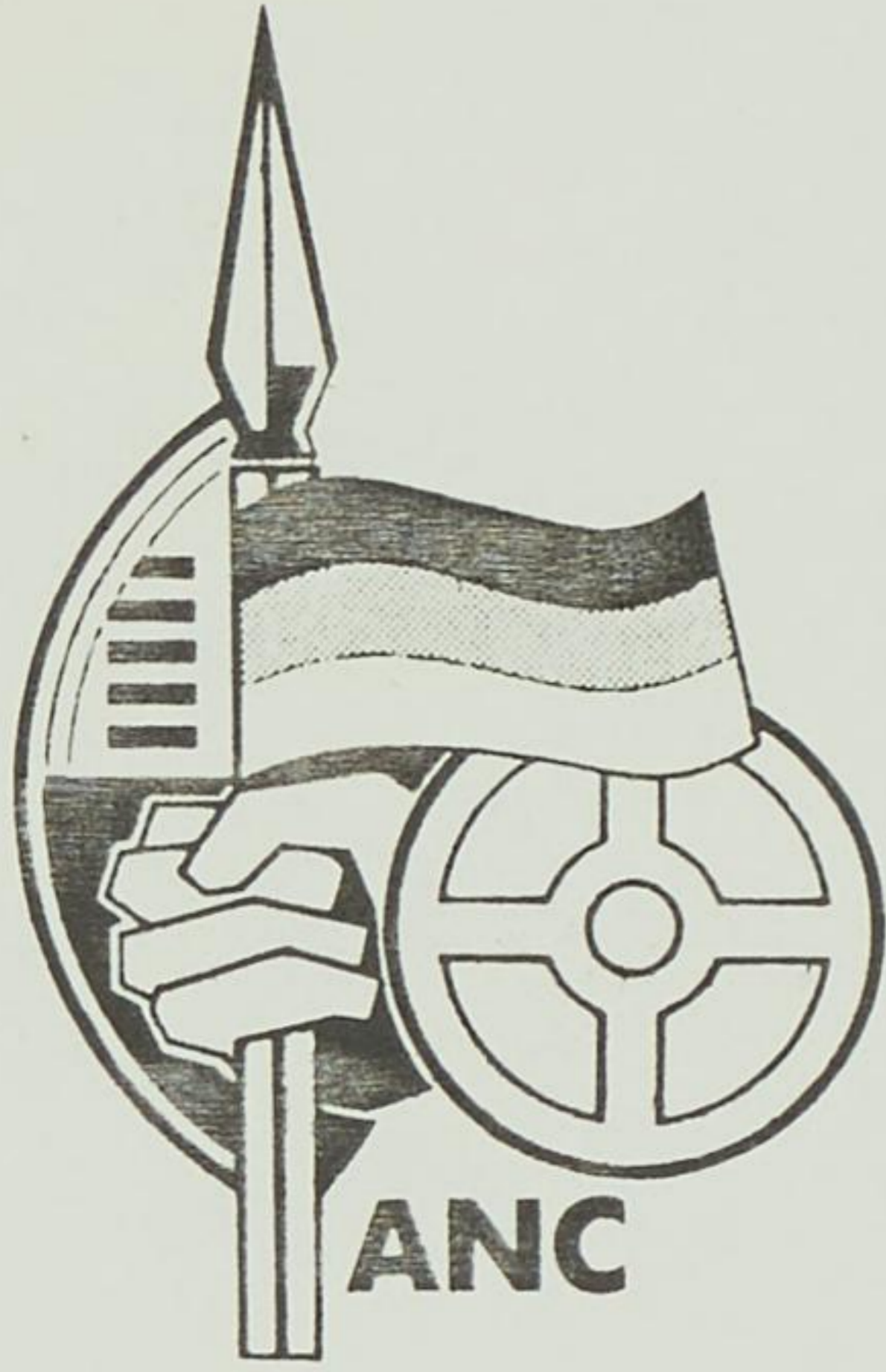


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Briefing: The Batlagae Trust

Introduction: The Batlagae Trust is an educational trust established in 1991 in South Africa, to assist with the educational integration of returning exiles. ("Batlagae" means "returnees" - literally "those that are coming home" - in SeTswana). The Trust will address educational problems of returnees on all levels, from pre-school infants to those facing university students and those seeking adult education.

Motivation: Education often takes centre stage in the problems confronting returning exiles. After 30 years of apartheid, the South African educational system remains a shambles. Classrooms are inadequate and often in ruins. Facilities are de facto, if no longer de jure, segregated. Curricula still reflect their roots in apartheid education. There are not enough places, by far, for the number of school-aged children; many youths leave school after a few years, forever.

The children from exile have no choice but to enter into this national disaster. These children must already cope with the trauma of finding themselves uprooted from familiar homes and surroundings, to "return" to a country they may never have known. Previous schooling, where ever it may have taken place, hardly prepares them for the conditions they are likely to find in the township schools (far less in the rural areas). Parents or guardians too often cannot afford the few private "non-racial" schools to which better-off township residents turn in desperation.

