

Spoken by?
Introduction



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I am particularly grateful that I was privileged for a period of years to witness in the making, something of the contribution in the sphere of race relations of that incomparable and noble S. African, the late Jan Hofmeyr.

Always his was the voice of the prophet, the teacher and the crusader. No wonder Gen. Smuts described him as the 'conscience' of S. Africa. By his precepts and his practices, by his words and his deeds, he showed that you could, in political life, set principles above expediency, as your guiding star. And he always insisted that it was the only safe course. "It is my conviction" he declared, "that it is necessary in politics, to put principle above expediency, and consistency above opportunism".

In 1938, when he tendered his resignation from the Cabinet, because of the appointment to the Cabinet of Mr. Fourie, he again rang out his challenge! It touches he said "what I regard, and most people regard, as the ultimate political issue in S.A." "The issue" he said "is simply this, are we going to allow the N.E. people to be made pawns in the white man's political game"? It reminded one of his declaration of faith a year earlier, when on the Native Laws Amendment Bill he declared "this Clause implies the denial of the principle that the native shares with the white man, a common humanity

that denial I am not prepared to subscribe to.

These are not subtle doctrines, but simple and basic declarations of first principle. The extent to which these indisputable principles are respected or rejected, determines the extent to which our race relations as between European and Non European improve or deteriorate. And who can doubt, that relations between Eur. and Non.Eur, have fallen on evil days? There is tension in the land. There is burning resentment. There is foreboding. There is everything about us of the stuff of which crises are made.

In 1936, when the Representation of Natives Bill, the counterpart of the Coloured People's Rep. Bill, which is now before the Courts, was before Parliament, Hofmeyer warned that race relations would deteriorate. We were sowing the seeds, he warned, of a far greater potential conflict than was being done by anything else then in existence. All that the Bill was doing for educated natives was to make them leaders of their own people in disaffection and revolt. The introduction of the ~~discriminatory~~ principle in the Bill, would not, he said, make for peace and safety, but for hostility and conflict. But, he added, "I know how my remarks will be described as academic and quixotic and unrealistic. I am accustomed to that," but these are matters on which the future must be left to judge. I express the belief, that the tide of reaction will turn, I believe that there is a rising tide of liberalism". He was right. History has judged, and history has judged that Hofmeyer the prophet was right, but Hofmeyer the Crusader, was mistaken. The tide of reaction

hasnt turned, it has gathered momentum, and Liberalism has suffered grievous setbacks. The hostility and the conflict which he foreshadowed, has come about, and has assumed proportions which even he probably little dreamed of. Since he uttered his last warning, much fuel has been heaped on the fire. Educated Africans have become, as he warned, leaders of their people, in disaffection and révolt. The evidence of it all hangs heavily about us. No responsible S.A. will be unmoved for example, by the threat of civil disobedience of the African National Congress. No sensible S. African will be unaware of the deep seated feelings which it reflects. I shall come back to the challenge of the African Congress, and the P.M.'s warning to it.

When war was declared in August 1914, Sir Edward Grey, the then British Foreign Secy. looking out of the window of the Foreign Office, and contemplating the future, coined an expression which became a classic. "The lights of Europe, he said are going out one by one". Recently there ceased publication of a liberal journal in S.A. devoted to better race relations with which many of you were no doubt familiar - "Common Sense". That followed shortly after the closing down of ~~the~~ another liberal journal "The Forum". A large number of readers of Common Snese, wrote to express their profound regret. Interestingly enough, several of them used Sir Edward Grey's expression. "The lights they said" are going out in S.A. one by one".

