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THE YEOVILLE COMMUNITY EDUCATION PROJECT tv?61

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INTRODUCTION

The Yeoville Community Education Project is a unique venture among several education institutions, a trust established to assist with the educational needs of the returned political exiles, and the local community. The project establishes certain precedents in the provision of schooling in Johannesburg in responding to the changing demographic situation and the resulting educational challenges in the city. It involves an interaction of the Boards of Trustees of Sacred Heart College and Barnato Park High School and the Batlagae Trust with parent communities in the establishment of affordable and relevant educational facilities which will be under the control of the community. The project continues to involve extensive negotiations with the Departments of National Education and of Education and Culture, House of Assembly, the . Transvaal Education Department and local school boards.

THE BATLAGAE TRUST

Since the unbanning of the political movements in February 1990 considerable work was needed to be done to effect the repatriation and re-integration of political exiles back into South African society.

Of critical importance has been the educational needs of returnees, many of whom have had to interrupt studies elsewhere before coming home. In May 1991, a committee, the Oversight Committee, was set up to co-ordinate the repatriation of children from exile. This committee was comprised of representatives from the National COordinating Committee for the Repatriation of Political Exiles (NCCR), political movements and the churches.

The Batlagae Trust was set up in July 1991 by the Oversight Committee to raise the necessary funds and to co-ordinate on an . ongoing basis, the integration of returning students and pupils.

Initially, the Oversight Committee had begun negotiations with the various government departments on all aspects related to the speedy return and placement of the students in education institutions in South Africa. The deserted Hillview school in Pretoria was identified by the government as a suitable site for an institution to be prepared to receive the students. Discussions between the Batlagae Trust and the Department of Education and Training on the registration and subsidisation of the school were started. However, after the Hillview buildings had been bombed, it was decided not to expose the returning students to danger by locating them in a specific institution.

For various reasons, therefore, negotiations with the South African government were no longer deemed productive, and the Batlagae Trust had to take full responsibility with the NCCR for the return and placement of the students. The Batlagae Trust had become fully operational in October 1991. It was constituted as non-partisan with the trustees representing the ANC, the PAC and the churches.

In this initial phase, the Trust had aimed to identify and facilitate the necessary educational and welfare arrangements for returnee learners. This has included:

- i) re-orientation, career guidance, support and assistance of students;
- ii) personal and academic counselling of returnee students;
- iii) arranging bursaries for children, students and adults;
- iv) making financial provision for these functions;
- v) ensuring that the necessary teaching and support are in place and to provide the necessary orientation and support to these people.

The educational integration of returnees has required concerted and well-coordinated national and regional planning, largely outside of the capacity of any structure existing prior to the establishment of the Batlagae Trust. With regard to the co-ordination at the national level, the Trust is at present dependent on the infrastructure and resources of regional offices of the NCCR and to a lesser extent on other community facilities, to function outside of Johannesburg. To date, the Trust has effectively, through this network, processed work in a number of regions. In addition, the Johannesburg office has executed a large number of applications for the PWV region. It has approved over 1000 bursary applications for pre-school, primary, secondary, vocational/technical and tertiary levels of education. This, however, has not fully met the needs of returnee learners, it still has a number of requests outstanding and has applied for emergency funding to cover the shortfall.

This underestimation has been due largely to the reality of the educational opportunities available to these students, previously unforeseen expenses and a substantial underestimation of the numbers who would be needing support.

The original proposal underestimated the real cost of tuition fees. This is due to the fact that most placements have had to be made outside of the public school system and that our average estimate of R400.00 per learner, is more realistically

R4000.00. Placement of students in state schools has been difficult because of the lack of available places and parents reluctance to place children into the inferior system of "Bantu Education" such as Department of Education and Training schools. In addition schools which recently opened (model B and model C) at present apply racial quotas in a discriminatory way. These schools are also failing to absorb the numbers, as they are often only willing to enrol students from a locally defined geographic area.

