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POLICY CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATION IN THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA: THE CASE FOR SCHOOL FEEDING IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION

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'How do we explain the relationship between the increase in democracy worldwide in the 1980s and 1990s and the parallel increase in poverty linked to the decline in social welfare provision for the mass of the people?' (Dr Fernando Coronil, University of Michigan, at the Conference on the Transition to Democracy, held at the University of Cape Town, 1 May 1994).

School Feeding as an aspect of Educational Policy Development in the Twentieth Century

Supplying food to indigent children in the industrialising countries of the late-nineteenth century was part of humanitarian or charity services usually provided through religious bodies. By the twentieth century the issue was gradually drawn into the domain of public policy. For example, the poor physical condition of many of the recruits for the South African War (1899-1902) led to a British government committee investigation, and 'against a background of charitable effort, radical pressure and evidence of the real physical condition of the poor, legislation of a new kind was enacted' (Lawson and Silver, 1973:379). The Education (Provision of Meals) Act of 1906 enabled, but did not compel, local authorities to provide school meals out of rates.

During World War I the government of the United Kingdom increasingly assumed responsibility for school feeding through subsidies to local authorities. In this era the function of supplying meals to children was increasingly taken on by the schools. 'As the contribution of the state increased, private initiative and effort decreased' (Cillie Commission, 1951:27-28; Moll P, 1985:2-3). In the post-World War I era schemes of this kind are also to be noted in a number of other countries, including Norway, Sweden and the USA.

In the Depression and the Second World War, as well as the period of reconstruction, the provision was greatly increased to cater for the large-scale undernourishment of the populations of the countries effected by the War. Whereas school meals were initially only available to the poor and needy they gradually came to be available to all at a small cost.

In Britain, the USA and Japan, the government provided the facilities and equipment for the programme, but parents often contributed toward the costs of the food. The development of these policies should be understood against the background of the historical legacy of the development of social welfare politics and social democracy in the USA and Britain, but that trend was considerably strengthened in the policy domain by the threat to liberal democracy posed by the rise of socialist or communist political power, which offered the hope of a better life to the majority of working class people in the industrialised countries. These trends were also to become apparent in South Africa.

In Britain 'the sense of solidarity in a nation under duress', meant that education and welfare assumed pivotal roles in thinking about post-war society. Attention was devoted to the specific health needs of children during the war years. The number of children taking school dinners rose from half a million in 1939 to one and a half million by 1945. 'Determination not to return to pre-war social conditions and related problems of nutrition and health was the main factor behind the Labour victory in the election of 1945 and the post-War efforts to construct a welfare state' (Lawson and Silver, 1973:417-418).

A particular manifestation of this state social welfare policy in the field of educational provision was the extension and elaboration of the School Lunch Scheme. In terms of the Education Act of 1944 all schoolchildren at public schools in Britain had a right to a free lunch at the cost of the Local Authority. It was part of the overall focus on the question of addressing disadvantage, the needs of all our children and a more equal society (Jones, 1989:11) by attempting to making up at school for the differences in advantage/disadvantage in home background.

In the USA the National School Lunch Scheme initiated in the early part of the century, was massively expanded during the harsh days of the Depression. By the late-1960s and early-1970s 'approximately 70 percent of the more than 100 000 elementary and secondary schools were participating in the National School Lunch Program'. The programme employed several hundred thousand people in 1968 and cost up to \$2 billion annually. In 1981 the US federal government funded school feeding programmes for 26 million benefactors at a cost of some \$4.5 billion (Shapiro, 1990:144).

Such policies became the new social gospel of social democracy in the post-War era. A key aspect of the philosophy that lay behind these initiatives was the assumption that governments, especially modern democratic governments, had duties to all citizens. Schooling was one aspect of a broad set of obligations of the state towards its citizens. Those duties when considered in the field of educational provision encompassed notions of family and child welfare as well as the rights of the individual to receive schooling at the expense of the state. The social democratic tradition asserted that it was the state's business not only to ensure that there were adequate educational facilities for all children (to secure equality of educational access for all), but that the necessary conditions for the exercise of those individual rights to equality of opportunity in education be enshrined in social policy and social services, and addressable through the law. Such principles featured strongly in the policy recommendation of the United Nations Organisation and its agencies during the 1950s and 1960s, and were often high on the policy agenda of the emergent Third World countries of Africa, Latin America and Asia as they attempted to meet the needs and demands of the newly enfranchised majorities.

The History of School Feeding in South Africa

Background

The first evidence of attempts to meet the nutritional needs of poor urban children in South Africa can be found in the efforts of charitable organisations during the nineteenth century. As early as 1916 the Transvaal Provincial Council's Executive Committee 'decided ... to make funds available for the feeding of needy children'. Food was provided at a cost of 2.5d per day per child by the Province. This measure was only for needy children, and what evidence there is seems to indicate that it was initially for whites only. By 1939/40 the Transvaal's expenditure on these schemes amounted to R18 000. This had risen to R31 000 by 1940/41 (Cillie Commission, 1951:3; and Moll, 1985:3).

Other schemes of this kind were the state-aided Milk and Cheese Scheme which cost R37 000 in 1937, the Dried Fruit Scheme and the Citrus Scheme to deliver oranges to schools. The latter were both initiated at the beginning of World War II.

