

CIVIL RIGHTS



News Letter

(Box 3807, Cape Town)

December, 1957

Human Rights Day

Tuesday, December 10, 1957 will be the ninth anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Human Rights by the General Assembly of the United Nations (South Africa and a few others unfortunately not being among the signatories). This year your Committee has decided to respond to the request of UNESCO and celebrate this by holding a public lunch-hour meeting at 1 p.m. Place, the grounds of the Cathedral. Speakers, the Dean (Very Rev. T. J. Savage), Professor Rollo and Mr D. van der Ross, Senior. The meeting should last about half an hour.

This is not a political meeting, but simply an opportunity for the ordinary man and woman to hear more about the principles underlying the Declaration, and to reaffirm their belief in the rights of the individual. It is not connected with the Declaration of Conscience to which we referred in last month's issue.

Please come, and tell your friends about it.

Our New Patron

It is with great pleasure that we welcome His Grace the Archbishop of Cape Town as a Patron of the League. We greatly appreciate the Archbishop's kindness in thus following in the footsteps of the late Archbishop Clayton.

"Undesirable" Publications

Because of the complex and highly technical nature of the Report of the Commission on Undesirable Literature, we do not wish to comment on it in detail until our Chairman and others have given it thorough study. We hope to do so later.

It is interesting to note, however, that the State Information Office in its "Fortnightly Digest" (October 11) carried a report on this document, but omitted any reference to the Commission's recommendations on racial and political matters!

"NUSAS News"

We congratulate NUSAS on its encyclopaedic News Letter, which is a mine of information on many aspects of civil rights, particularly as they affect the student community.

Then why ...?

The "Star" reports that, on his retirement, Mr P. F. Kincaid, Chairman of the Union Board of Censors, "has confessed that in his opinion national morals are no better than they were when he took over the job". The paper comments: "We may pardonably find in this conclusion one more proof of the relative futility of censorship."

For how long ...?

Mr Eric Louw has told the Johannesburg Press Club: "There is no need to speak of the freedom of the press in South Africa because the press in South Africa is absolutely free." The same Minister told the Cape Nationalist Congress at Port Elizabeth: "South Africa is proud of her free press, and it would be a sad day for the country if the freedom of the press should in any way be tampered with, in spite of its undermining propaganda."

Perhaps we have reason to be grateful for Mr Louw's press-cutting hobby! Is it too much to hope that he will maintain this attitude uncompromisingly in the Cabinet?

Language Medium in the Transvaal

The Transvaal Provincial Council has passed the third reading of the Draft Education Amendment Ordinance, which gives the Administrator absolute power to determine the language medium of schools.

The Home and School Council, representing more than 100,000 parents, attacked the Ordinance on three grounds:-

- (a) disapproval of the absolute powers given to the Administrator and support for parental choice of language medium;
- (b) support for parallel-medium schools which, it claimed, encouraged bilingualism;
- (c) condemnation of the provision which denies parents direct access to the Education Department and allows it only through school committees.

All this - and unilingualism too!

The Administrator, speaking on the Ordinance, is reported to have said:

"The amendment puts it beyond doubt that preference must be given to the single-medium school. Only in a single-medium school can religion, mother-tongue and the culture of a people (1) come into its own right. These are the principal ways of moulding a child's character and must be used by the school, without encumbrance, to that end."

If this is carried to its logical conclusion, how many peoples will South Africa have?

'tu quoque' argument

Commenting on Bishop Reeves's recent condemnation of the attempt to maintain white supremacy in a racially mixed society as "flagrantly immoral", "Die Burger" asks why the Nationalist Party only should be singled out for condemnation. (Bishop Reeves, of course, did not do this; what he said was that the Church "had no alternative but to demand a radical change in national - not Nationalist - policy.)

"Die Burger" complained that while apartheid was analysed and condemned, "we are never told how the colour policy looks which would be reconcilable with Christianity".

At the time of going to press, the Multi-racial Conference in Johannesburg is answering this complaint in no uncertain terms. We shall await the comments of apartheid supporters with interest.

We suggest that "Die Burger" might with advantage study Prof. Keet's "The Ethics of Apartheid", in which the answer is very clearly given. It might be summed up in the saying: "Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you."

"Die Burger"'s crowning argument is: "If the franchise policy the Nationalist Party (on the Coloured franchise) is unchristian, is that of the United Party also?" But this is merely evading the issue. It is our responsibility - and the "Burger"'s as much as any - to find the right policy, irrespective of what anyone else's may be. Since when, anyway, has the "Burger" regarded United Party policy as a standard for that of the Government?

Africans and the Crime Wave

"Ilanga lase Natal", discussing the incidence of crime and violence in the cities, says it is amazing "that at the recent congress of the Nationalist Party held at Port Elizabeth this burning question was not discussed. Instead there was a spate of resolutions urging the Government to exercise stricter control

over Africans, disregarding the fact that the present great multiplicity of laws that govern our people are so confusing and irritating that, no matter how a person tries to avoid breaking them, he finds it almost impossible to do so.

"Hundreds of our people have been brought into close contact with hardened criminals in prisons for statutory offences that are not crimes when applied to other racial groups. Pass and liquor laws have driven thousands of Africans into prisons. Municipal regulations have also made their contributions towards this unhealthy state of affairs.

"The result of all this is a hardened and cynical outlook among those who are constantly and quite unnecessarily brought into contact with the application of the many restrictive and discriminatory laws. And a fixed community of persons soon springs up which neither cares nor worries about the law and goes about determined to flout it regardless of consequences. The iron hand will not eradicate this evil; in fact it will only aggravate it. People go into big crime quite aware of the risks involved. But because most of them live from hand to mouth anyway, they do not mind taking these extra risks to augment their meagre earnings. All this goes to prove that most of the crime that is rampant among Africans to-day is due to bad economic ... conditions. Let the country face the truth that living conditions as they affect the vast number of non-whites are not conducive to healthy and orderly lives ... Responsible African opinion and assistance must also be enlisted. No conferences on the crime wave will be successful if enlightened African opinion is ignored, as is the tendency when African matters are discussed."

Pamphlet

Copies of Archbishop Clayton's pamphlet, "The Citizen and His Right of Association", are still available from this office (1s.2d post free). Many of the orders so far received have been sent along with the annual subscription (minimum, 5/- per calendar year). We respectfully commend this idea to our members.

Membership

If you have not yet found a use for the membership forms sent out last month, why not give a friend a year's subscription as a Xmas gift? More forms available on request - or we will inform your friends if you send in the names and subscriptions! And what about your own? XMAS AND NEW YEAR GREETINGS TO ALL OUR READERS!

MOYA