Were they right? or was it merely rhetoric? They were repeating what the P.M. had said in a recent debate, when he acknowledged that race relations had deteriorated. But

they were repeating it with a difference. The P.M. had a simple remedy. If the English speaking Press would only stop criticising the Govt. all would be well. But liberals who see the lights going out one by one, see that the tide of reaction hasnt turned, that it is gathering force, and that it is threatening. That as between the European sections mistrust is being engendered. The foundations that have been laid for racial co-operation and harmony are being undermined. They see that the Non-European is rapidly losing confidence in the integrity of the white man, and hostility is thus being fostered and encouraged. *will*

S.A. has become as we know only too well, the unfortunate victim of unmerciful criticism overseas. The fierce searchlight of world opinion is constantly focused upon us. Our prestige which was so high at the end of the war, has suffered. And in all this, S.Africans who should be asking themselves, how far, if at all, this criticism is justified because while a good deal is unfair and unwarranted, there is nevertheless some substance in it. S.Africans who should be asking where the remedy lies, tend instead of searching our national conscience, to skulk behind a curtain of resentment. And it doesnt help our problems, to retort tu quoque to our accusers.

Our race relations are governed by three co-related influences. The tyranny of ~~prejudice~~ *each 2 examples*, the curse of fear, and ~~unpardonable boorishness~~. Perhaps you will wonder what I mean by that. I do not mean the repudiation of the common humanity of all God's children

that is prejudice. I do not mean the lack of respect for human personality,irrespect-
-ive of colour-that is prejudice.I mean the
inexcusability of that behaviour which need-
lessly hurts-the thoughtless word,the Coolie
Kaffir,Hotnot jibe-the expression of thought,
and in language which wound men and women
w.who are entitled to be treated as self respec-
ting human beings.We should be unwise to
minimise the justifiable resentment and the
extent of it,that is felt at the repeated
pinpricks our non European people are need-
lessly made to suffer. And it all costs so
little,to be decent and just and respectful.
I am reminded of a story of Onze Jan.A colour-
-ed man,passing in a Capecart had his hat
blown off in the wind.Onze Jan stooped and
picked it up and returned it.A friend with
him,expressed surprise at his condescension
to a 'dirty nigger' .Here was white supremacy
making it's voice heard,and Onze Jan replied
'but he would have done the same for me" This
lack of feeling,is a serious contributing
factor to our worsening race relations,both
between white and white,and white and non-
European.

And what of prejudice? A people
is assessed only in part by it's material
progress.In the final analysis it is still
the moral law,the degree of it's moral
probity which is the criterion upon which
nations are judged.And prejudice is a
negation of the moral law. I do not invite
you to be disturbed by every prejudice.We
can have our prejudices against crooners,
and surrealism and Picasso and detective
novels.Not all gentlemen prefer blondes,but

prejudices which disturb race relations, are prejudicial to S. Africa - these I invite you to resent. Thomas Jefferson it was who said, "I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man" and here in S.A. the greatest evil of all is the tyranny of prejudice.

Time and again in his campaign for sanity and righteousness in our dealings with non-Europeans, Hofmeyer turned to the problem of prejudice. May I with your permission quote you because his eloquence is so matchless, and extract or two from a speech he made in J. Burg in March 1946. ("It is a mockery to talk of ourselves as a free people, while we are as a nation to so large an extent, the slaves of prejudice, while we allow our sense of dislike of colour, of some of our fellow S. Africans, to stand in the way of dealing fairly with them") ("More and more S.A. is suffering because it's dominant attitudes of mind do not measure up to what are coming to be accepted internationally as standards of value - ten years ago it was announced, with a great flourish of trumpets that we had found a solution of our native problem, but there was no change in our herrenvolk mentality. I said then at an address I delivered at this University, that it was futile to make such a claim" to-day there are few people who would not agree that I was right")

And what of fear? We fear competition, from the Non European because of his numbers. But whether you argue from the humane point of view, or from the angle of commonsense economics the white man stands to gain, rather than to lose, by the native's economic progress. Britain's Industrial development throughout the years, leaves no doubt of that.

This Govt. represents in outlook a section of a section of the white races in S.A. It represents a minority of the electorate. But it rules in a fashion which could only be justified if it had the greater majority of the population behind it. Governments are the servants of the people, and not their masters.