Social Democratic initiatives in South Africa: the United Party introduces School Feeding in line with International Trends: 1943

In the context of the war-time concern with the reform of social issues linked to the rise of militant African nationalist and labour politics, the United Party

(UP) launched a major investigation into living conditions of the poor. The Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Social, Health and Economic Conditions of Urban Natives (the Smit Report) was laid before parliament in 1942. Reflecting the political trend that:

had already begun to emerge in the industrialised nations of the West, the report argued the case for welfare policies that would deflect class conflicts in the new social context of urbanisation and industrialisation.

As part of a broader initiative to modernise social policy in South Africa, the Report emphasised the question of poverty and identified the extensive degree of malnutrition among the 'Non-European' and poor-white population, hinting at the political dangers of allowing such a situation to go unattended. Amongst other measures to address that situation, it advised large-scale nutritional education and communal feeding schemes and suggested 'that the Government refund 50 percent of the nett costs of approved schemes for the provision of free or partly free meals, whether such schemes are carried out by Provincial, local or voluntary agencies' (Smit Report, 1942:5-6).

In the political climate created by the outbreak of World War II, where the liberal lobby in Smuts' United Party government was strengthened by the departure of Hertzog and the National Party over the war issue, this Report provided the policy framework for the United Party's hasty introduction of state school feeding for primary school children in South Africa in February 1943. This proved to be a landmark in this area, acknowledging the need of government to be seen to be active in addressing issues of poverty. At a time of massively increased taxation due to the war effort, the government committed itself to substantial increases in social welfare spending. The Minister of Finance and Education, Jan Hofmeyr, who was known for his public repudiation of the policy of segregation, announced in the budget speech 'that the government intended to supply at least one meal per day (free) to all school children, irrespective of their race or colour'. Despite problems in implementing the programme, Hofmeyr once again showed the strongest commitment to the scheme:

in 1945 when he stated that he considered it to be 'of the utmost importance that ... we do everything in our power to have this scheme put on a proper footing' (Cillie Report, 1951:31-38; and Paton, 1964).

It was generally accepted that the central government would take on the main financial burden of the scheme and that it would be administered by the Union Department of Social Welfare, though there was also an understanding that the Provinces would make a substantial contribution to the effort. A conference in

April 1943 recommended that the central government pay £2 for each £1 paid by the Provinces. This led to 'a good deal of disagreement between the Provinces and Central Government over who was responsible for school feeding' (Moll, 1985:4).

The first report of the National Nutritional Council on the progress of the School Feeding Scheme was published in 1944. Nearly one million children were being reached at this time. Of these 322 000 were classified White; 485 000 African and the remaining 175 000 were Indian and Coloured (Moll, 1985:4). Yet there were immense difficulties in administering the scheme mainly because there had been a lack of forward planning and research.

The programme had been introduced as an emergency political issue and there was no attempt to regularise and formalise school feeding as part of the overall policy of school reform. These problems provided opponents with convincing arguments against the scheme in the years to come.

Before losing the election of 1948 the United Party passed two Acts of Parliament in an attempt to formalise the situation. Firstly, there was the Native Education Finance Act, No 29 of 1945, which related to the general financial provision for Native Education. Breaking with the tradition of provincial control of education since colonial times, it gave a share of the control of 'Native Education' to the Central Government. The transfer of Native school feeding to the Union Department of Education, Arts and Science was therefore 'an understandable sequel'. Secondly, the Financial Relations Consolidation and Amendment Act, No 38 of 1945, 'provided for the subsidisation of school feeding for European, Coloured and Asiatic children on a £ for £ basis to the Provinces, but excluded subsidisation of school feeding for Natives', ie school feeding was removed from the domain of state social welfare and placed under the same administrative authorities as schooling (Cillie Report, 1951:36-37).

In short, by 1945 considerable effort was put into the study and research of the existing situation, administrative reorganisation, and the development of new procedures for consultation about school-feeding, all with the strong backing of Minister Hofmeyr (Union Government, 1945). By 1947 the scheme was placed on a satisfactory footing with the appointment of local Organisers of Native School Feeding, the establishment of local school-feeding committees, and proper centralised control of procedures was secured. At this time an annual expenditure of over £2 million per annum was being made on School Feeding in South Africa (Cillie Report, 1952:79 and SAIRR, 1950:43).

School feeding in the apartheid era

The National Party in opposition had supported school feeding for poor-white children but had consistently opposed an equivalent provision for African children. When it came to power in 1948, the issue was immediately taken up but it was some time before a clear policy emerged.

The Committee of Enquiry into the Native School Feeding Scheme (Union of South Africa 1949) was justified in terms of the need to respond to 'representations emphasising steadily rising costs and alleged malpractices'. The final report was produced in January 1949 and on the basis of these recommendations Dr A J Stals, the new Minister of Education, laid down a policy which stipulated that government grants for Native school feeding would have to be decreased and eventually be phased out; that all wastage resulting from the existing schemes be terminated; that local school committees take over the administrations of such schemes and make their own contribution towards them; that where it continued school feeding be limited to children under the age of 14 years; and that the entire question of school feeding within its socio-economic framework should be re-examined (Cillie Report, 1951:39-41).

The publication of this report was followed by the temporary cessation of the scheme in some sectors, the reduction of grants, and the exclusion of some schools from the programme. It met with strong public protests.

The Deliberations and Recommendation of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into School Feeding (1951) The Cillie Commission

In 1950 the National Party government launched another, more comprehensive investigation into this highly contested area, based on the earlier recommendations. This was under the jurisdiction of the Department of Education, Arts and Science, an innovation, as all previous initiatives had been conducted under the auspices of the Department of Health or the Department of Social Welfare. The issue of food programmes for children was therefore irrevocably linked to the question of educational policy.

