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In 1955 the Nationalist government moved to implement the Bantu Education Act of 1953. Among the measures provided for in the Act was the establishment of bodies at a local level which would participate in the administration of schooling in black areas - the school boards and school committees. These were designed to play an important role in the new Bantu Education system. That system was aimed at the rapid expansion of black schooling on the cheapest basis possible. At the same time it had to underpin politically and ideologically, the state's intention to incorporate blacks within separate political structures. The school boards and committees were clearly part of this programme. Through them, the state could transfer much of the burden of financing education, and some of the burden of administering it, onto local communities. And the Nationalists intended that these structures would also provide a community leadership role for officially acceptable representatives of black interests, enabling more conservative figures in the community to strengthen their position by exercising a degree of real local power. The intention was to incorporate sections of the community ideologically into the apartheid project by providing an illusion of self-government.

That at any rate was the intention. What this paper aims to show was that the school board and committee system failed to play the hegemonic role which it was aimed towards. Established in the midst of the great political mobilizations of the 1950s, it was subject to immediate political attacks which undermined its legitimacy from the outset. The members of the committees and boards tended to be marginal and unpopular figures. At the same time, the authorities maintained an authoritarian and arrogant stance toward the boards and committees themselves, refusing to listen to their suggestions and unseating members who would not tow the official line. By the late 60s and early 70s, practises such as these, and the Department of Bantu Education's imposition of ethnic segregation in the urban areas had begun to turn some of the boards and committees against the department. While in the Bantustans, the boards and committees did help the state to incorporate traditional chiefs and Bantustan petty-bourgeoisie, the corruption and brutality of this stratum's use of the system did nothing to strengthen its legitimacy. Finally, the usefulness of the whole mechanism to the state was called into question with the controversy over the Afrikaans medium of instruction in 1974-6. In this period it was the school boards in the urban areas that initially led opposition to the states' new policy before being overtaken by the students in 1976. The instrument had turned against its creator. But this final rebellion came too late to restore any real popular legitimacy to those elements involved in the board and committee system. For all practical purposes, the 1976 uprising dealt a fatal

blow to any hope on the part of the state that the boards and committees would play the hegemonic role intended for them.

A particularly important aspect of this failure was the inability of the board and committee system to integrate teachers. Teachers were a key group for the state to draw into its new order - they represented, at least in the 50s and 60s, the most important section of the educated black workforce, enjoyed as a group a measure of respect in many communities and sometimes a position of community leadership (although to a lesser extent than in the pre-Bantu Education period). Moreover, they were at first glance a group disposed toward a certain conservatism: they enjoyed a relatively privileged position within the racially discriminatory and segmented labour market; they followed solidly conservative teachers organisations from the early 1960s until after the '76 uprisings; from the late 60s many of them were upwardly socially mobile - as opportunities developed for black clerical and junior managerial employees in industry many tended to see their future in terms of career advancement rather than social change; and professionalist and gradualist ideologies were pervasive in teachers circles. Indeed teachers did not, as an organised force really turn to militant opposition to the regime even in the 1970s. But throughout the period, the best the state was able to obtain from them was their acquiesence, rather than their real incorporation and support. Obviously this has to be understood primarily in terms of teachers' membership of an oppressed majority. But it was also in part an outcome of the fact that the board and committee system affected teachers in ways which militated against their incorporation. The boards and committees exerted considerable powers over teachers at a local level. Often drawn from more traditionalistic and less educated strata, their handling of the teachers was often tinged with an underlying social antagonisms. This conflict was intensified with the elaboration of the Bantustan system, as the boards and committees often became the tools of local petty despots. Pretoria displayed a total insensitivity to the plight of the teachers, and to their responses to these circumstances. School boards were made the conduit of many of Native Affairs Department's (and later the Bantu Education Departments') unpopular decisions about the teaching profession, and at the same time, government it subjected teachers to a grossly racist ideology and practice which could not in any way offset their negative reactions to the boards and committees.

Thus the role which the school boards and committees were supposed to play in underpinning the hegemonic project of Bantu Education was undermined; by the assertive bigotry of officialdom, by the states abandonment of teachers to the mercy of local tyrants; by the governments refusal to

listen to criticisms of policy voiced by the representative structures which it had itself established; and ultimately as the result of the long simmering traditions of popular resistance.

Establishment of the School Board Structure

Christie and Collins(1) have rightly drawn attention to the hegemonic character of the Verwoedian design for Bantu Education. Verwoerd and his cohorts did aim to provide mechanisms for the incorporation of blacks within the new political order which they were propounding. The 'homelands' would provide the arena within which black political advancement and educational development would unfold. The Nationalist government therefore sought to provide means by which the allegiance of sectors of the black population to a conception of their future as being one in the homelands could be secured. In order to do this, structures would have to be created within which such ideologically incorporated sectors would come to see themselves as having a role in determining their future. This illusion of self-determination would enable the dominant social groups to exercise control without being perceived as doing so.

Verwoerd quite explicitly outlined his aims in education in these sorts of terms in his notorious 1953 speeches to Parliament on Bantu Education. In these he called for a form of black participation in black educational administration

> "...which will make him ["the Bantu"] feel that he is co-responsible for his education but that he is also assisted by the guardian ["the European"] in so far as he is incapable of assuming co-responsibility for it..."(2)

The school boards and committees were the means chosen for this purpose. Not only would they play the essential ideological role of winning parents allegiance to Bantu Education, but they would also provide a means of squeezing black communities financially, in order to subsidize the kind of cheap mass education which the NP was aiming at. Thus Verwoerd argued that black parents should be made co-responsible for their children's education and that

> "...that co-responsibility is two-fold - it is co-responsibility for control, but associated with that is co-responsibility in respect of finances."(3)

Accordingly the Bantu Education Act (No.47 of 1953) gave the responsible Minister sweeping powers to provide for black participation in educational administration by establishing "such regional, local, and domestic councils, boards, or other bodies as he may deem expedient"(4) or to place any government school under bodies such as the 'Bantu Authorities'.(5) As we shall see, the sweeping over such bodies granted by the Act to the Minister were not always used in a way which was consistent with their hegemonic design.

