



## LETTERS

Write to **Democracy in Action**,  
Albion Spring, 183 Main Road,  
Rondebosch 7700

*Adhikari has made an important contribution to the history and sociology of the society in which we live. Most striking for me is that this publication marks a significant advance in writing about the much neglected history of teacher politics in South Africa.*

fascinating about the book, which Adhikari adapted from his MA thesis, was its attempt to elucidate the problems and tensions which beset an organisation with both a global and a particular mission.

On the one hand, the TLSA managed to develop a global rhetoric identifying itself as part of the emerging liberation politics of the inter-war years. On the other hand, it sought to further the aims of a conventional teachers' organisation in terms of improvement of salaries and service conditions for coloured teachers.

The major irony of this history is that the TLSA "saw itself as being in the vanguard of the fight against racism and for Western political values in a South African society increasingly beset by racism, while at the same time seeking to elaborate and amplify coloured identity". In order to secure its own elite position and specific professional identity within the coloured sections of the society (p. 149).

Adhikari has made an important contribution to the history and sociology of the society in which we live. Most striking for me is that this publication marks a significant advance in writing about the much neglected history of teacher politics in South Africa.

This book in no way undermines appreciation of the importance and uniqueness of the contribution of the TLSA to our heritage in this area. Rather it creates awareness of the complexities of the conditions under which the TLSA operated in the years prior to 1940. Indeed, appreciation of this early history makes it possible to understand the later history of the TLSA during the era of the Unity Movement. A doctoral dissertation on the subject should be equally fascinating.

A few words of criticism. I felt that the researcher could have used a wider base of archival resources. As it is, his research is based almost exclusively on the *Educational Journal*, which is an extremely important but limited guide. Much more extensive use of the Cape Education Department archive and a wider reliance on interviews might have

helped to bring out some of the texture of school and social life more vividly.

I longed for something of the atmosphere of those meetings that resounded to the "declamatory style so beloved of members of the League" (p. 82); those schools that were driven by the ardour and commitment of educational leaders that would surely provide a monument to the young teachers of today; and the social events that clearly were the nexus of the elite family intercourse over the years.

I would also have appreciated a more personalised and individualised history in which the key characters and actors were identified and constructed more sharply. As it is, most of the people who populate the pages of the book emerge as cardboard cut-outs in a massively institutional or sociological history.

Finally, I felt that Adhikari could have touched on the origins of the radical tradition towards the end of the book. Although he notes the establishment of the Lenin Club, the October Club and the Soviet Union Society, he provides no clue to the radical Marxist seeds of the future Unity Movement/TLSA orientation.

This omission, which the author could redress in a sequel, rather impoverishes the present story.

As a distant and occasional observer, from the 1970s, of the remains of the TLSA tradition, I was always inspired by visits to TLSA schools where a characteristic educational ethos was always noticeable, whatever complexities and critiques of the tradition there might be. ■

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"LET US LIVE FOR OUR CHILDREN":  
THE TEACHERS' LEAGUE OF SOUTH  
AFRICA, 1913 - 1940, by Mohamed  
Adhikari. UCT Press/Buchu Books, Cape  
Town, 1993. 204 pages, R56,00.

## Council for wise women

THERE were women at the top of party lists, but none at important negotiating summits. The Women's Lobby chair, Babette Kabak, made this point on Agenda on television on 3 April 1994. Speaking from the audience, she proposed to the panel of women politicians that a Women Leaders' Council be formed.

It could consist of two or three women from major parties who would explore and negotiate solutions to national problems as they arose.

Women leaders with different life experiences from men, debating national problems independently of men, may bring another dimension of thinking into the political process.

They would focus on critical issues such as peace, violence and other stubborn national problems. The council could function as an ad hoc structure of women drawn from the new parliament and interested political groups outside. It would not deal with women's specific concerns - as no doubt the proposed Gender Commission or the Commission on the Status of Women would do.

Such a council would present its ideas to the male leaders; or delegations of men and delegations of women could negotiate separately and then meet to reach decisions.

**Babette Kabak and Doris Ravenhill**  
The Women's Lobby

## Old rogues?

MAY I suggest that the painting of the 1984 Nat Cabinet by Fleur Ferri (photograph published in *Democracy in Action*, 15 April 1994) be consigned to the Rogues Gallery of an Apartheid Museum.

**A N Ozzier**  
Knysna