

EDITORIAL

It is the first time we have published an article in Afrikaans. The editorial committee takes the view that South African culture is heterogenous; that dividing it up into language or racial or religious categories is not only arbitrary, demeaning and impoverishing of the whole but in the end positively destructive.

It was Stephen Gray who in 1979 first declared, to our knowledge, in his Introduction to South African Literature that we could no longer afford the luxury of discussing South African literature in neat little compartments separated from one another on linguistic or racial grounds; that the only way one could have a coherent picture of the development of South African literature was to regard it as a whole into which all the so-called different literatures had fed and from which they had drawn their sustenance. We believe he is correct, and have taken his argument further to embrace the notion of language.

In the present climate there is in many quarters a tendency to identify Afrikaans as the language of the oppressor and to assume that, come the Future, it will be swept away and will lose its official identity and *raison d'être*. Such thinking is, in our view, simplistic and naive. But if it is not to prevail, the question of the status of Afrikaans has to be addressed now. Clinging to outdated notions of exclusivity and élitism are, we believe, as detrimental to the future of Afrikaans as the view that it will have no right to exist.

Fortunately, languages are as resilient as the people who speak them. No manner of protection or proscription will in the long run make much difference. Afrikaans has already survived Lord Milner, no doubt it will survive the FAK, Jaap Marais and Eugene Terreblanche. How it will survive will depend entirely on the will of those who speak it on a daily basis.

Purists may be horrified to read that one of the dominant varieties of Afrikaans is that spoken on the Cape Flats, and that

we believe that variety will most likely have an increasing influence in the future.

Anyway, to talk of or be identified with a purist attitude to language, much less Afrikaans (or for that matter English), says more about one's political position than one's understanding of how or why languages develop in the ways they do.

We take the view that in a multilingual country all languages should have equal official status. If there is a need, as no doubt there will be, for a lingua franca or francas in which to conduct the business of the state that should be arrived at by consensus and negotiation on a regional basis.

Finally, this edition of Lengwitch has focused on the vexed question of People's Education.

Michael Gardiner and Cynthia Kros have written in response to the call from the NECC for a revision of the English and History syllabuses. Lucas Malan has addressed the implication of Peoples Education for Afrikaans. In the next issue we hope to have articles on Maths, Science and

Geography written from a similar point of view.

We are aware that the issues in this edition of Lengwitch are contentious; we wish only to open the debate. The language issue for example does not seek to address only the merits and future of Afrikaans in the Future society. What of such issues as the place of Black South African English and other variations and dialects?

Responses of any kind from our readers would be most welcome and every effort will be made to publish all contributions.