The regulations which structured the new system provided for the school committees, which were immediately responsible for a particular school, to be partly elected by the parents. In both rural and urban areas, four to six of the committee members could be elected by parents;(6) clearly this was aimed at drawing local communities into the new system. In order to strengthen the strata participating in homeland structures, in the rural areas, the local authority was given the right to nominate six of the members of the committee.(7) However these nominations were subject to approval by Pretoria, and the Secretary of Native Affairs could appoint a further two members of the committees.(8) In the urban areas, the remainder of school committee members, comprising a majority were direct appointees of Pretoria or the Local Native Commissioner.(9)

The committees were to be the key link to the community, controlling school funds, erecting new buildings, and advising the school boards.(10) What real power was embodied in the system subsisted however, in the school boards. These were wholly appointed bodies, with one school board controlling a group of school committees. In the urban areas all the members were appointed by the Native Affairs Department.(11) In the rural areas the members were nominated by Pretoria and by the 'Bantu Authority': it seems that as the homeland system developed the proportion represented by homeland authority appointees was allowed to increase.(12) The boards had considerable powers over local schools and teachers. From 1955 all African teachers salaries were paid as subsidies to the School Boards, which meant they effectively controlled hiring and firing (although Pretoria could force the Board to sack a teacher by withdrawing the subsidy in respect of a particular person).(13) From this brief description some of the inherent weaknesses of the system ought to be apparent. The hegemonic aims of the school committee structure were undermined by the Native Affairs Departments' reluctance to concede real control to parents, by insisting on a majority of appointees. The NAD wanted parental participation without giving up real control. As for the boards, while doing something to strengthen the power of homeland authorities, their appointee dominated structure and the facts that they controlled the school

committees under them and that they were not responsible to the parents of local students, also undermined their legitimacy. This structure tended to encourage the emergence of petty, tyrannical school boards, subservient to Pretoria and resented by local parents and teachers.

Resistance to School Boards

The School Board system was immediately challenged by the mass political movements of the time; which saw it an intrinsic part of Bantu Education's imposition of a totally separate and inferior education system. At a meeting of "the ANC's national executive committee in Durban on 6th March 1955, a call was made for a boycott of the boards and committees.(14) The Unity Movement also opposed the board system, and indeed unlike the ANC saw such a boycott as the main strategy against the Bantu Education.(15) Although nationally insignificant compared with the ANC, the Unity Movement was in a position to affect the struggle over this issue in the Cape, because of its control of the Cape African Teachers Association.

During the two years following the introduction of the board and committee structure, there were numerous instances of resistance to their establishment. J. Dugard, then Regional Director of Bantu Education in the Cape, writes that:

> "...where the ANC was active only very brave men would agree to be government nominees on the boards and it was quite impossible to organise meetings to choose representatives of parents."(16)

At Langbuya Location, Paarl, in May 1955, parents voted not to elect a school committee, after a speaker suggested that "...it would be better if Dr Eiselen came to explain things himself."(17) Langa, Cape Town, proved a particularly hard nut for the NAD to crack. When meetings of parents were arranged for five schools there in August 1955, the parents at all but one voted against establishing a committee.(18) (There was suspicion that the sub-inspector had rigged the ballot on this issue at the fifth school).(19) A further attempt the next year to establish committees in Cape Town were also unsuccessful. At Langa High School, the chairman of the meeting arranged for this purpose was chased out of the meeting. Parents at Langa Methodist School disrupted the meeting there, and the school board member presiding fled via the window. St Cyprians parents also refused to elect a committee, while at an Athlone school, the secretary of the Peninsular School Board was reduced to accepting nominations of committee members from the C.I.D.

members attending the meeting.(20) There was also significant resistance to the new structures in the Eastern Cape and Transkei. A Grahamstown meeting to elect a committee was broken up by ANC members from East London.(21) It was reported in March 1955 that in the Tsomo and Mount Ayliff districts the overwhelming majority of school boards were being boycotted.(22)

The school boards and committees thus met a great deal of opposition on their inception, which to some extent stamped them, in the popular imagination, as organs of an oppressive system. This was clearly a major threat to their intended aims. But just as there were sectors of the dominated groups who resolutely rejected them, there were also those who sought to enter the system for whatever advantages might be gained. Those who were participating in the 'Bantu Authority' system in the homelands, urban elites who hoped for advancement through the advisory board system, and less educated rural people who resented the relative social prestige of teachers, were prime candidates for such incorporation. Furthermore, there were those opposed to the existing order, who did not see the boards and committees as worth opposing. All of this is reflected in the fact that despite strong opposition, the state did manage to put the system in place. By 1956 there were 300 school boards and 4,000 committees in existence.(23) Education officials found that in the rural areas it was not difficult, in most areas, to find "men and women of some standing in the community" to serve on the boards.(24)

In urban areas it was more complex for the NAD - the boards often consisted of clergy and ex-teachers who lacked much popular support.(25) But some prominent figures, such as Dr W. Nkomo and Paul Mosaka, could be found advocating the idea of joining school boards in order to fight Bantu Education from within.(26) It seems too that not all ANC members adhered to their organisations line of a total boycott of the committees. At an ANC public meeting in Dube in June 1955 a speaker advocating a school boycott, counterposed this strategy to a boycott of the committees:

> "Some said schools should be boycotted. Yet they forget that in School Boards there are elements... only because they are getting their bread."(27)

It seems that in New Brighton in Port Elizabeth, some ANC members participated in the election of a school committee.(28) These events should be seen in the light of the fact that it was only in the 1950s that the ANC moved away from judging participation in state structures on tactical grounds. The reality of the growth of the school boards and committees should warn us against a simple conception of the rise of Bantu Education in which "the

people" reject the system, while only a handful of "traitors" participate in it. There was broad based opposition to the system, but there were also significant constituencies, who, for varying motives, were willing to enter it.

