

The author discusses the pros and cons of a minimum wage legislation and comes out in its support, though he emphasizes that such a legislation would only be part of the solution to the problem. Economic problems have their roots in the various structures of society and Dr. Wilson concludes his list of proposals by suggesting that South Africa's educational structure must be altered so that it does not discriminate against those who are not white.

"Labour in the Goldmines" quite definitely succeeds in doing what it was intended to do, namely increase the reader's understanding of the situation. The dispassionate way in which the facts are presented provides the text

with an eloquence from which the use of rhetoric, however justified, could only have detracted. **In the final analysis, the picture presented is indeed a bleak one. Black Labour is being grossly exploited on the gold mines, and there is precious little that can be done about it in terms of the relative powerlessness of both Government and Chamber of Mines when confronted by organised white labour. In the present political situation, given the prejudices and short-sightedness of white interest blocs, none of Dr. Wilson's proposals is at all likely to be acceptable. It is quite unnerving to find such a calm, objective analysis leading one to the conclusion that the only way out of the impasse appears to be an increasing black/white polarization followed by confrontation and, probably, widespread violence.**□

AFRICAN HISTORY IN SOUTH AFRICA

by Andy Manson

The serious study of the history of the pre-literate peoples of Southern Africa began after the Second World War with the foundation of new Universities in many of the Colonial territories and with the beginnings of an increased flow of students from Africa to the Universities of Europe and North America. These developments in the words of Professor Roland Oliver, placed University teachers of history, particularly those taking up posts in the new African Universities "under pressure to develop a kind of historical education relevant to the needs of African students".¹

From these beginnings there developed what Oliver called "a career pattern". Young history graduates in the Universities of Europe and America turned to specialisation in African history, seeing in such specialisation a path to academic posts in African Universities, from which in turn they might return to work in American or European Universities.

In South Africa, this pressure to develop a historical education relevant to the needs of African students was needless to say, not experienced. University education remained geared to the needs and interests of a white-dominated society. The establishment of ethnic universities — in themselves an expression of an albo-centric society — did nothing to change established thinking. Because the syllabi at S.A. Universities remained the conventional ones — Ancient, Medieval and Modern European history plus a little S.A. history and English history — young graduates gave no thought to the emerging schools of African history; instead they followed the conventional path of specialisation in European and British history.

PLAYED NO PART

Thus the country with the most sophisticated traditions of historical scholarship in Africa failed to play any part in the creation of the new African historiography. So the African historians were caught up in a self-perpetuating tradition of scholarship that left them largely oblivious of the transforming developments that were occurring elsewhere. What could be the reasons for this failure? .

Undoubtedly a significant reason is found in the historiographical traditions of this country. Until recently the central argument of Afrikaner historiography was anglophobic, and woven into this negrophobic, in content. That the attack was negrophobic as well was completely incidental; it was not because White English-speaking historians shared a pro-African bias. Indeed the early English writers (G.M. Theal and G. Cory) were just as reluctant to regard the coloured races as worthy of sympathetic consideration as the Afrikaners were. More recently, however, the line of Afrikaner historiography has moved into a more direct attack on Africans. **This is**

due to the diminution of British influence in South Africa, the rise of African nationalism and the rise of a liberal school of South African historians such as J.S. Marais, W. Macmillan and Leonard Thompson.

INHERENT DIFFERENCES

Gustav Preller, a leading Afrikaans historian of the inter-war period, asserted that modern science had proved that there are inherent and unchangeable differences of quality, intellect and moral stamina between the races. This theme was pursued by J.A. Coetzee and P. van Biljon and expanded by G. Cronje, a sociologist at the University of Pretoria. For Cronje racial differences are a natural phenomenon. God keeps the races apart, South Africa should be ruled only by Afrikaners; the Whites, Coloured and Africans should be separated socially and in terms of land; Asians should be sent out of the country². Thus Cronje (1947) attempted to give historical basis to the policy of apartheid. Later publications began to distort the truth. N.J. Rhoadie and H.J. Venter³ claimed that the official, the sailor, the soldier, and the casual visitor to South Africa were the only white progenitors of the Cape Coloured peoples. In fact the Bastards, some of whom were later known as Griquas, were the product of miscegenation between the trekboers and Hottentot women. They also claimed that the Boers had a stronger aboriginal claim to this country than the Bantu. This is untrue. Monica Wilson has shown that Africans were in the Cape in the mid-fourteenth century⁴. It is an unfortunate trait of much Afrikaner Nationalist historiography that it cannot distinguish between myth and fact.