In the field of Non European affairs the deterioration in race relations has in recent years been disastrous. What are the reasons? One reason I think is the loss of confidence in the sanctity of the Constitution and its safeguards. The readiness with which the non-European has seen pledges broken. Another is the legitimate fear that the rule of law that cardinal principle of any democratic system, which places no man above the law, and deprives no man of its security, is no longer the final refuge from arbitrary rule and injustice. It was La Salle who once said "if anyone starts saying that we must defend the Constitution, we may be sure that the Constitution is as good as dead". We may still save the Constitution in S.A. but the sanctity of the rule of law, has been impeached with impunity. Citizen John and Citizen Kumalo have been deprived in many instances by legislative enactment of access to the Courts for their protection, and when fear of injustice in a rising

tide of reaction, gnaws at the vitals, it disturbs those more, who are likely to suffer more.

The very essence of democracy is that the legislative program of a Govt. reflects the broad will of the people. In what fashion are the views of non-Europeans tested? Almost every instrument of consultation have gone. The N.R.C. has been scrapped, and the pattern of our legislation has become law-making, by the force of the upper hand. How can we hope to solve our racial difficulties by unilateral action, without co-operation and without mutual trust, and respect and understanding? Can we hope for anything but resentment, if legislation follows not conciliation, but coercion? Can we hope to rule four fifth of the population without their co-operation? and one slogan of white supremacy?

That brings me to the very grave decision taken by the African National Congress. A decision communicated to the P.M. to stage a mass demonstration of civil disobedience, if in the language of the challenge, 'the harsh and repressive legislation' affecting non-Europeans was not amended.

Die Burger has conceded that sections of the native population are in a state of dissatisfaction and excitement, and that they have some legitimate grievances. It is not easy to know, how far this decision represents the view of the majority of Africans. It probably does not, but it is a grave situation none the less. The P.M. replied to the threat with two statements. One which was right and proper, the other deplorable and calculated to worsen the situation. He

warned Congress that the Govt. would not tolerate a violation of the law. He was in duty bound to tell Congress that the Govt. would maintain law and order. But that he should have told them, as he did, that the Non European peoples of S.A. have no hope of ever obtaining by constitutional and legitimate means, any effective representation in the affairs of the country, was but to add resentment at a declaration of policy that is as unrealistic as it is inequitable. It is calculated to add fuel to the flames, to weaken the hands of the moderates and to strengthen the influence of the extremists. It is to be hoped that Non European leaders will think again, that despite this challenge of subservience, that they will not drown the voices of moderation. That they will not undermine the goodwill of moderate European opinion.

I've always believed that what the non European resents primarily, in the notion of separation or apartheid, is the subservience that is implied, the inferiority that is insisted upon. That their fears are justified is reflected in the recent P.O. case. So much for the problem.

In what does the answer lie?

In my humble view, it doesn't lie in the creation of new parties. This is a time in the political field, for consolidation and not dissipation of effort. It lies in fighting reaction through the instruments at hand. It lies in an uncomfortable awareness on our part, of how much of the truth we cannot see, through prejudice. It lies in re-echoing Jefferson's vow, and swearing eternal hostility to

the tyranny of prejudice. It lies in faith not fear, it lies in holding the bridges, and re-establishing lines of communication, in a struggle that may be long and arduous, but which is inevitable, if we are to win back the confidence of our fellow men, in a return to sanity and a better S. Africa for them and for us.

"Freedom from prejudice - that is not the least of the freedoms for which we must fight. We are paying a very heavy price for our subservience to it today. Part of that price is material - undoubtedly we are poorer as a nation because of our unwillingness to make full use of our human resources. Part of it is being paid in the loss of international esteem and goodwill. We can't hide our prejudices away in a cupboard from inspection by others.

But our chief loss is a moral loss. As long as we continue to apply a dual standard in South Africa to determine our attitudes towards, and our relationships with, European and non-European on different ethical bases, to assign to Christian doctrine a significance which varies with the colour of a man's skin, we suffer as a nation from what Plato would have called the lie in the soul - and the curse of Iscariot may yet be our fate for our betrayal of the Christian doctrine which we profess".