Many of the children have had to be enrolled in the street academies in the city of Johannesburg. With few notable exceptions, these institutions have proven to be totally unsatisfactory. Complaints are being received daily from concerned parents regarding the poor quality of instruction, discipline and administration in these schools. This is also a matter of grave concern for the trustees, since they have an obligation to the donors to ensure that the funds received are properly spent.

BARNATO PARK HIGH SCHOOL

White enrolments in the central, eastern, north eastern, and western boards of Johannesburg schools have been declining rapidly for the past decade. By the end of 1989 a number of schools were already closed because very few white children were left in them. During the course of 1989 the Transvaal Education Department announced that Johannesburg High School for Girls would close at the end of that year. The parent community embarked on a high publicity campaign to save the school. However, Minister Clase declined to allow the school to open its doors to all races in admitting black children whose families had moved into the inner city.

The parents then approached Mr Murra Hofme r the mana in director of Johannesburg Consolidated Investment and Dr Neil McGur the headmaster of Sacred Heart College their cause. Johannesburg Consolidated Investment has an historic association with the property of Barnato Park on which the school was located. It was originally the estate of Mr Barney Barnato, and was given to the city on his death by the company to be used for education. Under the chairpersonship of Mr Hofmeyr a support group to assist the school's management council was formed to negotiate with the authorities. Minister Clase insisted on the closure of Johannesburg High School for Girls, but allowed the establishment of a new private high school. Thus a co-educational high school was opened in January 1990 with a Board of Trustees re-co

However, when, as expected, the initial enrolment of

approximately 500 students was predominantly black, Minister Clase refused to register the school with the Department of Education and Culture, House of Assembly. The Board of Trustees

of the school declined to accept his services to intercede with the Minister of the Department of Education and Training to register the school, as that would constitute an unacceptable racial statement and contrary to the spirit of the struggle to have the school opened to all races.

However, the Board of Trustees decided to proceed with the school. A principal and administrative staff were seconded to the new school from Sacred Heart College. Dr McGurk undertook a general caretaker role over the establishment and continued administration of the school. Tuition fees were set at the maximum affordable level, and, through the influences of Mr Hofmeyr, a number of local companies undertook to subsidise operational costs for a two-year period, while the trustees continued their negotiations with the education departments to have the school re-instated as a government or state-aided school.

During the course of 1990 Barnato Park High School received no state subsidy, since in principle the school was squatting in government buildings. However, the registration status of the school was brought up for discussion by Dr McGurk in the Joint Working Group in 1991, and through the mediation of Minister Stoffel van der Merwe, Minister Clase was prevailed upon to register the school with his department. The school then qualified during 1991 for the private school subsidy.

It was at the same time, and also related to the Barnato Park and Orange Grove issues, that the alternative models for the provision of education in the House of Assembly came into existence. At the beginning of 1992 the trustees of Barnato Park decided to renew negotiations with the government on the registration status of the school. It was clear that the school could not survive as a private school, at the same time serving the community which was supporting it.

Mr Hofmeyr and Dr McGurk met with Minister Marais in March 1992 in Cape Town. Minister Marais accepted the proposal that the school be registered as a "status quo" government school registered with the House of Assembly, which implied that the academic, administrative, and support staff salaries would be paid by the Transvaal Education Department in accordance with pupil-teacher ratio formulas, and there would also be a per capita equipment and book grant. A technical committee was set up by the Minister to work through the details. The final arrangements were settled by a group of elected parent representatives from the school with the Deputy Director General in charge of policy of the Department of Education and Culture, House of Assembly, and the Executive Director of the Transvaal Education Department.

As from the beginning of 1993, the statutory body that will manage the school will be elected from its parent community together with several consultants. The parents have requested the present trustees to assist them as long as needed. The school will continue to be assisted by the Sacred Heart College Outreach.