In 1951 the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into school feeding (the Cillie Commission) was made public. The commissioners comprised seven white male Afrikaners, amongst them the distinguished educationalist Dr GG Cillie, Professor of Education at the University of Stellenbosch, who acted as chairman, and Dr Samuel Pauw, the Principal of University of South Africa and future director of the National Bureau of Education and Social Research.¹

This report merits a full study in its own right as an exercise in the ideological development for the new National Party government. Its scientific and medical base drew heavily on a 1939 Cape Nutritional Survey, the work of Le Riche

around Pretoria (1940) and the Medical Inspector of Schools' Reports. The Commission also conducted extensive original research in its own right, touring the country to interview a range of concerned people and visiting institutions, collecting data and conducting statistical and attitudinal surveys of the field.

The recommendations of the Commission are ambiguous. Some of the criticism of the current state of affairs in school feeding seems to have been justified, but many of the harsher criticisms were eventually revealed to be spurious and misplaced. Nowhere does the Commission argue that school feeding should be abolished. Indeed despite all the adverse publicity, the Commission found that the vast majority of head teachers, especially in African and Coloured schools, argued strongly in favour of the scheme. According to the Cillie Commission the administrative preparations for this vast undertaking had been extremely inadequate and this had led to many of the shortcomings in its implementation. The Natal Provincial School Feeding Scheme was held up as an example of what could be achieved (Cillie Report, 1951: Appendix G). It was argued that the consultation had been inadequate. The Commission was highly critical of Hofmeyr, as Finance Minister, and the Department of Social Welfare's handling of the school-feeding issue - 'The National School-Feeding Scheme was introduced into South Africa without adequate systematic preparation' (Cillie Report, 'Findings and Recommendations' 1951:78).

The main aim seemed to be to discredit the United Party government through reference to the mishandling of the school feeding issue, but despite the criticisms the project emerged from the investigation with every reason to expect that it would be continued on a more business-like basis (Cillie Report, 1951:32). Only the Minority Report written by JH du Plessis, argued for the complete abolition of the scheme.

Summary of the period 1943-1958

The state School-Feeding Scheme was initiated by the United Party as part of a broader initiative by the South African government to fit in with the international welfarist politics of the post-war era. The political landscape and commitment to social democracy that emerged was fundamental to the ideological climate of the Allied victory. It formed part of the general 'Western' response to the 'threat' of international communism and socialism linked to the emergence of African nationalism and labour militancy within South Africa. Although the measures that flagged a change in United Party policy appear meagre in retrospect, they had considerable significance for contemporaries. In addition to including African children within the school-feeding scheme, they also came to include the extension of old-age pensions and invalidity grants to

Africans. This signalled a weakening of the strictly segregationist social policy of previous years.

Yet the contentious nature of the issue in the context of white South African politics is clear from the fact that despite Hofmeyr's strongly expressed commitment to the cause of school feeding, no legislation was passed through parliament relating to this issue until three years after its introduction. This weak formal policy commitment to school feeding in part accounted for its chaotic implementation in its initial stages. Despite all these drawbacks the scheme was clearly providing an essential social service, as even the Cillie Commission was to recognise in its report of 1951.

Despite its critical attitude, the Cillie Commission argued that 'all available data point to the fact that the extent of undernourishment in the Union is of such a nature that comprehensive and active steps should be taken to raise the nutritional standard of the population' (Cillie Report, 1951:3).

Yet the wider dynamics of politics within the creation of apartheid implied a radical shift in policy on a range of issues that were to influence this area in ways that were unforeseen by many of the Commissioners at the time.

The changes were initiated with a withdrawal of school feeding from farm schools, mine schools and mission schools (Moll, 1985:5). In the light of alleged shortages of funds, the subsidy for those children for whom the scheme continued to operate was reduced from 2d to 1.5d per day per child. There was strong opposition from church and charity groups, the South African Institute of Race Relations (SAIRR Memorandums, 1949-50), a few liberal politicians and some elements of the liberal press.²

The Decline of school feeding

Great Britain

Based on the legacy of a century or more of social welfare provision there was, by the 1950s, a firm commitment to the policy of school feeding in the USA and Great Britain. That policy was identified with the politics of social democracy in the international sphere. In South Africa, despite the tradition of racism and segregation, and National Party's hostility while in opposition, such policies had also been successfully initiated by the United Party government by 1948.

'Free milk and school meals (together with other welfare provisions) undoubtedly contributed in the 1950s and 1960s to the improved health of the majority of children in Britain'. It was widely accepted during the 1960s that these policies were there to stay as ... 'It is now firmly accepted that the child has

a right to milk and a midday meal at school' (Lawson and Silver, 1973:461) Yet by the end of the decade this right was increasingly being challenged.

