

FAREWELL TO MISSION SCHOOLS

By TITSHALA

CANON COLLINS' conclusion that he had been visiting a madhouse is one that will be shared by the great majority of inhabitants of this country, though, no doubt, they would not share his view that it was a pleasant one. More pleasant to visit than to live in, we think this honest and forthright Canon would agree.

We think the Canon would agree, too, that the South African Bedlam differs in one most significant particular from any other lunatic asylum that ever existed. The ordinary inmates are sane enough; it is the warders, alas, who are balmy — stricken with that strange malignant pigmentomania which so strongly impressed our kindly, modern Gulliver from St. Paul's Cathedral.

A madhouse where all but the governors and their staff are sane: it's a theme that would have delighted Gulliver's creator. Indeed there's material enough for the brilliant Dean of St. Patrick's to have filled out a whole new volume of Travels, in this strange, topsy-turvy land of ours where everything seems upside down.

All the grand democratic principles common to all the advanced thinkers of our times are stood upon their heads and made a travesty and a mockery to serve the ends of baasskap.

Take the question of female suffrage. All over the world, in the twentieth century, the issue of equal votes for men and women has become a practical touchstone of the genuineness of a democracy; none but the most bigoted reactionaries oppose it. But in South Africa the enfranchisement of (European) women on an equal basis with men meant little more than the doubling of the white electorate, thus halving the effectiveness of the rudimentary Non-European franchise in the Cape. A noble principle turned to the ignoble end of buttressing European minority domination.

Or, again, take the matter of Republicanism. The world over an enlightened and rational human being is, practically by definition, a republican. Monarchists are, almost everywhere, identified with

those who seek to preserve or to return to a rotten and decayed form of society. Kings and Queens and Courts belong to the childhood of the human race. Alone among the major nations of the modern world, the irrational British cling to these extravagantly expensive symbols of the past. But in South Africa the very word "republic" has been twisted to imply a sinister Broederbond dictatorship based upon principles the very reverse of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

Finally — though our theme is far from exhausted — let us examine that contemporary issue: the separation of the Church from secular education. Throughout Europe the debate has raged and still goes on. For the most part those who want to maintain Church schools belong with the monarchists and the anti-feminists: it is the democratic Left, and frankly we agree with it here, which declares that the schooling of the children is the business of society, not of the clergy. Piety and religious zeal are not qualifications for instructing the young in letters and numbers, in the sciences and the arts. Indeed they may be, and often are, positive handicaps. The priest-pedagogue is always in a dilemma: the devout evangelist and the conscientious schoolmaster always at war within him over timetables and curricula. Too often his zeal for saving souls overcomes his appreciation of the need for producing cultured and accomplished citizens; better, he reasons, a semi-literate conformist than an educated heathen. But here is at odds with the parents. We send our children to school to become useful and fully-equipped members of society and the modern world community. For religious instruction we may, if we choose send them to Sunday-school, to the mosque or the "cheider."

South Africa's long experience of missionary education for Africans only strengthens us in these convictions. True, mission education is better than no education, and we should be grossly unjust to deny tribute to those noble souls who laboured down the centuries in appalling conditions to teach young Africa its ABC. But the schooling thus imparted was always inadequate and seldom truly disinterested. As Mr. Duma Nokwe pointed out in a brilliant contribution to an earlier issue of "Liberation," many earlier missionaries and Governments regarded the mission schools as an ideal means of converting proud and independent tribesmen into submissive and obedient labourers. Whatever the achievements and motives of the past, the modern State of South Africa, made wealthy by the labour of its toiling millions, owes to its children of all races a full and many-sided education. Education, that is, as a right to be fulfilled by the State; not as a charity, in which the education itself is merely a by-product in the manufacture of so many pious Anglicans, Wesleyans, Calvinists or Catholics.

Yet we may confidently assert that not a single South African who is genuinely concerned with the education of Africans, how-

ever anti-clerical he may be in educational matters, will regard the impending transfer of African schools from the missionaries to the State with anything but the profoundest anxiety and misgiving. For the schools are to be transferred not to the Department of Education, but to the Department of Native Affairs.

With all their weaknesses and inadequacies, the mission schools; on the whole, believed in education for Africans; though they had no doubt a clerical bias, they understood "education" in its universally accepted meaning — the sum total of human knowledge, art and science gathered and sifted and passed on through a thousand cultures and civilisations, from Africa, Asia and Europe over centuries of time.

The doctors Verwoerd and Eiselen, on the other hand, do not believe at all in education for Africans; they believe in something quite different, which they call "Bantu Education," whose nature emerges tortuously but, in the end, clearly enough, from the Eiselen Report and the Bantu Education Act. They do not think that the function of education is to help the individual to self-fulfilment and give him the key to the cultural treasure-house of mankind. They do not recognise the human cultural heritage; they can see culture only as a separate tribal, racial or local phenomenon. In this, of course, they are grossly mistaken. To this day a large part of the education in European schools consists, essentially, of what the illiterate and savage British, German, French and Dutch tribes were taught by the Romans — and what the Romans had to a large degree learnt from the Egyptians.

