

AFTER ABOUT TEN DAYS I was summoned into the principal's office. He looked very sour-faced, had his usual authoritative air about him and asked me to sit down. He said he and the inspector had gone into my request, which in his long experience of teaching was foreign and extraordinary. He never expected such things from a new and young teacher.

Then followed a long sermon on the evils of writing letters as forms of protest, request or redress. A letter like mine was a dangerous thing, since it could later be used against me. He himself preferred the tried-and-tested method of verbal presentation. If I had presented my case verbally to him, he would have interrupted time and again, as he was wont to do. The written request was the best way of getting him to hear my case fully.

Then on to my request. The circuit inspector had also been very surprised at such a request, and he, too, was a man of many years of experience. They might have to raise the issue in the local school board, with probably dire consequences for me.

The school board, I knew, consisted almost entirely of Dutch Reformed Church predikants who were all Christian National Education exponents. I preferred not to consider what their attitude to me would be . . . I could discern a pattern in what the principal was saying. He was obviously trying to intimidate me by quoting the dismay and ire of a hierarchy of authorities from himself upwards.

Continued the principal: My request was technically speaking a form of insubordination, for I was voluntarily opposing the wishes of the principal. If every teacher was to raise objections against instructions for this or that reason, what would happen to school authority, school discipline, school organisation? Was I aware that I was treading on very, very thin ice, and that for any teacher,

but especially the new and young such a course was fraught with the greatest of dangers? He was obviously warming to his self-appointed double role of prosecutor and judge.

As he had said before, he continued, my case was one of insubordination and as such warranted a departmental inquiry. A panel of investigators could come to the school to hear the case or a meeting could be arranged at the departmental offices. (He paused here so that his words should have the effect he had envisaged. However, I was undeterred by this display of authoritativeness.) Then looking me sternly into the face like a grand old uncle, he continued: But, in view of my youth, they had thought fit to show some kindness and leniency and would not proceed with my case. I, however, had to remember that the principal had the highest authority at a school and that insubordination was a very serious matter. I would not have to give R.I. or take part in any S.C.A. work. But I had to see that the pupils said the "Our Father" regularly at the start and at the end of every day. That, after all, was the rule of the school. I could go . . .

BEFORE STARTING TO TEACH I had an idealised conception of principals, their principles and relationship with their assistants. For one, I naively thought that a staff meeting was a meeting where members of the staff could freely discuss and deliberate matters concerning the welfare of the school. I innocently thought that decisions would only be arrived at after a careful consideration of all the issues concerned by the whole staff. However, as with so many other matters, I was very soon to be sadly disillusioned. Staff meetings were generally meetings where one man was the principal speaker. Discussion became taboo, opposition

and obedience is evinced towards the Board's administration—*Native Resettlement Board Annual Report 1961-2, on Meadowlands* (published 1964). [R.L.]

A F R I C A N A

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● "Complaints about the bus service are legion and not confined to any one part of the city," he said . . . "A shortage of drivers is the main cause of this." . . . "Does it not seem absurd that it cannot be rectified because job reservation regulations demand that only 16% of the drivers be non-white?" Europeans did not want this sort of job, probably because of the working in shifts, on weekends and on public holidays. "If this is so why cannot the proportion

of non-whites to whites be increased to 33⅓%?" Mr. Peters asked.—The Mayor of Cape Town, Mr. W. J. Peters, *Cape Argus*.

● Dr. Verwoerd was accompanied by his driver and his personal body-guard, both of whom willingly busied themselves with tasks on board. They, too, enjoyed themselves and were described as "good chaps".

In fishermen's language that means that they were good company and that they fitted in well.—*Cape Times* [P.F.]

● BEHAVIOUR AND SPIRIT OF RESIDENTS. Except for crime in general, over which the Board's administration has no control, an attitude of respect

● Mrs. S. Heller, Burg Street, Cape Town: My husband was attacked recently in a Cape Town street by a group of non-whites. The attackers were not hooligans, but were prepared and waiting for a White victim.

Not one of the hundreds of people milling around aided my husband who, ironically, is a friend of the Coloureds.

Even now he pays rent for a couple who otherwise would be ejected. He has given cups for Coloured competitions, and has helped Coloured business men to avoid bankruptcy. He takes no part in politics.

Can anyone be surprised that a government that keeps law and order gets the votes when elections come?

Sunday Times [H.H.]