.

In Rumania education is compulsory and free for all children from the ages of seven to fourteen. There are over 100,000 teachers. There are 34,000 evening classes for illiterate adults and late adolescents. Rumania has a population of 17,500,000 people and is not rich.

Compare this record with that of the Republic of South Africa, with a population of 16,000,000 people. Three million of her people enjoy compulsory free education in schools increasingly segregated on a basis of difference in language. The children in these schools are separated from nursery school right up to the University. If the Afrikaans proverb „onbekend maak onbemind” is true, the White ruling caste in South Africa is steadily destroying itself.

The Coloured community of about a million and a half is not compelled to send its children to school, except in Natal and four towns in the Cape. Education, after the pattern of White education, is free; but in the Transvaal, for instance, Asiatic and Coloured education is lumped together, and as the communities have no representation on bodies such as the School Boards, facilities are very poor. In Natal, which has the largest Indian community, education is compulsory only for Whites and Coloureds—a strange state of affairs! Free instruction is available for Coloureds, Indians and Whites up to Standard 10; for Africans only up to Standard 7.

The African population of nearly 11,000,000, separated rigidly from the rest, are now enjoy-

ing the fruits of Bantu Education, a form of education considered fitting for their role in the community. Certain mission schools and thousands of dedicated teachers who were bringing the “wrong” sort of education to the African have been eliminated, and in their place half-trained African teachers, earning the wages of unskilled labourers, supervise classes of 60 to 100 children.

Farm schools are allowed if the farmer permits it. “Bantu mothers . . . can erect walls . . . and the department will provide windows, door and roof . . .”

The reversal of the late J. H. Hofmeyr’s Education Act of 1945, which made African education for the first time a claim on the common purse, has revived the iniquity of taxing the poorest people directly for education, and making them suffer the lack of educational facilities because of extreme poverty.

No one is allowed to teach, except those acceptable to the new order. One retired African teacher of 60 was fined R150 or seven months’ imprisonment for taking a number of children off the streets and *teaching them*. The Magistrate said, “You are a learned and respected man in the community, and yet you keep on defying the law.”

What are we doing? While Europe, and particularly Russia, has lifted whole populations from the mists of illiteracy and ignorance, and every effort is being made to educate all children and to help adults to overcome defects in learning and training, we alone are bringing about a debasement of all education.

Wherever there is lost the consciousness that every man is an object of concern for us just because he is a man, civilization and morals are shaken, and the advance to fully developed inhumanity is only a question of time.

Albert Schweizer.

All our rational investigation and rational planning of the economic and political and social spheres is without meaning unless it is the means to one end—the living of the personal life of the community in joy and freedom.

John Macmurray.