The School Boards In Action

The operation of the school boards rapidly justified the forewarnings of their opponents. The boards were placed in a position where they were responsible for carrying out the financial tightening up on state educational spending which Dr Verwoerd was bent on carrying through. In many matters the apparent discretion given to the boards was quickly shown to be illusory. For example, the boards were "allowed" to discontinue school feeding schemes if they wished. The money thus saved could then be spent on 'amenities'. But 'amenities' were taken to include the hiring of more teachers.(29) The demise of feeding schemes was thus assured. The boards also set about the supervising of the raising of money by the committees for the construction of new schools.(30) Considerable resentment was caused by the fact that sometimes an area which had been levied heavily by a school committee did not benefit proportionately from new school buildings.(31)

The boards also became the instrument of the state's purge of politically dissident teachers from the profession during the late 1950s.(32) In a series of cases it seems that school boards made spurious charges against teachers as a way of simultaneously discrediting and getting rid of them. A teacher at Langa Methodist School for example, was dismissed in 1956 for alleged sexual misconduct with a pupil. The student's father wrote to the school board saying that there was no truth in the charge. The teacher was then summoned to a meeting with the Secretary of the school board, who demanded that he sign a statement admitting his guilt. A scuffle broke out, and the teacher was charged with assaulting the school board chairman. But when the case was heard, the Magistrate threw it out, and advised the teacher to appeal his dismissal.(33) Similarly, the Unity Movement activist V.K. Ntshona was sacked by the Moroka - Jabavu School Board for supposed neglect of duties. When he applied to another school, he obtained a temporary appointment, but was then turned down by the school board on grounds of his political activity, after they had been visited by the Special Branch. A subsequent attempt to obtain a post for Ntshona was frustrated when the NAD informed the school board that it would not provide a subsidy for any post held by Ntshona and the board duly excluded him from consideration.(34)

Some board members positively revelled in the power that they now enjoyed. Rev. Lediga, the Chairman of the Langa School Board informed a meeting in 1958 that "...from now on he would see to it that the Board put its foot down and dealt more severely with the teachers". He went on to inform the gathering that "...there has never been such a learned government as we have in the present".(35) Much of the animosity between teachers and school boards was fuelled by the way in which teachers, a formerly prestigeous social group, were placed under the control of bodies often consisting of persons less educated than themselves.(36) There was an anti-democratic as well as a democratic component in the objections raised by teachers to the new structures. At the 1957 conference of the conservative Cape African Teachers Union, a resolution was passed that members of school committees ought to have completed primary education, and members of school boards some post-primary education.(37)

Teachers and Bantu Education Ideology

The Board system thus worked in a way which undermined the position of teachers as professionals. It thus served as an obstacle, and not an aid to their ideological incorporation into the Verwoerdian social order. The possibilities of such incorporation were similarly undermined by the staggering crudity of the administrative and ideological practises of the central educational authorities. The change from provincial to central control of the educational apparatus meant that the liberal paternalism which had characterised much of the administration of education was replaced by brute authoritarianism.

Inspectors with a knowledge of local conditions and African languages were often replaced by people who lacked these.(38) Administrators with educational experience were sometimes replaced by NAD officials who knew nothing of education and were notoriously rude to their sub-ordinates.(39) These developments in part reflected official determination to root out what were seen as liberal influences in African education, especially in the Cape where the government was particularly suspicious of the ideological proclivities of educational administrators.(40) Dr Verwoerd himself is said to have commented to the Director of Bantu Education: "A lot of your inspectors are just plain liberals".(41) Official racism in black education really came into its own however, when W.A. Maree became the first Minister of an independent Department of Bantu Education in 1958.(42) Maree was responsible for the issuing of a circular to inspectors forbidding them to shake hands with blacks.(43) Maree also

occupied himself with such weighty matters as personally reprimanding Inspector Martin Potgieter for drinking tea with the black teachers at Lovedale.(44) The Ministerial approach rapidly permeated to local level - at Adams College the dishwasher was upbraided for washing the cups of black and white staff in the same sink.(45) For black teachers used to the paternalism of the missions, and the relative paternalism of the pre-1955 inspectorate, such experiences were certainly shocking. The aggressive gut racism of those charged with implementing Bantu Education over-rode the hegemonic imperatives of the system. Squeezed between the bullying of school boards on the one hand, and the abuse of racist administrators on the other, teachers fell into a grumbling acceptance of the status quo. But that did not amount to an allegiance to it.

The 60s and early 70s - period of acquiesence

The defeat of the mass African nationalist movement in the early 60s created a wholly different political context for the school boards. From then until the early 70s, they were no longer under overt political attack. This brought about a situation in which they were potentially able to exert an influence over far wider sections of society. But this potential was only realised to a very partial extent. Certainly the credibility of the boards was undermined - by their subjection to departmental policies, by the way in which boards arrogantly imposed their control over school committees, parents and teachers, and by the way in which, in the Bantustans, the boards became the policy instruments of petty tyrannical chiefs and officials. Nevertheless, the new conditions during the 1960s did much to strengthen the boards. One senior departmental official found that in this period, holding a seat on a school board became far more acceptable in black communities.(46) By 1969, there were 509 school boards and 4,108 school committees, involving over 50,000 persons.(47) But while the numbers of those serving on the school boards may have increased, their structure and policies continued to be ones which generated friction between them and community members and teachers. The lack of accountability of the boards to parents allowed them to trample over grass roots opinion. A memorandum by Transvaal teachers in 1966 complained that school boards were ignoring or overturning recommendations made by school committees.(48) The board and committee system continued to be used by the state to extract financial contributions to education from parents. By 1971 these contributions had risen to the level of R1,7 million - of which only R350,000 was spent on repairs and new buildings, while the remainder was spent on teacher's salaries.(49) Urban parents in particular bore a heavy burden because of the states determination during this

period, to restrict funds spent on urban black schooling. In 1964 in Moroka, 100 out of 600 teachers were being paid by the board.(50) This practice also further alienated teachers from the boards as board salaries could be 45 to 55 per cent lower than regular departmental salaries.(51) The authorities thus generated a relatively limited amount of extra finance for education services, while at the same time creating a powerful source of parent and teacher resentment of the boards.

