

THE EDUCATION OF THE AFRIKAANS CHILD IN
SOUTHERN RHODESIA,

I have been asked to address you tonight on the question of the education of the Afrikaans-speaking child in Southern Rhodesia.

When Rhodes occupied this country he got people from all over South Africa to settle here, in order to make this land safe for Western civilisation. He knew that he could reckon on the help of relatives down South in case of a native rebellion. For this reason he welcomed people from the two Republics, and gave them equal rights with other settlers, looking forward to the day that there would be one South Africa. South African forces occupied this country for South Africa. Naturally Southern Rhodesia was linked up with the South in every respect. The Roman-Dutch law was taken over from the Cape, and in Bloemfontein is still the Court of Appeal for this country. Our educational system used to be linked up with that of the Union. In spite of the fact that most of our children go to the universities and colleges in the Union for further study, we are now linked up with Cambridge and our children write for the Cambridge instead of for the Matriculation Certificate which gives admission to the above-mentioned institutions. Our teachers must go to Cambridge for their training and to get a working knowledge of Afrikaans! Just how much and what sort of Afrikaans they will know I leave to your imagination.

This change of educational system seems to be the root of the problem as far as the Afrikaans child is concerned

concerned. The educational law passed by Parliament makes provision for the teaching of the Afrikaans child in the sub-standards by a teacher who knows Afrikaans. Our Prime Minister gave us the assurance in a speech in Parliament in 1939 that the attitude of the Government was that if a child went to school from an Afrikaans-speaking home, the teacher had to instruct in Afrikaans until the child understood enough English to be taught in English. The League of Nations took the following decision with regard to minorities in Europe and elsewhere: "Obligations with regard to minorities are henceforth conceived no longer as simple assurances of goodwill of a state towards its subjects of another race, but as international obligations which should be recognised by the state concerned as 'fundamental laws', which cannot be contradicted by any other laws." One of the guarantees given to minorities is: "In districts in which the minority constitutes a considerable proportion of the population, instruction in primary schools of the state shall be given in the language of that minority." In the regulations issued for primary schools in Southern Rhodesia in 1924 we find the following sound regulation: "In the case of the Dutch-speaking child, it is desirable that he should be taught Afrikaans, his mother-tongue, from the day when he enters school," and provision was made for its teaching right through the school. This is the official attitude of the Dutch Reformed Church in Rhodesia, and a memorandum was submitted to the present Prime Minister along these lines some years ago. The attitude of the present Government differs from this sound education system. No longer is the child in the sub-standards allowed to get instruction
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in Afrikaans as a basis for the teaching of English. No longer is Afrikaans, his home-language, tolerated in the primary school, as the authorities do not allow a "foreign language" in a primary school! The provision that the Afrikaans child would be taught in the lower standards by somebody who knew Afrikaans remains a promise which is not being fulfilled. Even in Enkeldoorn where nearly 100% of the children are Afrikaans-speaking most of the kindergarten teachers do not know Afrikaans, and the child is the victim of an education system diametrically opposed to sound pedagogy and contrary to the international obligations set forth by the League of Nations. If the majority of parents petition the Department of Education and a teacher who knows Afrikaans is available, it may as a favour allow Afrikaans to be given in primary schools from Std. IV. It is needless to say that this does not touch the real problem of the Afrikaans child at all. By that time the retardation of the child is a fait accompli.

Let us see how this wrong educational system affects the Afrikaans child. The child comes to school with no knowledge of English, and therefore does not follow what the teacher says in class. His teacher does not know Afrikaans and is therefore unable to make him understand what goes on in class. It takes him at least one year before he is able to follow what is being taught in the class-room. He has lost a whole year. Next year, according to the modern system obtaining in Southern Rhodesia, he is promoted to the next standard because of his age, and finds it impossible to catch up with the class unless he is exceptionally intelligent. No account is taken of his being retarded through a
 faulty

faulty educational system, and because of his seeming backwardness he lands in Class C, and even now finds it hard to keep up with the class without special instruction for which the teacher of a big class has no time, having had no sound foundation in his mother-tongue. He is being looked upon as somewhat sub-normal and develops an all-too-common inferiority complex. The parent who perhaps does not know anything about educational matters takes it for granted that the fault lies with the child, or, if the child is intelligent enough to make good his retardation, he does not see anything wrong in the system. This inferiority complex leaves its mark for good on the life of the child who also comes to the conclusion that he is good for nothing.

