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Natal Teachers' Society

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FDR/pjs
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The Chairman
The Management Committee
CODESA

Dear Sir

The NTS trusts that this information will
be of use at some stage during negotiations.

Yours faithfully

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MEMORANDUM TO CODESA ON THE EMERGING EDUCATIONAL DISPENSATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The Natal Teacher's Society (NTS) is a voluntary non-sectarian association of some 5000 teachers in Natal. Although it is a small society, the NTS has had an impact way beyond its size. It has a proud record of opposing apartheid education at every turn, including suspending participation in the racially based Teachers' Federal Council (TFC) at its inaugural meeting and remaining out for a substantial period of time, until it was in the society's interests to take its place in certain forums of the TFC.

On the proactive side, the NTS has promoted a vision of a South African society which is based on justice and fair play, a society without prejudicial discrimination, a society founded on respect for the rule of law and respect for individual freedoms. The NTS has gone out of its way to talk to a wide variety of educational bodies/organisations. Its regional initiatives have met with success.

2. NTS CREDENTIALS

The philosophy of the NTS is encapsulated in its principles, which are detailed below.

2.1 PRINCIPLES

* We stand for the development of the individual, irrespective of race, colour, creed, or sex, as a rational and tolerant person, able to understand and participate in, and be adaptable to a changing society.

* In the belief that no man is an island, we stand for a society to whose enrichment all individuals are enabled to contribute.

* We therefore stand for a society which upholds justice (including the absence of discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed or sex, and respect for the due process of law) and respects freedom (including freedom of association and freedom of speech).

* In the belief that education is a major contribution to the development of individuals and the enrichment of the society, we stand for a society in which a high priority is given to the provision of education from public funds.

3. RECENT EDUCATIONAL POSITION PAPERS VIS-A-VIS EDUCATIONAL STRUCTURES AND THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION

A number of "position papers", that accord in broad terms with the NTS viewpoint, have been articulated by influential organisations in recent years. The positions adopted have been based upon differing emphases, yet remarkably similar principles. The position papers referred to are:

- * DE LANGE COMMISSION
- * BUTHELEZI COMMISSION
- * KWAZULU-NATAL INDABA EDUCATIONAL PROPOSALS
- * EDUCATION RENEWAL STRATEGY
- * ANC DISCUSSION PAPER: EDUCATION POLICY

The kinds of principles found in these documents are consistent with a vision of education based on the following:

- non-racial education in a democratic society;
- a unitary education department and an integrated educational system;
- equality of educational opportunity;
- primary education that is free and compulsory for all children;
- democratic educational structures, with proper negotiation opportunities for teachers and parents, based

- on the right to participate in decision-making in educational matters; and
- the full and optimal use of educational resources (schools and teachers) for all the children in the land.

4. MATTERS OF CONCERN IN EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

The NTS is extremely concerned at the way education is currently being administered in this country. These concerns are both general and specific in nature.

4.1 GENERAL CONCERNS

(a) No one specific group at CODESA appears to have been charged with planning for an efficient and just education system in a new South Africa, in spite of the broad agreement represented in the positions adopted by the organisations mentioned above.

(b) It seems that no one is in control of education in South Africa and that no sound, integrated and overall planning is occurring. South Africa simply cannot afford to wait for political decisions and solutions, before beginning to address educational issues and problems. Holistic planning should already be put in motion.

(c) The Population Registration Act has been repealed, yet education is being rent asunder by the "own affairs" nature of educational funding and administration. Surely such matters should be being addressed at CODESA and a stand should be being made to stop the wastage of educational resources, arising out of an apartheid era in schooling, and moves should be being made to desegregate education?

Both human and physical resources in education are being inexplicably squandered, according to some short-term House of Assembly objectives and political agendas. Yet these spoiling moves are contra-indicated in planning for schooling in a new South Africa. Surely such short term damage should not be tolerated, given the advanced negotiations and accords apparently being achieved in CODESA?

(e) There appears to be no overall effective planning on the use of educational resources to alleviate backlogs in schooling facilities and the shortages of teachers.

(f) There appears to be no overall policy and planning for in-service teacher training, which is articulated with the pre-service provision of teacher training. The lack of qualifications of teachers represents a backlog which needs to be addressed urgently.

(g) There appears to be no policy and overall planning to ameliorate the backlogs in adult literacy and adult basic education.

(h) No democratic structures appear to be being planned and brought to fruition. Consequently there appears to be no adequate negotiation on a broad front and no effective consultation with parents and teachers. Co-opted bodies such as PANNO, which are hardly representative (even of the white parents), will not suffice in this regard. Neither does a co-opted, partisan and parochial Teachers' Federal Council meet the need for an organisation representative of the teaching profession.