Under the impact of resurgent neo-liberal conservatism, child health and welfare re-established themselves as critically contested issues in the political forum. Although those rights were vigorously defended by many teachers' organisations, local authorities and welfare organisations they were gradually eroded. From 1979 the new Conservative Party government under Margaret Thatcher was set 'to eliminate major tendencies that had dominated post-war education policy and to replace them with quite a different order of priorities' (Jones, 1989:1; and Simon, 1988). In the context of developing a set of policies which emphasised the linkages between the economy and education - Education for the World of Work - the social-democratic ethos in education was a prime focus for the attack. The lack of rational control of public policy and progressive education were held to be responsible for many of Britain's economic ills. Conservative reforms brought short-term prosperity to a large number of Britishers 'in the form of tax cuts, share purchases in private utilities, and capital gains in a buoyant and heavily subsidised housing market', but these were 'to a large extent paid for by the public industry, the underfunded welfare state, and by the poor who lost billions in benefits' (Jones, 1989:24). One of

the consequences of these pressures to cut state funding in an era of increasing stringency was the decision 'both to increase the charges for school meals and to withdraw free milk (with exceptions) for primary schools' (Lawson and Silver, 1973:460-61).

The justifications for these moves will be examined below in the context of a comparison with the arguments used to oppose school feeding in South Africa during the 1950s.

South Africa

From January 1951 local school feeding committees were abolished in South Africa and school feeding, where it continued, became the responsibility of the principal, the teachers, the parent committee and local charity organisations (Cillie Report, 1951:43). By 1953 the amount of state funding to African school feeding had dropped considerably, though school milk for whites, Coloureds and Indians was still being supplied as before. By the time that all state-funded schemes were finally discontinued in 1957-8, the annual expenditure by the government had reached R870 000.³

Thereafter school feeding in South Africa was to be carried out by voluntary organisations. The number of children being fed daily by the African Children's

Feeding Scheme in Johannesburg rose from 5 000 in 1953 to 12 000 in 1956 (SAIRR Survey, 1955-60:67-70). In the Eastern Cape the Grahamstown Areas District Relief Association (GADRA) provided a model for similar action. In the Western Cape the Cape Flats Distress Association (CAFDA), the Students' Health and Welfare Centres Organisation (SHAWCO) and the Peninsula School-Feeding Scheme moved in to take over when state funding dried up.⁴ Many similar schemes flourished elsewhere. This arrangement has continued to the present day with charity and non-governmental organisations like Operation Hunger and Ithuba taking a lead in this sphere in the 1980s and 1990s.⁵ The consequences of this dereliction of duty by the state during the era of apartheid is, as Ina Perlman of Operation Hunger reported in 1993, that 'South Africa's track record of child deaths is more than double that of any country of similar income level worldwide'.⁶

Assessing the Pros and Cons of School-Feeding Schemes

Any assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of state school feeding in the South African situation needs to take careful note of the specific political and ideological tone of the debate that was conducted in the 1950s. Much of that debate has traditionally been interpreted as a simple confrontation between the ideology of Afrikaner nationalism on the one side, and the liberal/humanitarian forces, epitomised by the writings of Quentin Whyte and the publications of the Institute of Race Relations, on the other (Whyte, 1949). That perspective fails to take account of the variety of positions that were developed at the time and the fine grain of the arguments put forward.

In general the opposition to the school-feeding schemes for African children has been taken to be further evidence of the racist nature of the newly established government. The fact that there were fundamental differences of opinion on the recommendations for state policy regarding the school-feeding scheme within the National Party commission in 1951 calls that assumption into doubt. Equally, the phasing out of school-feeding schemes all over the world within a decade and a half of their demise in South Africa seems to indicate that the South African experience was something less than unique or specific to the context of racism under apartheid. This would seem to call for a more careful investigation of widely held assumptions in this regard.

Is it possible to draw any meaningful comparisons between the National Party policy on this issue in the 'fifties and the decline of school-feeding policy elsewhere in the following two decades? For example, can any lines of comparison be drawn between the National Party policy on this issue and the acrimonious politics that surrounded the Conservative Party's withdrawal of the

school milk and school meals policy in Britain during the early-1970s, which was immortalised in the slogan: 'Mrs Thatcher, Milk Snatcher!?' (Jones, 1989:7).

In attempting to disentangle these issues I have made use of the work of Peter Moll for the Carnegie Conference on Poverty in South Africa (1985) to assess the advantages and disadvantages of the school-feeding policies that emerge from the literature.

Advantages

The arguments that have traditionally been used to support school-feeding schemes are fairly clear cut. They have been articulated in terms of health, wealth and community issues, aside from their link to the question of education. At a quite simple level they are held to lead to a reduction of deaths by malnutrition and an overall improvement of children's health by increasing body weights and providing a more balanced diet. This in turn leads to an increase in vigour and concentration levels which are relevant to the educational question. If children have sufficient food they are more likely to attend school regularly and this leads to better school performance. Taken together the resolution of these issues is often held to provide the focus for successful community action, and the stimulant to self-help initiatives. Finally, and perhaps most significantly from the educational point of view, school-feeding schemes offer a means for the state to engage with the provision of a simple and feasible means of direct income redistribution. It allows for some state action to be taken in the social policy domain which allows for the promotion of equality of access to education and by implication the promotion of equality of opportunity for all.

These issues combine to offer the prospect of developing an aspect of welfare and education policy which can be justified on humanitarian grounds even in the most stringent market-orientated economic climate (Moll, 1985:7-11; also see Moll, 1991).

