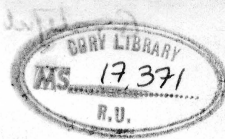


SPEECH AT D.S.G. DINNER - 14th OCTOBER, 1975



Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a well known and uncontested axiom that if there is a form of animal life of less account than new girls at a school, especially new day girls who elect to arrive in the middle of an academic year, then ^{that} ~~such a~~ form of animal life must be a parent of such girls. I esteem it a very great honour, therefore, and a complete counter to the oft repeated slur that private schools are snobbish that I have been invited to speak at this dinner, which marks part of the D.S.G. Centenary and the launching of a bold and ambitious Appeal. ^{*(c)} →

One of the more pernicious effects of inflation has been the enormous pressure it has put on private schools. The ever spiralling costs and the inevitable consequences they have on fees prompt us the more urgently to re-examine the whole position of private schools. We should welcome such appraisals as the one beneficial effect of the financial crisis, both national and individual through which we are now passing. If an institution cannot bear critical

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I am especially grateful to have this opportunity
of addressing ^{an audience} dedicated to the continuation of private schools
because of my own ^{school} experience and that of my ^{brother, sister} family
I was fortunate to have been at the finest private
school in the Transvaal, ~~and~~ the religious formation,
the introduction to wider ideas, the outstanding and
dedicated tuition, the aesthetic experience of living in
perhaps the most beautiful buildings in SA, the exposure
to the highest standards of secular and church music I
~~experienced~~ ^{enjoyed} there ~~has~~ influenced the formation of
my character in a way exceeded only by my
home background

assessment then it will not survive beyond a certain period of human inertia. Let us therefore consider some fundamentals.

The idea that it is the primary responsibility of the parents to house, clothe feed, nurture and attend to the secular and religious education of their offspring is as old as original human society. Where through neglect or misfortune the parents either would not or could not accept their obligations charitable institutions, notably the Church, assisted as far as possible.

The idea that the State should accept the ultimate obligation for education is a comparatively new one and stems back to the great educational enactment of 1870 in

Great Britain. * (1) The State, of course, has a vested interest in the education of future citizens, because an ignorant and illiterate populace is a great civic liability. It is a pity, however, to my way of thinking that the model was established of the State's accepting a liability to provide universal education by establishing and running its own schools, except in circumstances when nobody else would do so. How much better if from the beginning a bounty per pupil were paid

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(1) In S.A. no fact education followed the three well marked stages of evolution experienced in most western countries

At first the Church provided schools but these rapidly proved inadequate to meet the needs of a rapidly increasing population

Next stage is provision of aid to denominational institutions. In the third stage the state took over effectively all education but allowing private schools to continue to function & in many instances ^{providing grants in aid} ~~also~~ except in the Cape to those requiring such help

To day about 90% of white education is state provided, 10% private ~~and~~ grant in aid, with Natal having biggest proportion

to private parties and the State had limited itself to licensing, inspection and providing a limited school system of last resort. This idea has very eloquently been put in recent times by the American economist, Milton Friedman, who advocates a system whereby vouchers equal in value to the per capita annual cost the State is prepared to invest in a pupil's education are given to the parents of each school-age child. These vouchers are paid over to the school of their choice and may be cashed for government funds only by the school. If parents wish to supplement the vouchers with private fees in return for higher quality education they are at liberty to do so. Boarding vouchers would naturally only be given for children from remote country areas.

The great beauty of the system is that it encourages open competition amongst schools. Institutions which do not provide what parents, or significant groups of parents, want by way of religious and moral background, and academic and recreational facilities would simply fail through lack of support. To my mind the most unfortunate aspects of a totally monopolistic State school system

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are that it is not only deprives parents of freedom of choice but also encourages inefficiency through lack of competition. The layers of bureaucracy and red tape which inevitably encompass even the best of State school systems are too evident to require much explicit comment.

The advantages of being free to choose the academic and moral school environment for one's children are so great that a significant minority of parents are still willing to accept the enormous sacrifice of paying taxes for a system they do not use and paying fees which are not even tax deductible. By all means let us press for a more equitable system, but until the millenium arrives we must continue to seek in the same spirit of faith that characterised their founders to find ways and means of ensuring the survival of the schools we treasure so deeply. That is why we are here tonight.