The Bantu Education department's treatment of urban school boards themselves also served to undermine their credibility and their loyalty. Members of Boards and Committees who were politically suspect were arbitrarily removed from their positions.(52) In at least one case where the Department disapproved of the actions of members of a school board, the board was dissolved (Moroka, 1968).(53) The department also stifled the initiative of the boards by refusing them permission to raise funds from outside donors.(54) Vanderbijlpark school board was 'warned' by the department in 1971 for accepting R3,000 toward the building of a school library.(55)

The contradictions of the boards were further intensified through their being loaded with responsibility for the states policy, introduced in the late 60s, of separating out urban schools on an ethnic basis.(56) This policy resulted in utter chaos. When it was implemented in Meadowlands in 1968, artificial overcrowding was created in the Tswana schools.(57) In other cases disasterous mismanagement of the ethnic reorganisation brought about such consequences as the allocation of junior primary students to a secondary school.(58) The department acted with its customary lack of finesse in the matter, engaging in the wholesale expulsion of Zulu speaking students from a Soweto school where they constituted the majority in 1973,(59) and bringing about a situation where in 1975 there were no junior secondaries for Tsonga and North Sotho speakers in Diepkloof.(60) All of this scarcely brought much lustre to the boards.

School Boards in the Bantustans

During the 1960s and '70s, school boards in the bantustans increasingly became a means by which the chiefs and homeland politicians exercised their sway over rural society. The boards provided these groups both with ways of disciplining parents and teachers and profitable sources of misappropriated funds. These tendencies were accelerated from 1967 when the state moved to transfer administrative control over education in the Bantustans to their 'territorial authorities'.(61) The rural school

boards exercised their authority over the teachers ferociously: at one school in the Tswana Territorial authority area the Vice Chairman of the school board told the school committee that "Teachers are but dogs. We can dismiss them at any moment."(62) Once again, the way in which such school boards and committees operated undermined their hegemonic purpose. While they were able to underpin the incorporation of chiefs and some homeland elites into the bantustan scheme, the arbitary way in which they exercised their authority alienated numbers of potential supporters amongst teachers and parents. The dominant groups in the homelands tended to loot the institutions which were placed in their trust, for wealth and power, rather than using them as instruments of a hegemonic strategy.

Illustrative of these processes in the story of Philip M. Malebye, the Principal of Itotleng-Baralong Secondary School, Lichtenburg area, during the late 1960s. Malebye came into conflict with the local authorities over the various forms of corruption to which they subjected the school. The local chief imposed on those pupils who came from outside the Ratlou Baralong Tribal Area a R6 tax, which was paid into tribal funds.(63) The school committee raised a R3 a head levy from students for the building of latrines but then did not carry out this work.(64) In November 1968 they bought 100 bags of cement for the flooring of four new classrooms. The cement was then mysteriously used up without the planned work being done - presumably appropriated by members of the committee.(65)

Malebye's resentment of such corruption apparently engendered tensions between him and the school board and school committee. The conflict was finally precipitated when a pupil approached Malebye in 1968 with evidence that she had been sexually harrassed or abused by the Principal of the primary school. Malebye passed this evidence on to the school board for their action.(66) However, the primary school principal was an ally of the chief, and so instead of attempting to investigate the issue, the chief and school board began to try to get rid of Malebye. An allegation of embezzelment was then brought against Malebye. But an investigation by the responsible administrative official found that no money was missing.(67) A charge was then brought against Malebye in the Delareyville Magistrate's Court that he had stolen a R15 cheque from the Local Storekeeper.(68) However, during the trial, in February 1969, the storekeeper admitted that he had conspired with the chief to frame Malebye for the offence.(69) After a brief respite the board and committee moved to simply dismiss Malebye. An advertisement for his post was placed in 'The World' and he was given notice to quit his post by 1st April 1969.(71) To add insult to injury, the chiefs' henchmen also stole some of Malebye's

property. Although Malebye had plans for legal action, it seems that little came of this.(72) Malebye's tale illustrates well the manner in which those who exercised power in Bantustans structures enhanced their power through their control of the schools boards, but also of how this control was not exercised in such a way as to bring these bodies greater popular support.

Some of the most intense conflicts involving teachers in rural areas took place in the central and northern Transvaal during the early 1970s. Two dimensions of Bantustan politics need to be understood here. Firstly, in Lebowa the period was dominated by a conflict between those forces linked to the chiefs, who wanted to bolster chiefly power, and a grouping, apparently led by sections of the petty bourgeoisie and educated employees, who stood for a reduction in chiefly power. Up to 1972, the Lebowa Territorial Authority had been led by Chief Masermule Matlala, a stern traditionalist and extreme conservative.(73) However in 1972, with the transition of Lebowa to "self governing" status, Matlala was replaced by Cedric Phathudi, who became Chief Minister as the leader of an anti-traditionalist faction. In 1975, after Phathudi had failed, because of South African government opposition, to force the chiefs into a separate upper house in the Lebowa legislature, he brought about a compromise with Matlala, joining together to fend off attacks from a group around the former Interior Minister, Collins Ramusi who wanted a more determined attack on chiefly power.(75) Secondly there was considerable political turmoil within Lebowa, Bophuthatswana and surrounding 'white' areas over the creation of KwaNdebele. The state had originally not intended to establish a separate Ndebele 'homeland' but rather to allow the existence of Ndebele territorial authorities within Lebowa and Bophuthatswana. However a combination of the particularism of the existing Bantustan leaders who wanted to force out 'foreign' elements: particularist forces amongst the Ndebele chiefs: the labour needs of the PWV; and the ideological dynamics of the states commitment to a distinct ethnic basis for Bantustans brought about during the 70s, an attempt to construct a single ethnic unit for the Ndebele.(76) The result was the formation of the least viable of all homelands - Kwandebele. This process involved considerable friction between Ndebele communities and the Lebowa and Bophuthatswana governments.

The seventies thus saw severe friction in the region between traditionalist and 'modernizing' leaderships and between various ethnically defined leadership groupings, and this had severe impacts on teachers in particular. One of the most spectacular results of this was a spate of incidents in which teachers were forcibly circumcised by traditionalist elements. These actions were, I would

suggest, a way in which traditionalists warded off the threat to their power by more urbanised and educated groupings by subjecting them to a supposedly traditional ritual. These actions underscored the conflict in rural society between rural elites: teachers, the bearers of a heavily westernised identity, defined themselves against the forms of tradition invoked by the more conservative elites. A teacher who had been subject to such a forced circumcision replied in this fashion to his cross-examination during the trial of the culprits in the Potgietersrust Regional Court.