The missions believed in education, and were continually crying out for more funds and more resources to be devoted to education for Africans. It was not missionary shortcomings but Government stinginess that crippled African education all down the years. No funds for school buildings, for equipment, for teachers' salaries, for the training of teachers: that has been the terrible curse under which the African people have suffered in their thirst for knowledge for their children. The education of European children in South Africa compares very badly with that prevalent in advanced countries overseas. Yet approximately thirty times as much money per head is apportioned to European education as to African education. Until the advent of the Nationalist Government no-one in authority seriously contested that the first essential to improve education was to spend more money on it.

No so, however, doctors Eiselen and Verwoerd. In paragraph 812 of the Report of the Eiselen Commission, anyone may read this astounding passage:

"Experience in other parts of Africa has shown that the tendency is for an undue percentage of the budget to be allocated to education."

Unduly high, that is — as the context makes clear. And it is to the tender mercies of men who think like this that African education is now being entrusted.

Already, before the transfer, the N.A.D. is giving us a taste of the new regime by issuing high-handed mechanical directives to the schools. Not enough schools? Nonsense! says the N.A.D. By a stroke of the pen, it proceeds to double the number of "school-going children" by the simple process of halving the hours of instruction. That is the intention and purpose of the already notorious order to mission schools to run "double-decker" primary schools; two sessions must be held, the first from 8 to 11 a.m., after which the first batch of African children, having received their due measure of learning for the day, are free to roam the streets; the second from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Poor children, expected to absorb a lesson in a fifteen-minute period! Poor teacher, expected to teach duplicate lessons to two grossly overcrowded classes daily! Poor Africa!

But perhaps we may agree that the three-hour school is not inadequate to convey the sort of instruction which "Bantu Education" envisages.

Let us take one last example of the manner in which topsy-turvey "White South Africa" takes a sound and admirable principle, and turns it into a thing to be hated and feared. We refer, here, to the principle that a child should be educated in its own mother language. Of course, this is a right and proper conception. No child should have to struggle with arithmetic and history and geography and science in a language other than his own. And no African patriot will rest until we have enough good text-books and trained educationists and language academies and institutes to ensure that our children are not saddled with the handicap of having to learn through a foreign medium.

But when Dr. Eiselen's Commission reports in favour of "mother-tongue education in the vernacular," does it have in mind the rapid creation of conditions to give us good textbooks and teachers in the arts and sciences, in Zulu, Sesotho, Xhosa and Sechuana? Not a bit of it. "Bantu Education" is meant to produce not scholars but labourers; manual work, agricultural training, needlework: these are the backbone of the "vernacular" lessons to be given. And to facilitate separate language schools to teach such lessons, vast urban African populations are to be resettled in separate tribal zones; a suggestion as fantastic as would be one that proposed dividing the whites of Johannesburg or Cape Town into separate living areas for the sake of having separate Afrikaans- and English-medium schools.

No wonder then, that instead of welcoming the Verwoerd "mother-tongue" schools, Africans hate the very idea. It is hard to

learn history in English. But it is better to learn history in English than to learn handwork in Sesotho.

The Eiselen Report does not exclude the teaching of English and Afrikaans to African boys and girls. It says, in paragraph 924, that these official languages should be taught, but however:

“in such a way that the Bantu child will be able to find his way in the European communities; to follow oral or written instructions; and to carry on a simple conversation with European about his work

There you have it. “Bring daardie sak mielies! “Ja, baas.” “Jim, sweep the floor!” “Yes, Missis.” Teacher, you thought you belonged to the noble company of Socrates in the high profession of drawing forth and leading out the tender souls of the young. You were wrong. You are not there to teach the languages of Shakespeare and Langenhoven, but to teach your pupil how to follow instructions and listen to the baas.

We little thought the day would come when we should mourn the passing of the mission schools. The day is here.

WESTERN AREAS

By MOSES KOTANE

THE Townships of Sophiatown, Martindale and Newclare were established as Non-European free townships way back in 1905 and 1912. They were set up as places where Africans too could acquire, buy and hold landed property in their own names in the same way as other, non-African, citizens of the Union of South Africa do.

The three of them together have a total of 2,605 stands on which there are dwelling houses, schools, shops, churches, halls, tea rooms and cinemas. These townships have electric lights, water and tarred roads. They house a Non-European population of some 60,000 souls or 19,130 families. They are within five miles of the centre of the city of Johannesburg, and they are served by what according to all South African Non-European standards is regarded as a tolerably good and efficient bus service.

Now the Nationalist Government and its conscienceless sadist Dr. Verwoerd ruthlessly plan to uproot this large and old established Non-European population of Johannesburg. To enable them