Private schools in general and the D.S.G. in particular are cherished because of their religious and moral traditions, the dedication to excellence of their teachers and their high academic standards. If by reason

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of their escalating costs they are also becoming socially exclusive, this is greatly to be regretted. The best of our private schools even to-day have managed to avoid this stigma by providing a substantial degree of assistance by way of scholarships and bursaries. I believe we should set aside part of our Appeal results for this purpose. A perspicacious observer of the British scene, the Swiss newspaper correspondent Roger Bernheim, attributes part of the social and economic malaise of Britain to the existence of the private and State schools feeding the division of the population into two classes, the "We" of the managerial and professional group and the "They" of the working class. This is not perhaps a great danger in South Africa, except that the We and They are White and Black. Private schools are precluded by legislation, with rarest exceptions, from taking Black pupils, but this may not always be so. We should be psychologically and financially prepared to accept, even to pioneer, such developments when rather than if they become possible, such is the pace of change we must anticipate. The decision to introduce Xhosa is a tremendous step in the right direction. I sometimes wonder if we do enough even under the present dispensation.

Black
teachers

After an interval of thirty years I still remember the indelible effect on my outlook that school tours in small groups through the worst areas of Sophiatown and the Moroka and Jabavu shanty towns produced. Black preachers appeared in our chapel, Black entertainers graced our stage and Indians played cricket against us. The possibility of such events almost by itself justifies

private schools. They are still not illegal today.

Private schools must be the, and we must continue and expand such contacts in this age of détente

Whatever the success of the Appeal that is launched today, (and I wish it every success) the future of private schools will depend to a great deal on how imaginatively we consider our problems. Not being on your Council I can indulge in some flight of fancy. Granted that not all of the details are seriously proposed I am not entirely speaking with my tongue in my cheek. Let us reflect, for example, on how some of those other great ventures of faith, the monasteries, managed their affairs. The liqueurs, Grand Chartreuse and Benedictine have for centuries been economic mainstays of the community by the first name and of the ancient foundation of Fecamp in Normandy. Perhaps some

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friend of the school will discover through some secret recipe a magical property of the flora of the Zuurburg that will produce an elixir to rival even van der Hum and thereby enrich the school coffers. Or take the case of the private school in Upstate New York that received the unusual bequest of a racehorse of uncertain pedigree. The Council, already at their wits ends as to how to keep the school afloat, decided to keep the animal on the school grounds instead of getting what they could for it. The noble beast justified their faith by going on to win a million dollars in prize money. ~~In these days of hyper-inflation we can no longer accept Polonius' well-meant advice about "Neither a borrower nor a lender be". The true art of borrowing is exemplified by the Russian Countess immediately after the Revolution who arrived in a Balkan country beset with rampant inflation, carrying three precious diamonds and very little else. She immediately borrowed R10 000 on the security of the first diamond and lived in the style to which she was accustomed for three months. She was then able to raise R30 000 on the second diamond, redeem the first and continue the high life. Finally she pledged all three bought a little estate.~~

If I were to attempt to summarise the important factors that justify the continued existence of private schools in South Africa I should single out the following points

- (1) They have a strong commitment to providing a religious and moral basis for the education of the whole person
- (2) They attract dedicated and efficient staff who are prepared to assume their share of responsibility, and who enhance the dignity and status of the teaching profession
- (3) They exhibit a refreshing freedom to experiment with syllabus changes and new teaching methods
- (4) They provide a real alternative to state education so that parents have a real and meaningful freedom of choice as to the way their children are educated.

PA
RIVE GIRLS SCHOOL

^{final thought}
The ~~conclusion~~ I ~~really~~ want to ~~draw from these anecdotes~~ is that

^{leave you with}

however much we give, it must be given as an expression of faith. I believe D.S.G. deserves not only to survive but to flourish. I believe it will ultimately do so only, so long as the school Family retains its faith in the tradition and attributes for which schools such as D.S.G. stand. The founders ventured in Faith, the school has prospered through its first century by Faith and only ^{by} Faith will it ^{live to} celebrate its second and subsequent centuries. We possess that faith; Let us demonstrate it in the most practical possible way by supporting generously the Centenary Appeal to be launched tonight.

TOAST