> "Is die besnysdenis gedoen ooreenkomistig bantoegebruik.
> -Ek meet nie
> - Dra jry geen kennis van die gelsriuke van hierdie betrokke stam nie
> -Die heidene ja hulle gebruik daardie gebruik."(77)
>
> ("Was the circumcision done according to Bantu custom?
> I don't know.
> Do you have no knowledge of the customs of the tribe involved here?
> the heathens, yes, they use this custom.")

Here the distance between 'the heathens' - a term of abuse drawn straight from a missionary vocabulary - and the teacher is clearly demarcated. This demarcation reflects a real depth of hostility.

In one such case, Amos Motsepe, Principal of Metsangwana Primary School and Chairman of the Transvaal United African Teachers Association Elands River Branch, was the victim. On 31st May 1970, Motsepe was dragged out of his motor car, beaten and taken to a cicumcision school run by Headman Lesolo Maloka, under the control of Chief Motodi Matlala. The next day he was forcibly circumcised. Motsepe was later moved to another camp, and held until the end of July, when he was released.(78) Eventually, with the financial assistance of TUATA, Motsepe was able, in 1974 to bring a legal case against Chief Matlala, Headman Maloka and their henchmen.(79) Motsepe duly won the case, and considerable damages against Chief Matlala: however when he tried to collect these damages he found it virtually impossible to do so.(80) Motsepe's attempts to recover what had been awarded to him were an object lesson in the difficulties faced by anyone trying to challenge chiefly power in the Bantustans. An investigator sent to the Chief's area by Motsepe's attorneys, found that the Chief, and his brother Chief Mokogome Matlala, had a considerable income, as they imposed their own poll tax in the area, and an annual levy on patients at the local mission hospital,

received salaries as officials of the Lebowa government, split the proceeds of tribal funds etween them, and pocketed half of any fines imposed in their Lekgotla.(81) In addition the Chiefs received a portion of the produce of a portion of all land farmed.(82) But it was to be very difficult for Motsepe to lay his hands on any of these assets. Matlala dispersed his cattle amongst the herds of the local people, thus making it impossible for them to be identified and seized;(83) and it became clear that further investigations would place the attorney's agent in danger.(84) When the attorneys tried to serve a writ on the Chief, they could not find a Deputy Sherrif who was willing to enter the area for this purpose.(85) In 1980, the attorneys were still struggling to have the judgement enforced, even though Matlala had now suffered a decline in his fortunes and was in jail on a charge of stock theft.(86)

In other cases the results of forced circumcision were more tragic for those involved. In 1971, a group including school teachers, were forcibly taken to a circumcision school in the Zebediela area, and subjected to circumcision. One teacher, Gideon Mokoena, suffered a sepsis and died as a result. When those charged with the crime appeared in the Potgietersrust regional court, they were let off with a fine.(87) Interestingly, forced circumcision has continued to be a weapon of traditionalist political forces in the rural Transvaal in seeking to control those representing any form of challenge. During 1986, Venda's local Trujillo, Chief Mphephu, ordered all uncircumcised males to attend circumcision schools.(88)

Another aspect of the conflicts within the Bantustans was the way in which the Bophuthatswana authorities tried to force non-Tswana minorities out of their 'state'. In particular there was a determined attempt in the mid 70s to force the ama Ndebele-a-Moletlane tribe under Chieftaness Ester Kekana to leave for KwaNdebele.(89) The Boputhatswana government tried to force the tribes schools to teach in Tswana, but met with resistance from the tribal authority.(90) Eventually Chieftaness Kekana was deposed from her position.(91)

In summary, there was extensive conflict between and within Bantustan elites. In this conflict the school boards often became instruments of those who were strongly placed within the bantustan social order - especially the chiefs. Because the most conservative of these elements often saw teachers as bearers of ideas contrary to their interests, and because of the avenues of corruption which school boards opened up, they were often operated by chiefs in a way which adversly affected teachers and parents. Thus although the boards brought some benefits to dominant Bantustan elites, they did not really serve to build constituencies supporting the apartheid order.

Teacher Resentment

It should by now be clear that teachers were placed in a structurally powerless position by the school board system, and that this explains in a major degree their lack of incorporation in the new education order. Through the sixties and seventies there were complaints from teachers and parents about intimidation by the boards;(42) about manipulation of boards by the inspectors;(95) about what one teacher called the "incompetent and unscrupulous management of our schools";(94) and about extortion of bribes by board members in matters of teachers employment, transfer or promotion.(95) An editorial in 'The World' in 1966 reflected the attitudes of black salaried employees and the urban petty bourgeoisie toward the system when it denounced the situation where teachers "are more and more being exploited by small men who are in power over them in some school boards".(96)

However, the states failure to obtain real support from teachers for the board and committee system was also underpinned by its inability to articulate an ideology which could effectively draw in teachers to a new perception of their role, in line with the aims of apartheid institutions. It is true that the Bantu Education Department and its publications did make much of the concept of professionalism, which certainly had a resonance with sections of teachers.(97) But for the most part, the department's ideologists put forward themes that were crudely racist and loaded with menace against any form of disseat: such approaches could scarcely gain the allegiance of many black teachers. The crudity of the department's pronouncements was quite staggering. The department's mouthpiece, the Bantu Education Journal is notable here. On one occassion it informed its teacher - readers that to them South African whites were the most important whites in the world: "They are honest and sincere in their actions to all, people whose word is their bond and who will not be frightened by violence".(98) Even more bizzare was this 1965 editorial in the B.E.J.:

> "It is about time that we take a look at our South African Bantu population to see in what respects they have exceptional qualities... choral singing is one of our strong points... Another talent which is manifested in our children is their neat handwriting... subversive activities and sabotage are not our strong points. There are some of our fellow men who, following the instigation of strangers attempted this but they were bound to fail. They failed because these things have never had a share in our traditional way of life and because they are not intrinsic abilities of the Bantu."(99)

Here, the gut racism of the Bantu Education departments officials was clearly subverting their attempts to create a coherent ideology which could hegemonise teachers.