Even the most modern of Afrikaans general history books tend to see five-sixths of S.A.'s inhabitants as non-population⁵. "500 years — a history of South Africa" is an example. This is ludicrous. How can the Trek or the expansion into Natal be seen unless the Difaquane (tribal dispersions after Shaka) and its repercussions are analysed? How can one comprehend the basis of the Bantustan in the Transkei if African resistance to white encroachment on the eastern frontier is passed over as "Kaffir Wars 1 to 9"? How can the nature of industrialisation in S.A. be studied if the role of the black worker is left unexamined? Yet "500 years" pays precious little attention to those matters.

STEREOTYPED

In this same book (printed in 1969) Rhodes and Kruger are seen as stereotyped characters (one the bad Imperialist-Capitalist, the other the good unifier of Afrikaners.) The reason for this, one feels, is not because the author has not read the evidence rejecting such a view (e.g. Blainey's "Lost Causes of the Jameson Raid") but because this interpretation best fits his concept of history as people struggling to retain a corporate identity. It typifies the Afrikaners' unconscious acceptance that when racial groups meet there is little or no interaction. Interestingly this book omits many of the more controversial subjects of Afrikaner nationalism, such as the Broederbond. This somewhat ambiguous attitude is, one feels, part of the current attempt (proved somewhat spurious by events preceding the Brakpan election) to smooth over differences between English and Afrikaner in an effort to unify white opinion.

BLIND

The point of all this is to show that many (but by no means all) Afrikaans historians are blind to the general pattern of South African history — to the interaction of

South Africa's diverse peoples as opposed to their separation.

With these historiographical traditions it is not surprising that many South African (and particularly Afrikaans) historians have given little consideration to African history.

Such a vision is tragically myopic, for Afrikaner historians will only understand the history of their own communities when they learn to take the history of Black Africans seriously. For similarities between the two are striking. Both were small-scale closely knit communities, based on a subsistence agriculture, with wealth based on cattle. Both were egalitarian and tended to fragment easily along lines of kinship. State formation was common to both. Both were dependent on outsiders for trade in basic supplies and luxuries, and neither had the money or technical expertise to develop the mineral wealth of South Africa discovered in the late nineteenth century. Both had to face the problem of resistance or collaboration with the mightier British Empire and both had to face rural impoverishment and adapt to an industrial environment. So much could be learnt from comparative study, yet so much South African history has remained hidebound by its refusal to acknowledge the roles played by all the race groups.

SEPARATENESS

Of course the crystallisation of apartheid "justified" by much Afrikaans historical writing, has made the basic acceptance of another racial group's history, so much the harder. One need not dwell on this save to mention that the idea of racial "separateness" has become entrenched in the schools. Consider the general policy preamble to the latest report on Differential education.⁵

"The South African attitude to life, is characterised, among other things, by striving after the *retention of identity*, which implies that the South African national groups must, in the first place, retain, preserve and amplify their identities *This national characteristic attitude to life is of a Christian nature* In view of this it is the aspiration of the white population to *guard their identity* without sacrificing the necessary respect of the other national groups and the granting of reasonable living conditions to them." (our italics) What alarming paternalism and vagueness we find in this last sentence. Obviously one should not look to a South African School history syllabus to get a balanced view of the history of all the racial groups.

Thus the tradition of Afrikaner Nationalist historiography and the history in S.A. schools is entirely in conflict with the OXFORD HISTORY OF SOUTH AFRICA'S view of S.A. history as the "interaction between peoples of diverse origins, languages, technologies, ideologies and social systems, meeting on South African soil."⁶ It comes as little surprise then, that the writing of African history in South Africa is only a relatively recent development.