The primary task of the Batlagae Trust is the educational integration of these children from exile. This task requires the clear and careful selection of appropriate institutions and programmes; and often the provision of funds. It requires counselling, both to the learner and to guardians or parents; and the development of personnel capable of providing this form of support. It requires reaching out to the wider community, to engage their interest and involvement in this process of integration. Ultimately, it demands not the "adjustment" of returning children to the South African educational system, but rather looking for ways and means to change that system, with an aim to providing a valid and effective education for all who must go through it.

Background: The Batlagae Trust was created by the "Oversight Committee" of the National Co-ordinating Committee for the Return of Exiles. As with the NCCR, the Oversight Committee comprises representatives of the churches and the liberation movements. It was charged with the task of coordinating the return of exiled children and students. However, the Oversight Committee has no powers to raise funds, nor is it likely to survive beyond the time where the NCCR completes its main tasks. The Batlagae Trust was formed to fill this gap.

The Trust is non-partisan, and will support all children and youth from exile, irrespective of which liberation movement holds their affiliation.

Objectives: The Trust's immediate objectives are:

- ① • to arrange reception and school facilities for repatriated children and students who cannot be dispersed to parents or next of kin;
- ② • to arrange a bursary/scholarship programme for children and students who are able to stay with their families;
- ③ • to facilitate the return of educational archives from abroad, and arrange their safe custody inside South Africa; at a later stage to create an information and research project on SOMAFCO and other educational institutions set up by the liberation movements during the years of exile.
- ④ Long-term projects include the establishment of an education centre to concentrate on the needs of youth and adults; in particular, to develop appropriate technical education for returning exiles and for the educationally "lost generation" in our country.

Structure: The Batlagae Trust was established by the NCCR, to which it remains accountable. Its Board of Trustees is composed of representatives of, and it liases closely with, the ANC, the PAC, and the Churches.

The Trust was registered on 19 July, 1991; registration no. 1279/91, issued by the Department of Justice, Section 6 (1), Trust Property Control Act, 1988 (Republic of South Africa).

The Batlagae Trust is audited by Deloitte Pim Goldby.

Trustees:

Michael Corke, Chairman (Anglican Church representative; headmaster of St. Barnabas College, and Chairman of the Independent Examinations Board)

John Samuel (ANC representative; Head of ANC Department of Education)

William Seriti (PAC representative; practicing attorney).

Barbara Watson (Social Worker at Sacred Heart College)

and **Neil McGurk** (Catholic Church representative; headmaster of Sacred Heart College, and Director of the Independent Examinations Board)

The Board of Trustees has recently appointed **Mohammed Tikly** as Executive Director.

Doubling up in the dusty veld

THE Etwatwa community on the East Rand plans to turn the government's double shift "platoon" system on its head with its new "two of everything" school, officially launched this week.

On Monday African National Congress president Nelson Mandela opened the primary school, which bears his middle name — Rolihlahla — in the dusty little town near Daveyton. A lively crowd of more than 5 000 people, young and old, gathered to watch him unveil a larger-than-life bust of himself, sculpted by Naomi Jacobson.

Built in three months, the school is the result of a "social compact" between the Etwatwa Civic Association, the Independent Development Trust, Nedcor and a Pretoria-based construction company, Citicon. The Department of Education and Training has been drawn in to help with staffing, stationery and books.

"In many respects Rolihlahla is symbolic of the co-operation we have been striving for between the state, the private sector and the community," Education and Training Minister Sam

A new school — and a new system — is up and running on the East Rand. And behind it is the unusual combination of the state, the private sector and the community.

By **PORTIA MAURICE**

de Beer told the gathering. But in this project, the community is definitely in the driving seat — a sense of ownership clearly felt by the festive atmosphere of the opening. It has followed the school's development from conception stage, making sure it is designed to meet its specific needs.

Three years ago Etwatwa East was a neglected stretch of bare veld. "Ours was a community deliberately sidelined, disowned and left to defend itself," said the chairman of the school's parent-teacher association, Chris Dhlamini. "All our basic needs were regarded by the regime as a luxury it could not afford."

The R2,2-million school project is an offshoot of Emaphupheni —

"place of dreams" — the Perm's local housing scheme. Before the school was built, the area's 20 000 children were expected to squeeze into a farm school, one in neighbouring Etwatwa West which was already full and schools in Daveyton, eight kilometres away.

When the development partners realised that some 700 children could not be accommodated in the initial school, they decided to put them together with the 111 qualified teachers "roaming the streets" — and double up on the building.

This was contrary to department regulations but, said fiery "activist principal" and local South African Democratic Teachers' Union chairman Mojalefa Mogane, "we cannot follow rules which don't help us".