One would think that at least in Salisbury with hundreds of Afrikaans children provision might be made in at least one school for a kindergarten teacher who knows Afrikaans. To my knowledge there is no such teacher in Salisbury. Allow me to tell you what happened to a child of mine who came to Salisbury without a knowledge of English. His teacher arrived from England six weeks before, and of course could not understand a word he said and vice versa. In order to test this new system my wife and I decided not to interfere. As a matter of fact we could not help the child because he was not allowed to bring his books home. At the end of eighteen months I found to my amazement that he could not differentiate between the numbers seven and nine! He found it difficult to read English as he had no idea of phonetics, being taught by the look-and-say method, which made no provision for the Afrikaans child to proceed from the known to the unknown. Then my wife, who had been a
teacher....

teacher of the lower classes for years, started to teach him Afrikaans phonetically, and we were astonished to see how quickly he improved in his English reading. His elder brother who had attended an Afrikaans-medium school in the Union did not find it difficult to adapt himself to the new medium, having had the privilege of a foundation in his mother-tongue. By not learning anything for more than a year the boy was definitely retarded to such an extent that he found it impossible to catch up with the boys of his own age. Eventually he landed in the Tutorial Six of the Modern School, and it took me six weeks to get the headmaster to allow him to go to St.V, by this delay being again retarded. In order to help him to catch up with the class in Arithmetic, I personally took him for four afternoons and taught him the sums he missed. I was thoroughly surprised to see how easily he grasped the subject. The result was that he came out first in his class in Arithmetic at the end of the first term! To me this was proof enough that there was nothing wrong with his intellect, but that he was the unfortunate victim of wrong educational methods which retarded him completely. You can therefore appreciate why I feel for the Afrikaans child who is being wronged by this system and has no one to see that justice is being done to him. If this Union could help to put this matter right, you will earn the gratitude of the Afrikaans child who is unable to speak for himself.

In conclusion I want to say that the Government is trying to get every child educated, and is making liberal grants to children whose parents are not able to pay for their education. There are no school fees and books are free. The clergy have the right of entry in the schools of the Colony to give religious instruction to children belonging to their denomination. We cannot but be

thankful

thankful for these privileges, and let us hope that the Government will in future not be blind to the needs of the Afrikaans child with regard to the teaching of Afrikaans in the primary school as a basis for acquiring an adequate knowledge of English, the official language of Southern Rhodesia. This method was tried out in the Cape when I was a child, and gave satisfaction to parents and showed the necessary results in the attainments of the children.

(Toespraak van dr. H.C. de Wet, Leraar van die N.G.

Gemeente, Salisbury. (16.3.44, Afrikaans-Engelssprekende Unie).

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I. VERNAAMSTE KERKE: SIELETAL.

	Anglikaanse	Presbeteraans	Rooms- Kat.	Methodiste	N.G.
1904	5282	1375	-	672	1934
1911	10545	2632	1873	1626	3256
1921	15349	3504	2590	2646	6537
1926	17619	3982	3045	2751	7486
1931	21983	5107	4003	3933	8863
1933	23788	6321	4676	4919	9860
1941	29857	7545	6020	6555	10214
Persent	42	11	8.8	9	18

II. GETAL SKOOLKINDERS VAN KERKE
(1947) STAATS.

	Sekondêre	Laer	Ander	Totaal
Anglikaans	1702	3572	1287	6561
Rooms Kat.	202	414	1023	1639
N.G.	469	2104	149	2722
Ander Christen	1277	2738	582	4597
Joods	183	306	133	622
Geen Godsdiens	5	47	1	53
	3838	9181	3175	16194

III. RHODESIERS BUIITE S. RHODESIE
OP SKOOL 1946.

OUDER- DOER	UNIE VAN S. AFRIKA		GROOT BRITT.		ANDER		TOTAAL		GROOT TOTAAL	
	Seuns	Meis.	Seuns	Meis.	Seuns	Meis.	Seuns	Meis.	Seuns	Meis.
6 - 7	-	4	2	-	-	-	2	4	6	
7 - 8	5	3	1	-	-	1	6	4	10	
8 - 9	3	2	1	1	-	-	4	3	7	
9 - 10	5	7	1	-	-	-	6	7	13	
10 - 11	6	9	-	-	2	1	8	10	18	
11 - 12	14	14	-	-	1	-	15	14	29	
12 - 13	21	26	-	1	-	-	21	27	48	
13 - 14	32	26	-	1	-	-	32	27	59	
14 - 15	56	26	-	1	-	1	56	28	84	
15 en oor	129	63	2	2	1	-	132	65	197	
TOTAAL	271	180	7	6	4	3	282	189	471	

TABEL IV GODSDIENS VAN BLANKES IN DISTRIKTE 1941 (S.R.)