The 70s: Rebellion of the urban school boards

In the early seventies, the consequences of the failure of the school board system for the state became apparent when school boards and committees in urban areas became focii of protest against aspects of state educational policy. In the urban areas it was harder for the state to find appointees for the boards who would be tractable, than it was in rural areas where conservative groupings around chiefs could easily be yoked in. Moreover, there was more space for parents to elect competent people to school committees than in the rural areas, because of the lesser element of nomination by official structures in the way these were chosen.(99) With the rise of new oppositional politics, there was an increasing confidence on the part of urban black elites of their ability to assert themselves. Thus in some urban areas from around 1971 there was growing protest from school boards and committees about various state policies, culminating in their taking a significant role in challenging the policy which precipitated the 1976 student uprising - the use of Afrikaans as a teaching medium. This is not to suggest that the boards and committees were simply transformed from being collaborationist bodies into some form of popular leadership. But it is to say that in certain areas they began to articulate themes contrary to those of state policy, even if they were in fact too enmeshed in a supplicant relationship with the state, to be bodies which could organise militant opposition.

The first such issue around which conflict arose was the states attempt in the early 70s to separate urban schools along ethnic/'tribal' lines, and to establish similarly distinct school boards for different ethnic groups. In late 1971, at a meeting with departmental officials, members of Soweto school boards expressed their opposition to the states plans to reorganise the boards, saying that this move would create administrative problems and generate conflict between different groups.(100) The following year, in March a meeting of Soweto school committee members and parents objected to the scheme to establish 'tribal' schools and threatened to withdraw their children from the schools if it were imposed.(101) In Alexandra township in 1973 school committees and parents met and protested about the ethnic separation of the schools. The Alexandra school board then withdrew its instructions to Principals to pursue this policy.(102)

There were also some incidents in which school boards came to the defence of politically victimised teachers. In two such incidents in 1972, Abraham Tiro, the Turfloop student leader (later to be assasinated in Botswana) and Edward Kubayi, who had also been expelled from Turfloop, were ordered by the department to be removed from the teaching posts they had taken in Soweto. However the responsible school boards both refused to implement the department's decision.(103)

Thus by 1974, urban school boards, at any rate on the Rand, had developed a degree of autonomy from the department, and were in some way voicing educational and other grievances within the community.

Writings on the student uprising of 1976 have generally ignored the role of the school boards in opposing the imposition of Afrikaans as a teaching medium from 1974. This activity highlights the reasons for the ultimate failure of the boards. An issue confronted township communities on which there was near unanimity of feeling: there was virtually no support for the Bantu Education Department's decision to insist on half of school subjects being taught in Afrikaans. The school boards and committees voiced protests in this connection. But throughout the period from '74 to '76, the Department showed no inclination to listen to these views. It responded to the boards opinions with threats or disciplinary action. Here was the central contradiction of the board system: namely that the state wanted it to incorporate blacks into a sense of participation in the education system, but that it was not prepared to give the boards the decision-making powers that would have been essential if they were to establish a real social base. The Department wanted community participation in education, but only as long as the community's views coincided with its own. This approach guaranteed in advance the failure of boards as a hegemonic structure.

Discontent about the Afrikaans policy resulted in a meeting of 91 delegates from school boards of the PWV and Western Transvaal areas, held in Atteridgeville on December 21st, 1974.(104) The tone of the meeting was relatively mild but nevertheless strongly opposed to the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. A memorandum was drawn up demanding an end to the policy, and a deputation chosen to meet the Department of Bantu Education on the matter.(105) The views of the meeting were couched in terms of support for the homeland leaders views that secondary education should be conducted in English.(106) The meeting also supported the idea of seeking a Supreme Court injunction if the Department proved intractable.(107) Some however did express more combative views: Mr M. Peta, a member of Atteridgeville school board, called for a school boycott if

the policy were not reversed.(108) The very limited demand of the school boards was met with implaccable opposition from the department. A further meeting of school boards was held in January at which "great dissatisfaction" was expressed by the boards at the department's refusal to compromise with them.(109) However the department was determined to repress any opposition to its policies. A later planned joint meeting of school boards at Sebokeng was banned by the circuit inspector of Vereeniging.(110) In Atteridgeville, the chairman of the school board, J. Mahlangu was sacked for his opposition to the Afrikaans policy, provoking a school boycott.(111) Circulars number 6 and 7 of 1975 were issued by the department to firm up its position: they reaffirmed the 50-50 English-Afrikaans rule, and forbade school boards to decide on the medium of instruction in their schools.(112) W.C. Ackermann, the Regional Director of Bantu Education for the Southern Transvaal, told one school board, which had instructed its teachers to use English, that their grants for teachers salaries would be cut off if they did not co-operate.(113)

These strong-arm policies did not however crack the school boards opposition to the Afrikaans medium of instruction policy. Several school boards in Soweto persisted in instructing their teachers to use English as the sole medium.(114) Boards in the Port Elizabeth area also took up the issue. The school boards in the Port Elizabeth townships in February 1975 presented a joint memorandum to Inspector in the area calling for abandonment of the 50/50 policy.(115)

With the beginning of the 1976 school year, the conflict in Soweto deepened. On the 20th January the Meadowlands Tswana school board met the local circuit inspector to discuss the issue. The inspector took an approach characteristic of his department's usual chauvinism: he argued that as all direct tax paid by blacks went to homeland education, black education was being paid for by whites: the department thus had a duty to 'satisfy' white tax payers.(116) Not surprisingly, the board members were unimpressed by this analysis, and voted unanimously that English should be the medium of instruction in schools under their control.(117) Following this, two members of the school board were dismissed by the department and the other seven members resigned in protest.(118) Thereupon, a students school boycott broke out in the area, demanding the reinstatement of the board members.(119)

The story of the period leading up to June 1976 is in part one of the refusal of the Bantu Education Department to listen to its own school boards. On 13th March 1976 at a public meeting of the Diepkloof school board (interestingly, chaired by one J. Maklangu) it was

announced that the board was making it compulsory for teachers to teach in English.(120)

Yet the role of the boards in opposing the department had brought them little credibility in the community. Creatures of the Bantu Education system, they were never given the power to establish a real base for themselves in their communities. A few days before June 16th, parents in Soweto began to establish their own representative committees, precisely because they felt that the boards were not representing them properly.(121) The student movements were already by-passing the school boards. With the coming of the 16th June the school boards and the education order they represented were swept aside, as an entirely new era of political and educational struggle opened up.