THE SACRED HEART COLLEGE OUTREACH

Sacred Heart College is a well-known independent school in the suburbs of Observatory and Yeoville in Johannesburg. It was one of the first schools in South Africa to become nonracial in 1976 in defiance of the apartheid legislation. The school is over 100 years old and was originally on the site of the present Mariston Hotel in central Johannesburg. It was transferred to the Observatory site in 1926. With the opening of the school to all race groups, and with the subsequent increase in the enrolment of the school, it acquired the buildings of the old Holy Family Convent in Yeoville in 1980, where at present it conducts its junior primary and pre-school departments. The school has an enrolment of over 1200 students with three streams in the primary and high school and nearly 200 students in the pre-school.

Sacred Heart College has been active in developing the philosophy and practice of the "Open School" in South Africa. Dr McGurk, its headmaster, is a well-known educationalist who works closely with various community education bodies and trusts, and is also often consulted by the Department of National Education.

Sacred Heart College has a Curriculum Development Unit and an Outreach Programme. The former is involved in developing relevant curricula for schooling towards a nonracial and democratic South Africa. Its various projects deal with integrated social studies, science instruction, language programmes, technology and design courses, teaching and learning with computers, creative and dramatic arts curricula, and the democratisation of school administration. The Outreach Programme has involved staff at the college with the broader national issues. Among other activities, there has been the involvement with the various independent schools' associations, the Independent Examination Board, community based educational programmes, the setting up of a national body for the deployment of technology in education, the Batlagae Trust, the Joint Working Group on Education, policy development for a future education system, and mediation between government education departments and community organisations.

Dr McGurk and Mrs Barbara Watson of Sacred Heart College serve on the Batlagae Trust. Sacred Heart College had already established a relationship with the educational network of the exiled political movements through its outreach. Because of the

College's pioneering work in the desegregation of schooling, Dr McGurk met with the exile community in Lusaka in June 1988 as part of a larger delegation from South Africa. Subsequently, he was invited to serve on the Mandela Delegation and was on the Joint Working Group during 1991. Sacred Heart College enrolled many of the first group of students who returned soon after the unbanning of the political movements. Two trips to Tanzania were organised by the Batlagae Trust in which staff from Sacred Heart College helped to assemble all the necessary data on the social and educational needs of the students at Somafco for their placement in South Africa.

PROVISION OF SCHOOLING FOR THE RETURNEES

Because of the problems the Batlagae Trust was encountering in the adequate placement of the returnee students, it was decided to approach the Minister of National Education with a plan which would assist in resolving the situation in the Johannesburg area. The plan evolved out of discussions between Batlagae Trust and the Sacred Heart College Outreach.

The idea was for Sacred Heart College assisted by Batlagae Trust to establish and help supervise a state-aided community primary school of 400-450 students on the site of the present Yeoville campus of the College. The buildings at Yeoville could be made available in a phased withdrawal over one to two years by the junior primary and pre-school departments of the College. In the first phase accommodation of the junior primary classes would be made available on the Observatory site. In the rooms vacated in Yeoville a two-stream junior primary school with an additional standard two class would be started. In the second phase, part of the pre-school would be transferred to the Observatory campus, while the other half with the necessary staff, administrative and support infrastructure and equipment would remain at the community school in Yeoville. In the space vacated the two-stream senior primary department would be added on in 1994. The plan also entailed cooperation with Barnato Park High School and the senior primary and high schools of Sacred Heart College in the placement of the more senior students.

At a meeting with Minister Marais in July this year in Pretoria, permission was given to set up a state-aided primary school at Yeoville (model C). He also approved the establishment of a technical committee composed of senior department officials and representatives of the Batlagae Trust and Sacred Heart College Outreach to work through the details, and then to report back to him. Subsequent discussions brought in the local inspectorate, the school board and representatives of the parent community at Sacred Heart College. It was decided that in any situation in which the returnees were placed it was advisable that they were in a minority to ensure their effective integration and to prevent any resentment from the

local community developing over possible preferential treatment. It was also important that any new venture needed a long term perspective that would serve the interests of the community generally.

Far reaching discussions regarding the provision of education in the East and Central Boards of Johannesburg ensued. The plan for Yeoville was whole-heartedly endorsed as a model for other possible developments in the area. The school at Yeoville would eventually be under the control of the parent community, in which Sacred Heart College and Batlagae Trust would continue to play a variety of supportive roles. It would also serve as the primary school feeder to Barnato Park High School.