Disadvantages

The most conclusive argument to be produced to oppose the provision of school meals revolved around the prioritisation of state spending in the welfare/education domain. In an era of fiscal stringency it has often been argued that state funds need to be earmarked for spending on improving schooling provision in ways that directly contribute to the human capital development of the nation: the expansion of facilities, the development and diversification of curriculum and the provision of skills appropriate to the needs of the market. Such a tight set of priorities aimed at increasing the linkages and flow between

school and industry leave no room for 'costly extras' like school feeding which are assumed to lie outside the province of state educational provision. These issues are, therefore, by default, to be taken up by welfare agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), or by the families and 'communities' of the present recipients. In particular, the arguments have tended to focus on the need for the expansion of education in the pre-school and the primary phase and have as a consequence been difficult to oppose. The responsibility for the nutrition of children is therefore placed back in the lap of parents, with particular significance for poor communities (Lawson and Silver, 1973: 460-1).

A major and perhaps fundamental criticism of the scheme in the context of South Africa in the 1950s, where only a small number of the total child and youth population were at school, was that the target group for school feeding excluded those who were most in need of state nutritional assistance, namely those who were too poor or too geographically isolated from schools to be able to attend, or children under school age who were not yet attending school. Unless strategies are developed to reach these groups, the scheme might fail to reach its objectives. Yet for Moll most of these are logistical problems that can be sorted out with efficient management and do not affect the substantive ethical or welfare arguments in favour of such schemes (Moll, 1985:7-11).

School feeding schemes, in common with other welfare programmes, have come in for much criticism during the 1980s as they are often represented as being highly prone to mismanagement, malpractices, corruption, theft and waste. More specifically, there seems to be some evidence that South African schools might have become dumping grounds for produce in the 1930s. Yet even the Cillie Commission which was so keen to find fault with the United Party programme asserted that 'the rumours concerning abuses and waste in connection with school feeding are to a large extent either exaggerated or unfounded' (Cillie Report, 1951:31-79). There is considerable evidence of such exaggeration in other contexts as well.

A fourth argument relating to the negative aspects of school-feeding policy is concerned with the purportedly negative moral consequences of welfarism. This argument, inherited from strains of nineteenth century patriarchal social philosophy is fundamentally opposed to the practice of charity for the poor. It developed a hard racist edge in South Africa during the 1950s. The supporters of the National Party argued that African community and family systems of duty and obligation were undermined by state charity contributing to the process of moral decay that was associated with detribalisation. In addition, Cillie argued that 'in South Africa as well as abroad school feeding has smothered and eliminated private initiative' (Cillie Report, 1951:78-80). In the context of

educational provision, the educational value of school feeding was therefore thought to be negative, as the hidden curriculum was said to promote a spirit of dependency and entitlement.

Many of these arguments which were salient to the Cillie Report were to re-emerge with remarkable similarities of emphasis in Britain and the USA during the 1970s and 1980s (See Jones, 1989; Simon, 1988; and Shapiro, 1990).

Conservative policy in the area of school feeding: comparative perspectives

The issue that forms the focal point of this investigation is the need to explain the policy shift away from state-controlled school-feeding schemes in various national contexts during the period between 1950 and 1990. Policies which were defended in the name of human rights and equality of opportunity in the social democratic climate of the post-war era were reversed in the context of apartheid (in the South African case) and the Thatcherite or Reaganite revolutions of the last two decades.

The decline in the advocacy and implementation of state school feeding as part of social-welfare policy and a mechanism for addressing the injustices of society is a phenomenon that needs wider investigation than is possible here. My point is simply that there are significant parallels between the moral tone, the welfare consequences - and more tentatively - the ideological climate - of National Party rationales and those of the US and British 'New Right' governments of the last two decades regarding the issue of abandoning school feeding policies.

The 'moralistic' arguments against the maintenance of school feeding put forward by the Cillie Commission Report must, of course, be seen within the context of the racist mindset of emergent apartheid policy discourse, but it is also important to locate it as part of the new educational policy which favoured the expansion of mass schooling to all children in South Africa in the context of the modernisation of segregation (Adam, 1972; Johnstone, 1970; Wolpe, 1988; and Kallaway, 1990).

In that context the abolition of state school feeding in the 1950s must be understood as part of the apartheid adventure which was at one and the same time aimed at securing the reproduction of apartheid society and racial segregation in the social, economic and political spheres through the medium of the school and its curriculum, while at the same time providing the infrastructure for the economic integration of the *Bantu* into the modern economy, albeit as a junior partner at a lower economic level to whites.

Citing the proceedings of the April 1943 government-sponsored conference on school feeding that heralded the new UP policy, Cillie singled out 'some suggestions of great interest with regard to Native School Feeding':

It was felt by some that on account of the great lack of school facilities it might be better to use the money intended for school feeding for the purpose of expanding the school facilities. Where Bantu schools already existed, school feeding would provide the pupils with additional advantage, while numbers of other Bantu children were in the meantime being deprived of the privilege of attending school at all (Cillie Report, 1951:33).

Similar arguments were used in Britain in the 1970s. In a climate of deepening recession and diminishing resources for education, the Conservatives argued that it was essential that the available finances be used for the building of new schools and the development of new curriculum essential for the revitalisation of the educational system in the context of the economic and human resource needs of the New Economic Order (Loney, 1986; Walford, 1990; Lawson and Silver, 1973:460-1 Jones, 1989; and Kallaway, 1989).

In both cases there was an argument that funds available to education should not be used for the purpose of school feeding. If 'undernourishment (was) caused mainly outside the schools, (it) should be combatted mainly outside the schools', though neither the British Conservatives nor the Afrikaner Nationalists were very specific on precisely with whom that responsibility lay (Cillie Report, 1951:78).

The justifications offered in the two contexts for discontinuing school meals appear to be remarkably similar, even if the context in which they operated were in many ways radically different.

