

Solomon Levinsohn

When death comes shortly after retirement, there is added to the sense of loss and sadness the regret that so little well-earned rest could be enjoyed. Such was the general reaction to the sudden passing in August 1984 of Mr Solomon Levinsohn, who had retired as Natal's Director of Education at the end of January.

He had a distinguished academic career, at Maritzburg College where he was Dux in 1935, and at the Natal University College. In both these places academic achievements were accompanied by sporting honours. Graduation was followed by war service with the Natal Carbineers in North Africa and commissioned rank as a gunnery instructor.

Mr Levinsohn's career in the Natal Education Department was also a distinguished one. At Newcastle and Dundee he soon established himself as a highly successful teacher of Mathematics, and in 1955 a study bursary enabled him to investigate and report on the teaching of Mathematics in



Mr S. Levinsohn.

(Photograph: Natal Witness)

Britain. Later he was in the forefront of the introduction of new ideas and directions in Mathematics teaching in Natal. Principalships and appointment to the inspectorate were followed by a move into academic planning and later the directorate, where he served as a Deputy for some eight years before becoming Director in September 1982. The Natal Education Department's way of carrying out the national policy of differentiated education bears the imprint of Mr Levinsohn's firm belief in a broad formative education up to the end of the senior secondary school. The ideal, for example, of a balance between the sciences and humanities or between the academic and the more specifically vocational, were constantly in mind in his planning of the subject combinations permitted in Natal schools.

Sol Levinsohn was the child of a Jewish-Afrikaner marriage, and this fact, together with his friendly, open nature and his education at English institutions, may account for his remarkable ability to be completely at home in whatever company he found himself. In the latter part of his career his work entailed frequent contact and consultation with other education departments, the teachers' societies, elected advisory school committees and members of provincial and central government. The frequency with which one heard, even before his death, spontaneous and sincere praise from beyond this province's borders for Natal's Levinsohn, is an indication of his personality and the esteem he enjoyed in his profession.

Sol Levinsohn was a man of incisive thought, an accomplished speaker whose grasp of educational matters usually made notes or script unnecessary, a man of absolute integrity, and above all a considerate and understanding friend, colleague and superior. Natal may have hoped that the greater leisure of retirement would enable him to continue his contribution to society in various ways, but this was not to be.

The final eulogy on Brutus in *Julius Caesar* is too often quoted in such circumstances, and one eschews the temptation here. It is enough to say that in his passing we have lost a true gentleman.

JOHN DEANE