A letter has been sent to the Executive Director of the Transvaal Education Department to request the Minister for his formal approval of the project.

THE YEOVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

While initially bringing in the returnee students, the Yeoville Community School would become a permanent education institution for the community. Besides the establishment of a pre-school and a primary school, there would be other important educational services and developments. Batlagae Trust will locate its offices at Yeoville, re-constituting itself from serving only the needs of the returnee student to serving the educational needs of community generally. It plans establishing a polyclinic to help with remediation, psychometric testing, social and health issues in schools, and generally assisting in the de-segregation process in schooling in Johannesburg. Discussions between the Sacred Heart College Curriculum Development Unit and other research groups, such as Dr Neville Alexander's, on a relevant curriculum have already been initiated. Representatives from Batlagae Trust as well as other community organisations serve on the Board of Trustees of the Sacred Heart Curriculum Development Unit. Close collaboration of the community schools at Yeoville and Barnato Park with Sacred Heart College Curriculum Development and Outreach is envisaged.

THE SCOPE OF THE YEOVILLE PROJECT

In the very dynamic situation in which we find ourselves, as the experience with Barnato Park has taught us, the provision of one-off capital and establishment costs can play a crucial role in catalysing in a practical way a constructive engagement of the community with the government education departments, in which the ongoing operating costs are borne by the community and the state. Also in a situation in which negotiations in education are stalemated on political issues, it is important to begin to support the ongoing resolution of educational problems by people with an "on-the-ground" practical understanding of fundamentally educational challenges. In this process, as our experience has again taught us, new and surprising associations of people are brought together in

consensual action around the resolution of these practical problems, which can then begin to influence future policy. As far as the returnee students are concerned, the plan provides for a stable and affordable educational environment for the rest of their schooling. This will also relieve the Batlagae Trust of raising large bursary funds on a long-term basis, and to begin to re-focus its strategy towards serving the educational needs of the wider community. The development costs below do not involve the ongoing operational costs of the polyclinic and the curriculum development work, but relate only to the establishment of the new school.

PHASE 1

For 1993 the junior primary (grade 1- standard 1) and standard 2 will be set up at Yeoville. Returnee students in the other senior primary classes (standard 3 -standard 5) will be accommodated in special classes at Sacred Heart College and " Barnato Park for one year. The standard 5 students will continue at Barnato Park into Standard 6 in 1994, while the students at Sacred Heart College will transfer to Yeoville community school as places become available. As far as possible high school students will be accommodated at Barnato Park. The following costs will be involved:

(1) Facilities be created at the Observatory campus of Sacred Heart College to accommodate the junior primary department from Yeoville to provide space for the two-stream junior primary section of the Yeoville community school. Plans have already been drawn up and work is under way.

R600 000

(ii) Setting up of a Working Committee drawn from Sacred Heart Outreach, Batlagae Trust, and the local community to deal with the education department in staffing the new school, enrolling the students, and planning budgets and plant. This group is at present being constituted under the convenorship of Mrs Barbara Watson. Establishment costs involve the employment of staff and other costs in assessment, consultancies, administration and registration.

3 50 000

(iii) Initial equipment, furniture, books etc not . , provided by the state in establishment costs. R 60 000
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(iv) Two remedial teachers to be employed for one year, one at Sacred Heart College and the other at Barnato Park. These teachers will transfer to Yeoville Community School in 1994. Thereafter, their salaries will be covered in normal operating costs.

R 80 000

PHASE 2

In PHASE 2 half of the pre-school will transfer to Sacred Heart College leaving at Yeoville the staff, administrative and support infrastructure and equipment for the community pre-school.

Estimated cost of building the necessary
. pre-school facility at Observatory. R800 000

' "o "M -, The Star Tuesday June 27 1989

Parents angry with threatened school

By Sue Valentine,
Education Reporter

Parents and pupils of Johannesburg High School for Girls who attended a meeting at the school last night were angry at the apparent lack of determination by school authorities to fight to keep the school alive.