Conclusions

What then are the implications of the tale sketched out above?

Firstly, that Bantu Education was not simply a coercive strategy. It did embrace an attempt to win the consent of sections of black South Africans. In this sense it was a hegemonic strategy and it is thus incorrect to view the system as one which simply aimed to impose itself on communities 'from the outside'.

Secondly, that the states drive toward such a hegemonic strategy was undercut by the personal racism and the authoritarianism of its agents. Through their individual abuse of key figures in local communities, and through their reluctance to accord any decision-making powers on policy to the school boards and committees, the officials of the NAD and the BED destroyed the possibility of these bodies being able to sway popular views of the education system. Just as is the case in the larger political arena today, the state failed to understand that it could gain no credibility for its schemes if it were prepared only to negotiate with those whom it approved of, and to agree only to those proposals which were in accord with its own presuppositions.

Thirdly, in the period under discussion, once the initial attempts to prevent the construction of the boards and committees had failed, they did despite their limitations become important arenas of conflict over education. Bantu Education was able to draw significant constituences into these administrative structures, and though they mainly functioned to prop up the system, they did also, in certain circumstances provide vents for oppositional activities.

The role which they played cannot simply be derived from the fact that they were state imposed structures. In the absence of alternatives, such structures can be places where the conflicts of the wider society emerge.

Fourthly, this story illustrates very well the bankruptcy of the homeland government's and state-identified urban elites attempts to entrench themselves in this period. They proved incapable of providing ideological direction which would really draw mass support to the systems in which they were implicated, exposing themselves through their rule by coercion and robbery.

Fifthly, the failure of the state to provide for the ideological and structural integration of teachers in the new education system, produced amongst this vital grouping a mere sullen and resentful acquiescence in the new order, which stopped short of any real identification with it.

Finally, the limitations of the educational politics of this period were precisely that it remained an intra-elite politics. 'Elite' is clearly a term with a suspect, rather conservative theoretical heritage. But it is useful in looking at the upper strata of black society in South Africa until the mid 70s. In that situation one found groupings of classical petty bourgeois (small property owners), Bantustan functionaries and salaried employees who were clearly, socially and politically, differentiated out from the mass of the population, but did not necessarily represent one, or several, clear and coherent social class or classes. It was in and around these groupings that the conflicts within and around the school boards were mainly fought. The condition of this was a willingness on the part of large sections of workers and the rural poor to recognise the power of the elites. In the 1970s these conditions were swept away. As the urban working class entered the scene through its labour movement, and as the children of those workers launched their mass student organisations, the basis of existence of the school boards and committee's elite politics was swept away.

FOOTNOTES

The following abbreviation are used:

RDM = Rand Daily Mail

Star = The Star

1. P. Christie and C. Collins "Bantu Education: Apartheid Ideology and Labour Reproduction" in P. Kallaway (ed.) Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1984), pp.172-5.

2. Hansard vol.82-3 (1953), col.3581.

3. Idem.

4. Act No.47 of 1953, para 12(1), Statutes of the Union of South Africa 1953 (Parow, The Government Printer, 1953).

5. Idem.

6. The Torch, 12th April, 1955; M. Horrell A Decade of Bantu Education (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1964), p.45.

7. Horrell (1964) op. cit., p.45.

8. Idem.

9. The Torch, 12th April 1955; M. Horrell (1964) op. cit., p.45.

10. Horrell (1964) op. cit., p.44.

11. Horrell (1964) op. cit., p.43.

12. Idem.

13. The Torch, 25th January 1955.

14. AD 1812 Ea 1.2 ANC Press Release, March 1955.

15. See J. Hyslop CATA and CATU: The Politics of African Teachers Organisations in the Cape 1948-1968 (Unpublished paper 1984).

16. J. Dugard Fragments of my Fleece (Pietermaritzburg, Kendall and Strachan, 1985), p.101.

17. The Torch, 24th May 1955.

18. The Torch, 6th September 1955.

19. Idem.

20. The Torch, 20th March 1956.

21. Dugard (1985) op. cit., p.101.

22. The Teacher's Vision, Vol.XII, no.3, Jan-March 1955.

23. SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1955-6 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1956).

24. Dugard (1985) op. cit., p.101.

25. M. Wilson and A. Mafeje Langa: A Study of Social Groups In An African Township (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1973), p.103.

26. The Torch 14th June, 1955.

27. AD 1812 Ea 1.8.3 Untitled transcript of a meeting in Dube on 19th June 1955.

28. The Torch, 10th May 1955.

29. The Torch, 24th January 1955.

30. The Torch, 21st August 1956.

31. The Torch, 11th November 1958.

32. See for example The Torch, 17th April 1958.

33. The Torch, 12th June 1956.

34. The Torch, 30th July 1957.

35. The Torch, 1st April 1958.

36. Dugard (1985) op. cit., p.31.

37. AAS 212 (File: CATU Conferences I) Resolution of the 1957 CATU Conference.

38. E. Brookes A South African Pilgrimage (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1977) pp.69-70.

39. Dugard (1985) op. cit., pp.89-90.

40. Ibid, p.90.

41. Ibid, p.106.

42. Ibid, p.125.

43. Ibid, p.92.

44. Idem.

45. Brookes (1977) op. cit., p.69.

46. Dugard (1985) op, cit., p.132

47. Race Relations News, February 1969.

48. TUATA, May 1966.

49. Eastern Province Herald, 1/5/71; See also Evening Post 11/2/69.

50. Star 6/5/64.

51. Evening Post, 1/5/64.

52. RDM 19/7/68: the case discussed in this article is that of Henry Tshabalala, a former treason trialist, who was removed from two committees and a school board.