(i) There appears to be no national development plan for education and no joint action in setting and realising short, intermediate and long term objectives. The Committee of Heads of Education appear to have been ineffective in this regard, as has come to be expected from such apartheid-based structures.

(j) There does not appear to be any expert and responsible group of persons addressing financial policy and financial priorities for education on a national basis. Such persons should be responsible for the effective monitoring of expenditure, thereby ensuring an efficient use of resources.

(k) No one appears to be addressing the matter of the bloated education bureaucracy and the inefficiencies inherent in running 17 education departments. The public service bureaucracy has grown by a further 15 761 persons, and the salary bill has increased by R1.5 billion to R11.2 billion (Natal Mercury 6/2/92). Yet qualified and experienced teaching personnel are being fired at enormous expense.

4.1.1 A DECADE OF STASIS

In 1981, the HSRC highlighted the important shortcomings of the system of education management as being:

i) Education is controlled by a particularly complex bureaucratic structure within which consultative mechanisms are inadequate. Although various consultative bodies exist within the sub-systems, those that provide consultative machinery between the different sub-systems and between the structures at the national level are inadequate;

ii) No specific body has been established to bring about co-ordination at a national level with regard to the subsystems;

iii) There is no body within the system of education as such which is responsible for ongoing planning at the level of determination of national policy;

iv) A high degree of centralisation in the determination of policy is evident. For example, all important decisions are made centrally and outside of the education system itself. Within the system, control over almost every important educational decision lies at national departmental level. Although the processes are highly centralised, there is considerable decentralisation ('deconcentration') of administrative authority in the terms of structures. However, there is little decentralisation ('devolution") of authority in terms of decision making in the existing systems.

(de Lange, HSRC 1981a:89-90:1981c)

More than a decade later, and over two years since President de Klerk set a new course, these criticisms by the government's own Commission are still relevant. Nothing has changed for the better.

It is time that educational administration moved from a survival mode to a growth mode. It is time for co-ordinated planning to commence and for a statement of intent to be forged at CODESA. In the spirit of the recent referendum, reform and negotiation in educational matters should be commenced as soon as possible.

4.2 PARTICULAR CONCERNS

The NTS is particularly concerned about the Model C school issue.

4.2.1 Models and the current House of Assembly policy directions in schooling.

It is apparent that the outcome of the CODESA deliberations, which will eventually be enshrined in the Constitution and in our Law, will be predicated upon a unitary non-racial education department, albeit administered on a regional basis, ensuring justice and equality of opportunity for all the children in our land.

With this in mind, it should surely be a priority in CODESA to salvage the worthwhile remnants of our current educational dispensation in order to build the new educational dispensation. Model C schools, with entrenched property rights and an entrenchment of white elitism and privilege, cannot be consistent with a non-racial and just society. Yet the introduction of Model C schools this year has apparently gone virtually unchallenged, with little commentary in the press, apart from a minor debate amongst the white citizens. Surely a strong stand should be being taken at a national level by

significant persons and bodies. CODESA is an ideal forum in which such a stand could be taken.

The Model C schools issue should be opposed on the following grounds:

a. The Model C school system is elitist and exclusive, in that valuable public property has been placed exclusively in the hands of white parents.

b. Model C schools are actually State schools, and, as such, should be made available to all children irrespective of creed, race, sex, financial status or religion. White schools were purchased and maintained out of the nation's fiscal resources. Such tax monies were contributed by persons of all races. For this reason, white schools, that have become Model C schools, belong to all the citizens, including all the children. The "own affairs" Constitution may have resulted in education being administered separately. It did not confer ownership of State property to a segment of the population.

c. Schooling, and especially primary schooling, is not a privilege of the wealthy. Every child should, by right, have a free basic education. It is every child's right according to all the codes of human rights and the precepts of all civilized societies. It is unacceptable that a premium (compulsory school fees) should be enforced by law, before

school children, and especially primary school children, may enter a State school.

d. Model C schools entrench the essence of white elitism and exclusivity, thereby perpetuating the basis of apartheid.

e. Model C schools will bring unnecessary pressure to bear on the children (fund raising pressures, parents who can't or won't pay school fees) and could undermine the status of parents in the home and in the community if they are unable to pay the fees. Some parents, caught in the double bind of compulsory schooling and compulsory school fee payments, may be criminalised and their children prejudiced if they are sued for their school fees.