The Legacy of Social Policy Provision in the 1970s and 1980s

The influence of international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on educational policies in Africa during the last two decades is well documented. Numerous writers (Adepoju, 1993; Mengisteab and Logan, 1995; and Onimode, 1989) Joel Samoff and Kenneth King, among others (Samoff, 1992, 1993 King, 1993; and Stoneman, 1993) have highlighted the linkages between Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) that have characterised economic aid to Africa during the 1980s and the political and economic agendas of the 'New Right' in Britain, Europe and the USA. Despite a stated commitment to the 'social dimensions of adjustment in Africa', the IMF and the World Bank have, until recently, shown scant regard for the social hardships inflicted by SAPs (Du Pisani, 1992:20-21). Whatever else those policies entailed, they were characterised by the shifting of the balance of responsibility for educational provision to the local or community level or to the NGO sector.⁷

Where the central government at the time of independence in the 1950s and 1960s had assumed the responsibility for social services, health care, medical services and educational provision, these policies have been widely abandoned under the influence of the SAPs. In short, in the name of efficient government, the poorest members of the nation have been expected to shoulder the heaviest load of self-reliance, with the least help from the central government. Those policies have been widely criticised as being inappropriate to Africa in the context of economic dependency and an era of recession, war and drought. In recent times reports from the World Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) appear to acknowledge the need for an urgent revision of such policies (Graham-Brown, 1992; and World Bank, 1992; and UNECD, 1992).

It is therefore not in the least surprising that none of the major World Bank documents of the previous decade deal with questions of social welfare in the context of education. In particular, the issue of school feeding as outlined in this paper, is neglected. The politics of child health in schools is an issue that has to a large extent been defined out of the political economy of educational planning by those who hold the purse strings of the African debt. Responsibility for the delivery of such services is clearly not located with central government. It is relegated to the domain of NGO or 'self-help' community initiatives.

South Africa had already moved substantially down this path at the end of the apartheid era. As pointed out above, school feeding in the context of apartheid South Africa was largely left in the hands of charity organisations, NGOs and strange semi-business organisations like Ithuba. From March 1994 the policy of the Government of National Unity (driven largely by the initiative of the ANC) identified the area of school feeding as a priority area of policy. The specific intervention of President Mandela and the RDP allowed for immediate action to establish the lead project - the Primary School Nutrition Project (PSNP) - at the core of national nutrition policy. Although there was a deliberate attempt in the early days of the PSNP not to rely on the role of NGOs for delivery, this policy was only partially carried out in practice. Some areas like the Western Cape continued to rely on the traditional NGO networks. Elsewhere delivery was on tender to big business, and later various efforts were made to decentralise and involve small contractors. All this was done in the face of sharp criticism from the NGO sector which had a strong track-record in the area. By 1996 the indications are that the policy is under severe strain and a number of accounts of corruption and the breakdown of the service seem to indicate that all is not well with this important initiative.

Can any future government, elected by the mass of the people and committed to national reconstruction and development leave this area of central national concern to charity organisations? What signs are there of public policy development in this area at the present time in relation to meeting the new social policy goals of South Africa? What support or constraints on the development of such policies are likely to emerge from humanitarian organisations that were previously active in the anti-apartheid struggle? How will such welfarist policies be received in the context of policy formulation that increasingly falls in line with the neo-liberal criteria dictated by the World Bank and the IMF, who have frequently shown their hostility to welfarist policy in other contexts?

Social Policy, Educational Reform and School Feeding in South Africa during the 1990s

The research which informed this paper was conducted during the transition to democratic government in South Africa, and was aimed at focussing attention on the importance of the school-feeding debate - not just as a problem of welfare policy, but as part of the establishment of priorities in relation to educational policy. More specifically, that project was aimed at addressing a gap in the current discourse on education by urging the case for school feeding as a specific part of the new policy of educational reconstruction. That initiative urged that the ethos of social democracy that characterised the ideology of the liberation movements in exile be extended to the field of educational policy development in the 'new' South Africa.

It is argued that a consideration of school-feeding policies is of particular relevance to the current South African context as part of the general Reconstruction and Development Programme given the sheer humanitarian need that is the legacy of apartheid - but it is also stressed that such policies needed to be specifically tied to educational reconstruction if they were adequately to benefit those who needed them most.

In order to assess whether the planners of South Africa's future educational system have recognised the significance of this area, I undertook to examine a number of key policy documents which have been fundamental to the debate about educational reform or renewal in South Africa during the 1990s. They can be read in the specifically local context of the reform politics of the late apartheid era, or the politics of the new democratic South Africa. They also require contextualisation in the light of the history of liberation ideology and resistance politics, or to put it more specifically, in the light of the 'People's Education' discourse of the 1980s. More broadly it is important to assess them in the context

of changes in social policy associated with the era of world recession, free market ideology and the emergence of Neo-Liberalism and the New World Economic Order.

In the first place, all these documents need to be read in relation to the overall historical development of reformism in the context of the National Party programme since the early 1980s. They can be understood as an extension of the educational reforms that were initiated from 1981 with the publication of the Human Science Research Council (HSRC)'s (De Lange) Committee Report on Provision of Education in the RSA.⁸ This is not the place to review the extensive literature that critiqued that initiative, but suffice to say that prior to 1990 there was a strong emphasis by commentators on the lack of democratic participation and the lack of a social democratic ethos to the reforms that were mooted. Peter Buckland aptly described those reforms as technicist proposals that failed to take cognizance of the human factors in social and educational policy development (Buckland, 1984:371-386). It was only the People's Education debate of the mid-1980s that succeeded in injecting the idea of the national or popular good back into the policy debate (Kruss, 1988; and Kallaway, 1990).