53. RDM 27/3/68.

54. RDM 21/12/71.

55. RDM 2/5/70.

56. SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1972 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1973) p.354; Sunday Times (Township Edition) 18/2/73; Star 9/6/75.

57. RDM 17/1/68.

58. Star 1/2/74.

59. Sunday Times (Township Edition) 18/2/73.

60. Star 9/6/75.

61. RDM 16/9/67, 13/12/67.

62. AAS 121 (File: TUATA correspondence - unsorted) J.M. Ditlhage, Phokeng Higher Primary School, Rustenburg, to the General Secretary TUATA, 30th January 1968.

63. AAS 121 (File: TUATA correspondence - unsorted) P.M. Malebye, Itotleng - Baralong Secondary School, Lichtenburg to the Regional Director, Botswana Education and Culture, Mafikeng, 17th March 1969.

64. Idem.

65. Idem.

66. Idem.

67. Idem.

68. Idem.

69. AAS 121 Malebye to Regional Director, Letter cited; AAS 121 TUATA (File: TUATA correspondence - unsorted) P.M. Malebye, Itotleng - Baralong Secondary School, Lichtenburg, to the General Secretary, TUATA 7th March 1969.

70. Idem.

71. AAS 120 (File: L.M. Taunyane - legal cases) P.M. Malebye, Itotleng - Baralong Secondary School to the Regional Director, Botswana Education and Culture, 17th March 1969.

72. AAS 121 (File: TUATA correspondence - unsorted) P. Malebye, Swartruggens to the General Secretary, TUATA, 7th August 1969.

73. SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1969 (Johannesburg SAIRR, 1970) pp.128, 131; SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1976 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1977) pp.251-3, citing RDM Extra 30th December 1975, 13th January, 25th March, 5th April 1976; Speech by Chief M. Matlala, Verbatim

Report of the 1974 Session 4th March - 15th March: Second Lebowa Legislative Assembly (Lebowa government, 1974) pp.221-3; Surplus Peoples' Project Forced Removals in the Transvaal: The SPP Reports: Vol.5: The Transvaal (Cape Town, Surplus People Project, 1983) pp.40-41.

74. Surplus People Project (1983) op. cit. pp.40-1; SAIRR (1977) op. cit., pp.251-3; SAIRR A Survey of Race Relations in South Africa 1975 (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1976) p.138, citing Star 30th December 1974, 4th March, 16th May, 28th July 1975 and RDM 5th March, 28th April 1975.

75. SAIRR (1977) op. cit., pp.251-3; SAIRR (1976) op. cit., p.138; Surplus People Project (1983), pp.40-1.

76. Surplus People Project (1983) op. cit., pp.38-58, 89-109.

77. AAS 120 (File: L.M. Taunyane - legal cases) In Die Streekhof Van Die Streekafdeling Van Transvaal Gehou Te Potgietersrust: Die Staat Teen Patrick Kekana ....

78. AAS 120 (File: L.M. Taunyane - legal cases) McMullin, Bowens Attorneys to the Vice President of TUATA, 11th March 1974.

79. Idem.

80. AAS 120 (File: L.M. Taunyane - legal cases) Report by M.J. Molelo to McMullin, 21 December 1976.

81. Idem.

82. Idem.

83. idem.

84. AAS 120 (File: L.M. Taunyane - legal cases) McMullin, Bowens to Taunyane, TUATA, 7th February 1977.

85. Idem.

86. AAS 120 (L.M. Taunyane - legal cases) McMullin to Tannyane 2nd May 1980.

87. AAS 120 "In Die Streekhof..." document cited.

88. Star 11th August 1986.

89. Surplus People Project (1983) op. cit., p.50.

90. AAS 120 (L.M. Taunyane - legal cases) Statement by Amandebele-a-Moletlane Tribal Authority 21st April 1976; Secretary of Education, Bophuthatswana to M. Sono, Hans Kekana High School, 6th September 1976; Secretary of Education, Bophuthatswana to M.J. Langa, Kekana Higher Primary School, 7th June 1976; Inspector, Mabopane Circuit to M. Sono, 25th May 1976.

91. Surplus People Project (1983) op. cit., p.50.

92. RDM 4/2/66.

93. Natal Witness 17/2/64.

94. RDM 4/2/66.

95. TUATA September 1966, quoting Editorial from 'The World' 26th September 1966.

96. Idem.

97. Bantu Education Journal, April 1965.

98. Cape Times 18/6/64.

99. See above.

100. Star 2/11/71.

101. RDM 30/5/72.

102. RDM (Township edition) 10/4/73.

103. RDM 20/10/72, 31/10/72; Star 11/10/72; Natal Witness 30/10/72.

104. Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Riots at Soweto and Elsewhere from the 16th of June 1976 to the 28th February 1977 Chairman: Cillie J. Vol.I (Pretoria, The Government Printer, 1980) p.56; SAIRR (1976) op. cit., pp.222-3, citing RDM 23rd December 1974, 13th January, 15th May 1975.

105. Idem.

106. Star 23/12/74; SAIRR (1976) op. cit., pp.222-3.

107. RDM 23/12/74.

108. RDM Extra 23/12/74; Cillie Commission (1980) op. cit., p.57.

109. Cillie Commission (1980) op. cit., p.57.

110. Idem.

111. Ibid, pp.61-3.

112. Cillie Commission (1980), op. cit., pp.58-9, The Friend 14/2/75.

113. The Friend, 14/2/75.

114. Cillie Commission (1980) op. cit., pp.57-8.

115. Eastern Province Herald 19/2/75; Weekend Post 22/2/75.

116. Cillie commission (1980) op. cit., p.73.

117. SAIRR South Africa in Travail: The Disturbances of 1976-7: Evidence Presented to the Cillie Commission by the Institute of Race Relations (Johannesburg, SAIRR, 1978), p.1.

118. Cillie Commission (1980) op. cit., pp.60-1; SAIRR (1978) op. cit., p.2.

119. Cillie Commission (1980) op. cit., pp.60-1.

120. Ibid, p.76.

121. Footnote forthcoming!