DISTRIK.	Angli- kaans.	N.G. Kerk.	Presb.	Meth.	Rooms	Hebreeus	Ander	Totaal.
Masjonaal:								
Bikita	32	34	7	16	20	-	2	111
Charter	119	578	21	35	25	17	15	810
Chibi	28	24	5	13	2	1	3	76
Chilimanzi	167	274	33	48	42	4	38	606
Darwin	56	1	4	4	1	-	7	73
Gutu	21	269	1	39	3	-	5	338
Hartley	1,223	551	237	353	203	130	185	2,882
Inyanga	104	12	13	23	37	8	9	206
Lomagundi	652	393	180	95	99	24	117	1,560
Makoni	317	407	36	45	26	26	67	924
Marandellas	397	189	49	89	61	16	69	870
Mazoe	878	194	247	89	101	40	177	1,726
Melsetter	209	529	37	49	31	3	54	912
Mrewa	45	34	14	27	12	6	43	181
Mtoko	30	3	5	14	9	14	5	80
Ndanga	42	48	7	14	1	-	4	116
Salisbury	9,315	1,973	2,597	1,678	2,275	891	2992	20,721
Umtali	1,615	580	551	348	335	67	319	3,815
Victoria	448	305	84	86	73	13	94	1,103
Totaal								
Masjonaal:	15,698	6,398	4,128	3,065	3,356	1,260	3,205	37,110
Matabeleland:								
Belingwe	511	196	72	158	105	60	103	1,205
Bubi	324	115	62	63	32	49	50	700
Bulalima-								
Mangwe	224	86	35	67	54	23	67	556
Bulawayo	8,340	1,176	2,081	2,221	1,608	1,400	1,311	18,137
Gwanda	349	132	76	53	83	81	67	841
Gwelo	2,763	1,230	724	526	479	193	476	6,391
Insiza	230	198	44	41	38	29	39	619
Matobo	152	163	33	23	27	20	23	441
Nyamandhlovu	183	119	27	42	29	5	23	428
Sebungwe	23	4	2	2	2	1	2	36
Selukwe	513	223	105	162	84	58	112	1,257
Wankie	399	136	113	95	90	27	48	908
Totaal								
Matabeleland	14,011	3,778	3,374	3,453	2,631	1,946	2,326	31,519
Reisigers	148	38	43	37	33	9	17	325
Totaal Suid- Rhodesië	29,857	10,214	7,545	6,555	6,020	3,215	5,548	68,954

TABEL V - GODSDIENSTE.

SOORT SKOOL EN JAAR	ANGLIKAANSE KERK		ROOMS KATOLIEK.		N.G. KERK.		ANDER CHRISTENE		HEBREEUS		ANDER - NIE-CHRISTEN		GEEN GODSDIENS		TOTAAL.	
	Seuns	Meisies	Seuns	Meisies	Seuns	Meisies	Seuns	Meisies	Seuns	Meisies	Seuns	Meisies	Seuns	Meisies	Seuns	Meisies
Blankes:																
Staatsskole:																
1939	2,129	1,617	318	173	1,174	1,065	1,332	1,170	240	166	-	-	11	12	5,204	4,203
1940	2,136	1,642	370	162	1,163	1,030	1,444	1,245	254	177	11	9	11	14	5,389	4,279
1941	2,238	1,783	375	175	1,098	986	1,443	1,270	268	170	4	2	11	9	5,437	4,395
1942	2,393	1,854	375	165	1,078	997	1,512	1,330	276	159	3	5	8	18	5,645	4,528
1943	2,475	1,909	374	179	1,138	1,050	1,484	1,329	270	176	3	1	16	12	5,760	4,656
1944	2,477	1,992	385	202	1,170	1,043	1,638	1,386	277	188	2	2	18	15	5,967	4,828
1945	2,509	1,984	400	202	1,179	1,087	1,745	1,435	269	191	2	2	21	23	6,125	4,924
1946	2,657	2,078	397	185	1,244	1,120	1,913	1,670	262	197	2	2	27	25	6,502	5,277
Ander:																
1939	414	657	253	352	39	81	107	211	27	74	-	-	4	3	844	1,378
1940	457	695	258	376	44	82	99	208	23	72	-	19	2	-	883	1,452
1941	459	713	254	368	52	75	124	282	24	70	2	2	2	-	917	1,510
1942	463	736	265	399	63	79	122	309	23	69	-	-	3	1	939	1,593
1943	479	774	285	405	64	70	147	322	21	78	-	-	1	-	997	1,640
1944	485	797	307	441	62	76	155	376	25	94	-	-	1	3	1,035	1,787
1945	470	823	305	477	64	58	156	386	30	96	-	-	-	3	1,025	1,843
1946	433	832	367	532	53	79	155	368	29	101	-	-	-	1	1,037	1,913

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