The Education Renewal Strategy (ERS) (1991) and the Curriculum Model for South Africa (CUMSA) (1992) laid out the following principles as the philosophical basis for the development of the model for 'educational renewal':

That equal opportunities for education, including equal standards of education, must be created for every inhabitant of South Africa irrespective of race, colour, creed or sex and 'that the provision of education shall be directed in an educationally responsible manner at the needs of the individual and those of the society (CUMSA, 1992).

These individual and social needs are repeatedly interpreted in the narrow context of knowledge and facilities to be provided for students already within the formal educational system. The recommendations ignore the need for the state to consider policies which will address the social and economic context outside the schools which inhibits large numbers of children from taking advantage of the facilities provided. In general, the discourse about educational provision in the De Lange and ERS reports, reflecting World Bank policy, is largely about the need for efficiency, rationalisation, cost management, constructive participation in the economy, and the relationship of education to the market. There is a lack of emphasis on the need to secure conditions under which all children will be able to take maximum advantage of the facilities provided.

Given the political origins of the policies and their embeddedness in state-reform strategies borrowed from Thatcherite Britain and Reaganite USA, and the reliance on the World Bank frame of reference, this lack of emphasis is, of course, not in the least surprising (Kallaway, 1989).

But what of the educational proposals coming from the 'democratic forces' representative of liberation politics in South Africa - the ANC/SACP/COSATU⁹ alliance? The political and ideological tradition of the liberation movements from the 1950s often reflected social democratic or even socialist and communist policy thinking inherited from the post-Post war II era and manifested in the politics of African nationalism since the 1960s. Such a tradition of public policy is embedded in the opposition to Bantu Education which was epitomised in the moral outrage expressed at the time of the state suspension of the school feeding scheme of the 1950s.

The National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) report on Support Services (1992) only appears to recognise the issue of school feeding by implication in the context of the report on 'School Health: Policy Options' (NEPI, 1992:69 Support Services, Appendix 1) where it is noted that in many Third World countries 'provision of healthy food appears to be a priority'. Also in the context of 'Early Childhood Educare' it is noted that 'up to one-third of urban and half of rural black children are undernourished'.¹⁰ Therefore almost all educare services for disadvantaged children require a health and nutritional component'. The options that are recommended are:

- feeding schemes, growth monitoring, and medical checks;
- food aid through food stamps or coupons or tax relief on basic foods
- food gardens at educare centres and involving families and communities
- health education for adults and children'. (NEPI, 1992:127, Framework Report).

What is particularly noteworthy is that there is no overall assumption that school feeding should be a responsibility of the state even at the pre-primary (EDUCARE) level. At the primary and secondary level it is not even mentioned. At best it would seem that the issue of school-feeding policy had not been adequately theorised as an aspect of the broader educational and social policy framework needed for all in a democratic society. At worst, the issue is being deliberately avoided.

The ANC's (1994a) Policy Framework for Education and Training (PFET) says even less than the NEPI report regarding the issue of school feeding. Despite a clear recognition of the need for 'a special emphasis on the redress of

educational inequalities among historically disadvantaged groups such as youth, the disabled, adults, women, the unemployed and rural communities' (1994a:4) there is no mention of the issue outside of an oblique reference to the need for 'nutritional services' in the context of Educare provision. Even in the context of a chapter on 'The Special Case of Rural and Farm Schools' where the neglect of the apartheid era is identified as most severe and the poverty of the children most in need of state redress, there is no mention of the provision of school feeding or nutritional services.

The ANC's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) (1994), the major blueprint for post-apartheid redress, is more direct in defining the nature of the problem under discussion. 'The central objective of our RDP is to improve the quality of life of all South Africans, and in particular the most poor and marginalised sections of our communities' (1994:15). The notion of a social safety net through which food, clothing and health care could be made available to those in need comes near to addressing the concerns of this paper. In the context of a key chapter on meeting basic needs, the ANC identifies nutrition as one key factor among others in need of urgent attention. The full list of basic needs includes the provision of jobs, land reform, housing and services, water and sanitation, energy and electrification, telecommunications, transport, environment, health care, social security and social welfare (see chapter 2). The report emphasises that 'the RDP must ensure that as soon as possible, and certainly within three years, every person in South Africa can get their basic nutritional requirement each day and that they no longer live in fear of going hungry'. While accepting that the only long-term solution to the problem is 'to increase employment opportunities through land reform, job programmes and the reorganisation of the economy', there is an acceptance that 'short-term interventions should support nutrition education and the stable low-cost supply of staple foods combined with carefully targeted income transfers and food subsidies'. The institution of a National Nutritional Surveillance System would aim at providing data to assist policy-makers in targeting groups in particular need and identifying groups requiring food relief (1994:41-2).