PROGRESS

However progress is being made. African pre-history and tribal histories are being researched and written up by many scholars at the English-speaking Universities. The study of Sociology, Anthropology and Archaeology has reached the stage where it is possible to reconstruct South Africa's history before the coming of the white man. A course in African pre-history is now available at the

University of Natal. A body of committed academics, such as Professors Mason, Inskip, Wilson and Webb are leading the field in the production of accurate information regarding South Africa's past. Moreover their work lacks the impassioned political overtones that have been discernible in the criticism and work of several European and American Africanists. Whereas their work has been conducted in the face of indifference and hostility from Research Centres in South Africa, the American or European scholar is given much more encouragement to research. Furthermore their work lacks the embarrassingly paternalistic tone that often characterises overseas scholarship. Thus even if South Africans are late in researching African history in South Africa, one is gratified by the hope that this work will stem from a genuine interest and commitment to South African history as a whole. I am not suggesting that all British and American scholars lack integrity; far from it, but many histories of African societies have been written for dubious reasons: often for the self-interested, furtherance of a career.

BLACK HISTORIANS

Black South African historians have had little opportunity to investigate their own history. University syllabi and lack of research facilities have severely handicapped those who might take an interest in the subject. Outside of South Africa African historians are now producing good histories of Africa. In most cases the backlash from colonialism and political and economic suppression is absent from their work and the deliberate denigration of the White man's activities in Africa is no longer a feature of their writing. When Black South African historians finally come to write their own histories it is to be expected that there will be a tone of self-justification about their work; such is the perversity of the apartheid system in general and, the Extension of the Universities Act in particular.

The new Africanist historians in South Africa appear to be determined that the increase in the study of African history will not lead to an exaggerated view of this history. Consequently many are unwilling to lessen the amount of world history included in the University syllabi. Nearly all English-speaking Universities include British and European history in their courses. Consequently when African history is introduced at University level it will be seen in the perspective of world history. This, on the whole is fairly commendable. However, Universities are committed to producing teachers and such University history has to follow the School syllabus. The amount of African history in such syllabi is pitifully small and this remains a stumbling block to the teaching of African history at University level.

However at the moment there are over 100 syllabus Committees meeting in the Republic and a draft issue of one of the History syllabus committees included a good deal more African history than there has been in the past. It is, at least an indication that the study of African history is being recognised as a necessity. Still, the syllabus Committees by no means have the final word.

PROBLEMS

Another good reason why African history should not be introduced comprehensively is because it contains problems which are not normally contained in other branches of history. In African history one cannot rely on written material and other sources of information have to be used. Briefly these sources of information include:

- a) Archaeology – this is possibly the most useful source but is still, relatively, in its infancy in South Africa.
- b) Botany has given us an idea of previous botanical structure in South Africa and provides clues to the development of food production.
- c) Linguistics helps us to trace the movements of peoples by a study of languages. Assisted by the existence of a distinct linguistic relationship between many African groups the extent of a people's dependence on one another and the nature of this relationship can be studied.
- d) Ethnography or the study of contemporary cultures makes it possible to see what cultural traditions remain in a society and what practices have been dropped.
- e) Oral tradition. This has to be properly verified and synthesised before it can be accepted.

The study of African history requires some knowledge of these disciplines and so the introduction of such a course requires some discrimination. For example, first year University students may not be able to handle this type of course.

In this article I have tried to show why African history in South Africa has been so slow in developing, the changes that are taking place and the commendable nature of this change, and why African history needs to be introduced carefully. This might suggest that South African historians stand a better chance of producing a lively and objective African historiography. To some extent I am suggesting this. **In the long run however the future for African history in South Africa looks very bleak for apartheid creates a society and institutions which destroy the foundations from which history needs to operate successfully. Until there is some change of heart African history can never come to real fruition in this country.**□

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 3. *Apartheid: a Socio-economic exposition of the origin and development of the apartheid idea.* 1960.
 4. *African Studies* Vol XVIII No. 4 1959.
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