Although black parents have suffered from the injustices inherent in the school system for years, the perpetuation of injustices arising out of apartheid structures simply must be stopped.

f. Allowing parents to set the admission criteria for their school is against the equality of educational opportunity rubric which has universal acclaim.

g. In Model C schools, individual parent rights are ignored and a majority decision by the parent body can discount the wishes of a minority of parents. Yet the

Nationalist party, which introduced Model C schools, has Constitutional proposals which are predicated on building checks and balances into the Constitution in order to ensure that the minority wishes and opinions receive attention in the new South Africa. This irony is poignant. De Lange (1981, Principle 3) enunciated that "... education shall give positive recognition to the freedom of choice of the individual parents ..."

h. The firing of approximately 4000 teachers and the closure of schools and colleges of education all in the name of "own affairs" rationalisation, is unacceptable. South Africa needs every teacher it can find, especially every primary school teacher, as it is short of teachers, let alone adequately qualified teachers.

i. Handing State property over to a select group of persons (white parents), with entrenched property rights, is immoral, especially when facilities are needed by other children in the vicinity of these schools. The government wouldn't hand over a dam to some farmers, or the Union Buildings for some private enterprise, so why do so with schools?

j. The financial costs of retrenchment packages are unacceptable, especially in this time of economic stringency.

Firing teachers is the height of financial profligacy and public folly.

k. The waste of expertise, experience and physical resources implicit in the school Model options may be described as a national tragedy.

l. The civil service is growing ever larger and costing millions of rands more each year, but teachers are being fired, supposedly on economic grounds. Children may be politically impotent and unable to sway matters political and economic, but they are the future of this land and we need, as concerned educationists, to stand up for their rights and welfare. The large scale sacking of teachers is **not** the way to redress the massive educational imbalances in our society.

m. The morale of teachers has reached an even lower ebb. It is a sad commentary when government policies result in formerly dedicated teachers asking to be released on early retirement. Teachers were not properly consulted about the Model C dispensation. Teachers have rights and feelings as well. Considerable damage has been inflicted upon their profession.

n. It needs to be recognised that primary schooling is a public good and therefore should be a State responsibility for all children, as the State, commerce and industry all benefit

from having a society of citizens with a sound basic education. Thomas Jefferson stressed the need for every citizen to be able to read the Bible and the Constitution, as a minimum pre-requisite for a democratic form of government. Such education should be the responsibility of the State, in consultation with all the citizens in a community. We need all the education facilities to be used optimally and finances allotted to schooling need to be efficiently utilised.

o. Parents were not properly consulted in deciding on Model B and Model C schools. In gauging how the citizens felt about the way the reform process was being conducted, the government did not ask citizens to send in letters to them if they were unhappy with the government's national reform programme. They held a referendum, with anonymous votes, to assess the position fully. Yet parents disagreeing with the Model C option were not given the opportunity to vote. In some instances they were merely asked by the school committees to write in to register their dissatisfaction, with a chance of their children possibly being prejudiced thereby. All parents should have had a democratic right to vote on such a crucial matter.

p. The saddest commentary on Model C schools is the dilemma being experienced by our NTS members who want the best schooling possible for their children, and who are against the

Model C option, yet are forced to choose a Model C school, which they find morally unacceptable.

5. ACTION

CODESA is requested to take a stand against the Model C dispensation and ensure that all State educational facilities (colleges of education and schools) and personnel (teachers and lecturers) are retained and used optimally for the good of all the citizens (parents and children) of South Africa. Race should no longer be allowed to feature in structuring the provision of education. All learners should be accommodated in all the schools.

6. REQUEST

The NTS requests CODESA to put the above general and specific concerns on their agenda. Responsible and knowledgeable persons should be debating and planning a new educational dispensation for South Africa now. Professional teacher associations with a broad and open agenda, such as the NTS, should be given the opportunity to become involved in such a process.

A plea is made that the Teachers' Federal Council is not a suitable body to conduct such investigations. Its political partisanship and lack of credibility, because of its

association with an "own affair" apartheid structure, are known only too well.

The State needs to be made to realise that primary education is a fundamental and basic human right. We believe that the State has abdicated part of this responsibility in the past. Such matters need to be addressed urgently.

7. CONCLUSION

What is needed in education in South Africa is a global holistic planning initiative, conducted by a Commission representative of all stakeholders, resulting in a co-ordinated assessment of needs and resources, within short, medium and long term planning parameters.

CODESA may be such a Commission, or it may prefer to instigate such a Commission. All that we ask is that the process commence straight away and that damage control be implemented in the interim period until such a Commission's proposals are accepted.

Enclosure: Proposals for Educational Provision in a
 Democratic South Africa.