The White Paper on the RDP (RDP/WP, 1994) emphasises the need for the 'co-ordination of a programme alleviating the needs of people living in poverty and marginalised circumstances' and specifically the importance of a focus on the need for a welfare system which involves 'services to children' (RDP/WP, 1994:27). Linked to the lead projects of the Department of Health and the Department of Education, there are commitments to Student Health Promotion and a comprehensive nutrition programme (RDP/WP, 1994:65). The Primary School Nutrition Scheme, introduced by President Mandela as a lead project on

the occasion of the opening of the first democratic parliament, features as part of the Human Resource Development Programme of the RDP.¹¹ It is specifically aimed at contributing 'to the improvement of education quality by enhancing primary school pupils' learning capacity, school attendance and punctuality and to contribute to general health development by alleviating hunger'. There were already plans in 1995 to incorporate this project into the national nutrition scheme. By September 1994 the scheme was being implemented in 50 schools per province. The cost to the RDP fund amounted to R473 million in 1994/95 and R500 million in 1995/6 (RDP/WP, 1994:46).

The White Paper on Education and Training (WPET) (February 1995)

The WPET places specific emphasis on the rights of the child, and the need for a partnership between the Ministries of Health, Welfare and Labour to secure these rights to educational support services. There is also awareness that 'the monitoring and safeguarding of the child's rights to education, health and well-being will require research, advocacy and action on many fronts' (WPET, 1995:43) which will require 'an action plan for Human Rights in Education' (WPET, 1995:52/58). Yet in this context I have been able to find no specific reference to the question of school feeding. In short, educational reconstruction is delinked from the issues I have been concerned to highlight in this paper.

Summary

A common characteristic of policy documents on educational reform has been the lack of any specific attention to the question of school feeding. Where it has been taken up in the presidential lead project, the planning and implementation of the school feeding programme has remained something separate and disconnected from the whole question of reformulating educational policy for a post-apartheid context. The lack of a coherent philosophical/political rationale for the programme and the absence of a framework of governance would seem to weaken this important initiative. The strength of President Mandela's initiative was that it cut through the red tape of parliamentary process and bureaucratic procedures in order to get the scheme off the ground in the shortest possible time. The weakness paralleled that of Hofmeyr's project in the 1940s. It was not sufficiently coherently located in the normal structures of government to provide it with an adequate and systematic infrastructure of support to secure its future. Additional problems arising from the devolution of education provision to the nine new provinces is likely to further weaken the viability of such programmes

given the problems of management and corruption that already began to emerge during 1995. It is only if the rationale and administration for school feeding is firmly established in the context of educational priorities for social development that the future of the project can be secured.

As I have attempted to indicate, the lack of emphasis on the issue of school feeding in South African policy-making is symptomatic of a particular policy silence on such issues in the educational domain internationally at the present time. That silence in itself represents a commitment to a particular view of social policy that has gained a hegemonic position during the last twenty years. That policy which has its origins in neo-liberal political thought, as part of an international campaign against social democracy, is an aspect of the policy thinking of the New World Economic Order.

Despite the lead project, the absence of a school-feeding scheme as an aspect of overall educational policy would seem to be one indicator of a retreat by the ANC from the social democratic or socialist assumptions that were taken for granted in exile, and in the context of UDF resistance politics in the 1980s. Such policy shifts may be unavoidable in the context of the realpolitik of the 1990s; they might even be desirable in terms of the logistics of policy at this particular time. What is necessary is a comprehensive public reappraisal of these assumptions in the light of the history of the liberation struggle and the political forces that are contesting power in the international domain at the present time. The question of how these tensions work themselves out will form the essence of South African politics in the years to come. A major policy challenge for the new government in South Africa is to link its interpretation of democracy to the question of economic growth without losing the essentially social-democratic agenda of the anti-apartheid struggle.

NOTES

1. The National Bureau of Education and Social Research, the forerunner to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), was to play an extremely important role in providing a 'scientific' underpinning to apartheid policy in the years to come.
2. There is remarkably little research on the history of school feeding in South Africa. For what there is see Moll (1985), Paterson and Drummond, (1991) and Tsibani (1993).
3. SAIRR, Survey of Race Relations: 1952-3:94. Also see SAIRR Survey 1948-9 and 1949-50:70; 1950-5:69; 1951-52:67-70.
4. For the background to such organisations in the Western Cape see van Heyningen (1976), and Taylor, (1994).

5. 'Operation Hunger was established in August 1980 in response to the felt need by many voluntary organisations for co-ordinated action on rural hunger and poverty'. Annual Report, Operation Hunger, 1992-3, cover page; Ithuba is a more recent part business/part charity venture, and its contribution to nutrition is yet not well substantiated.
6. Report of Ina Perlman, the Director of Operation Hunger, at the Tenth AGM on 30th September, 1993; also see UNICEF (1995) Report on the State of the World's Children: Section on South Africa (Paris).
7. 'To promote long-term development most African countries should try to increase both public and private expenditures on education ... The broad array of measures appropriate to these objectives will typically include greater non-governmental provision of educational services, thereby raising private resources dedicated to this sector at least in proportion to the increase in public resources'. Recommendation 1 of the World Bank Policy Study (1987).
8. Human Science Research Council (1981) Provision of Education in the RSA (Pretoria, HRSC).
9. African National Congress/South African Communist Party/Congress of South African Trade Unions.
10. In May 1995 a Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) study found that more than nine million South African children were living in 'poverty-stricken households' where they 'are exposed to the risk of impaired physical and mental development'. Nearly two-thirds of those living in poverty were rural blacks (Cape Times 31/5/95).
11. RDP/WP p46; On the day that I completed the first draft of this paper President Mandela, at the opening of the first democratic parliament, announced on behalf of the Government of National Unity that 'a nutritional feeding scheme will be implemented in every primary school where such a need is established' as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme.

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