Mpengesi Primary was opened as the second school and, "after a fight", the DET agreed to pay 10 extra teachers. Each of the 100 000-odd Etwatwa households have been asked to contribute R10 towards salaries for the seven still needed.

"After repeated phone calls we lost confidence in the DET," said Mogane.

"These teachers will be paid from community coffers."

So, in the morning, the building is Rolihlahla, and in the afternoon it's Mpengesi. It has two administration blocks, two staffrooms, two store-rooms, two sets of catering facilities. Soon, it hopes to open a day care centre — so that toddlers on the afternoon shift can be supervised during free time rather than being left to their own devices at home.

Step by step, said Mogase, they are trying to iron out the creases in the platoon system — which may in the medium-term be the only way to address the space shortage in black schools: use whatever infrastructure is available to capacity at all times of the day.

The IDT has allocated R300-million to a national school building programme to contribute towards meeting a backlog of at least 50 000 classrooms. It favours multi-purpose community learning centres along the lines of Etwatwa to extend educational access across different sectors of the community.

In a letter to *The Weekly Mail*, the NLC said the creation of a parallel structure was an unnecessary duplication of resources which would make foreign funding more difficult to procure.

NLC sources said almost R800-million was in the offing for literacy and adult basic education from donors such as the Independent Development Trust, the European Community and the recently-launched Joint Education Trust. A single organisation, they said, was a prerequisite for the release of the money.

NLC spokesman Brian Cooper said there had been "considerable resistance" from conference participants to the launch, but that dissent was "largely ignored".

A myriad of non-government organisations battle to make a dent in South Africa's heritage of illiteracy — yet among themselves, education departments and the private sector reach less than one percent of the people affected.

A few years ago squabbles such as this may have been regarded as a storm in a teacup, but the stakes are much higher these days when education reconstruction appears more in reach of those on the left. More resources may be spent on building fiefdoms and setting up structures which are "politically correct" than on dealing with the problems at hand. It is a luxury the country can ill afford.

And petty politicking is at the centre of the storm: the SAALAE has its roots in the Black Consciousness tradition and the NLC in that of the African National Congress, and each accuses the other of sectarianism. They have had no official discussions between them, yet each say they have made "overtures" towards unity.

SAALAE general secretary Deena Soliar dismissed as "petty" the NLC objections and said all "controversial issues" had been passed by majority vote at the conference. His organisation was prepared to talk and co-exist, and believed there was room for more than one national structure in the field of literacy and adult basic education.

USE, SPEAK, WRITE ENGLISH

(USWE) a non governmental Adult Basic Education Project wishes to employ a

DIRECTOR

Responsibilities will include:

- an involvement in planning and policy issues
- liaising with a wide range of individuals and organisations
- fundraising
- personnel issues and staff development
- overall co-ordination of the work of the project (trainer training, teacher training, research and development, materials production, and 30 learning groups in the greater Cape Town area)

Applicants should have:

- a post-graduate degree in Education or Development studies
- a broad knowledge of the Adult Basic Education field nationally and regionally
- strong leadership qualities
- broad administrative experience
- at least five years of working experience in a related field

EDUCATION BRIEFS

■ **TEACHERS**, pupils and principals from schools in 50 Karoo towns will attend an education conference in Beaufort West on May 16 to discuss illiteracy, community control of farm schools and other educational priorities for the region.

The conference has been organised by the Karoo Resource Centre, a satellite project of the Career Resource and Information Centre (Cric). Speakers will include University of the Western Cape rector Professor Jakes Gerwel, South African Democratic Teachers' Union (Sadtu) general secretary

controversy with students boycotting classes in protest against the exclusion of others on financial grounds. Spokesmen for both the Students' Representative Council and UWC's media office confirmed that the boycott had been suspended and classes were continuing as normal.

However, negotiations are continuing between the SRC and the university administration. — Sapa

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The SAALAE conference noted that literacy initiatives to date had "served to perpetuate the dependency of oppressed people and to suppress their self-reliance and self-determination". Soliar said his organisation had "reservations" about the NLC's claims to be non-sectarian.

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For more details contact Cornelia Schuster at
tel: (021) 448-7070, fax: (021) 448-1837

Closing date: 30 April 1992

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For further details contact Ruby Marks at (0201) 2890.

■ **NORMAL** academic activities resumed at the University of the Western Cape as students returned this week to start the second term.

The first term ended amid

controversy with students boycotting classes in protest against the exclusion of others on financial grounds. Spokesmen for both the Students' Representative Council and UWC's media office confirmed that the boycott had been suspended and classes were continuing as normal.

However, negotiations are continuing between the SRC and the university administration. — Sapa

■ **SCHOOLS** in Botshabelo in the Free State were deserted on Monday following week-long protest action called jointly by the Sadt and the Congress of South African Students.

Children did not report at schools on Monday and teachers staged a sit-in. No incidents have been reported. The Free State regional office of the Department of Education and Training said the action had been launched by individuals who did not have the interests of the pupils at heart. — Sapa