Johannesburg High School for Girls, or Barnato Park as it is often known, is the city's oldest school with a capacity to accommodate 680. Present enrolment is about 225 pupils.

At the meeting, which was closed to the media, the headmistress, Ms Elizabeth Niemeyer, and the chairman of the management council, Dr Jack Foster, presented facts and figures to parents to show why the school was no longer viable.

Although it was stressed that no decision on the school's future had yet been taken, parents were told of several schools which would serve as alternatives.

It was suggested that in some cases it might be in a pupil's interests to move to a new school as early as next term.

OPTIONS

Parents were told that options such as converting the school into a boarding school or opening it to all races were out of the question.

White education was an "own affair" and it was not policy to open white schools to pupils of other races. Heated questions were asked by parents annoyed at the attitude of the school authorities who they felt had summoned them to a meeting only to present them with a fait accompli. This was denied by the chairman of the meeting, Dr Foster.

Some parents who spoke to The Star afterwards said they would be in favour of opening the school to all races.

They said a petition the school was being circulated

In a statement distributed by "Concerned Teachers in the Johannesburg Area", Johannesburg Girls' High was described as an "ideal starting point for integrated education" against the closure of.

COSMOPOLITAN

The teachers said Barnato Park had coped well with new cultures which had been introduced to the school after the collapse of white rule in Mozambique, and Angola. . ? 1!?

In this cosmopolitan population of Greeks, Portuguese, Italians, British, Slavs, South Africans and ex-Rhodesians, the pupils (have) played and worked together without any signs of racial tension. It was

?cachors at Joha'nnosbur

class lists against names

good for pupils good for the school and good for. 554 meeting to discuss alienation in South Africa " they said . 1 ' v

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 hannesburg;_lligh School for u
 THE pending closure of the Jo-
 Giris puts 'tw the test the
 National Party's. recent u-
 surancee on a new South Attica free
 of ethnicit and l race. groups. The
 loz-year-o d school in Here: is cloa-
 ing on December 81 because these
 i are no longer enough white girls in
 the area. The test will be whether it
 becomes a post office or admini-
 stration block, or reopens on Janu-
 .Qla;y 1 as a mixed school serving the
 ocal communityw ' . ' -
 The time for that decision is now,
 not when the inevitable crisis arises
 over the lack oi schooling for black
 children in what are already grey
 areas and will soon become free
 settlement areas. The school, down '
 to 231 white pupils, is onl the first
 to closenumberoiotg ,both
 junior and senior, will undoubtedly
 follow as areas like Beta, Hillbrow
 and Joubert Park become lhereas-
 ingl mixed or-lpredominantly
 blac . Local black and coloured
 children, meanwhilez' are. being
 hused daily to distant township
 schools or being sent to rurallereas.
 The Group Areas Act is crum-
 bling under the weight of black ur-
 banisation; peo le are ignoring an
 unenforceable w: which govern-
 ment intends substantially to me-
 liorate and eventually to repeal.
 Also destined ion; the, mpheam 11
 recent gove mmelit-a'ssunncee are
 to be believed; lathe Population
 Registration Act which underpins
 all apartheid through its separation
 of South Africans into statutory
 race groups. ,

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 WI!" DAY. My, July I 1!"
 ECOMMENT

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 w U'mn 'reality
 The National Party is a out to
 come face to face not only ith its
 own assurances. but with t e Law
 Commission's study on in vldual
 and group rights. Justice nister
 Koble Coetgee last week lat: ed this
 study as is magnificent lp ece of
 work"; it remains to be seen ow his
 colleagues in education v ew an
 analysis that rejects the id a that
 cultural. linguistic or religl us val-
 ues should be seen as group rights.
 White education is eurr tly in
 the hands of Piet Clase, w o told
 Parliament this year that is de
 pertment's schools would emaln
 for whites only and that he ad re-
 jected every request for 0 en ad-
 mission. That does not lesv much

room for optimism when Cl says
a decision about the future use of
Johannesburg High School i r Girls
will be made according to guide-
lines laid down by the white
Migtilstfxas' Council.
a ecision belongs e where.
NP leader F W de Klerk t id last
week's Nationalist congress that it
was not NP style "to run aw y from
the burning issues of our da , how-
:Jvigcfnarovemial they mi ht be".
r n sa ion is a burnln u
is education. g e, as
The NP must do more th n con-
sider subsidising mixed rivate
schools in tree settlements eas. it
cannot take live ears to a just to i
the reality typiied b on rls'
school. it must take dezlslo gow,
before empty white set: is in
mixed suburbs move fro politi-
cal disgrace to a focus i urban
conflict.

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A wanton
their fight to save the school
from closure. There may not
be a great deal they can do
to modify the authorities' stub-
born refusal to let the school
go nonraciai. ,But certainly
concerned parties ought to
make as much noise as possi-
ble, and take whatever other
action might still have an im-
pact on public opinion and gov-
ernment. Perhaps they could
still shame the authorities into
rethinking such wanton waste.

It makes sense from every
point of view, except blind ide-
ology, that the school should be
opened to all races. lt obvious-
ly cannot continue with a
white enrolment that has
dwindled to 228, against a ca-
pacity of 680. Living close by
in Berea and i-lllllbrow, as
apartheid crumbles, are many
hundreds of girls who would be
only too happy to enrol, in-
stead of travelling many kilo:
metres daily to overcrowded
and inferior schools in their
"own" Areas. a y

A majority of teachers, par-
ents and pupils would be
happy to have them there -
waste of

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school f aulltles

THE pupilsgpafents and teach- not only to save the 102-year-
ers at Johannesburg High 'old school from the scrapheap
School for Girls showy com- but also to give the disadvan-
mendable spirit in continuing tagged a better chance, and to
help pioneer the mixed State
schooling which must sooner
or later come about.

The Barnato Park school

has successfully played such a role in recent decades. Situated in a highly cosmopolitan area, it coped well with a varied influx of immigrants. Greek, Portuguese, Italian, British. Slav and ex-Rhodesian girls played and worked alongside South Africans without any signs of racial tension or tears of cultural domination. The experience was ugood for pupils, good for the school and good for South Africa", noted a group of teachers. It the school could serve this purpose for immigrants, why not for fellow South Africans too? But Mr Clase and his government cannot see any of this. All they can see is nominal apartheid and Hown afo fairs" and, no doubt. potential rightist propaganda in the coming election. It is for such petty considerations that they are happy to see the wasteful, almost criminal closure of fine schools like Barnato Park.

The Johannesburg Girls' High School is to be closed down within the next few weeks after being in operation for 103 years. The school moved to its present site in 1909 and was given to the South African Government by JCI, the company of which I am presently chairman, in 1910 at the time of Union. The site of the school was the original residence of Barney Barnato, whose name the school is once again to bear. It has become one of the best known schools in South Africa.

The school is being closed down because there are not enough white children to make it viable. It represents a symbol of a nation-wide problem. Today there are 1 179 000 places in white primary and secondary schools, of which only 871 000 are taken up. In other words, there are 308 000 vacancies. The capital cost in today's money locked up in these vacant places amounts to approximately R7 billion.

It is a matter of great encouragement that the education authorities have been prepared to co-operate with the private sector in finding a basis for the school to re-open in January 1990 to serve the needs of the children of all races who live in the area.

It should be stressed that the arrangements entered into are of an interim nature. Quite clearly, the educational requirements in areas like Berea cannot be met by private schooling. It is greatly to be hoped that during the course of 1990 a policy will be formulated so that State schools can be established, which are open to children of all races.

I must repeat that the arrangements entered into for Barnato Park are interim arrangements; that they are not ideal for any of the parties involved and that a great deal still remains to be done before the school opens its doors in January. I believe there is sufficient goodwill and understanding between the Board of Trustees and the education authorities to ensure that the school will be a reality in January.

M.B. HOFMEYR

24 November 1989

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