

CIVIL RIGHTS

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News Letter

(Box 3807, Cape Town)

June, 1958

The League and Political Parties

After reading our May News Letter, one of our members wrote a friendly note suggesting to us that it would be unwise to allow the News Letter "to become, or even to appear to be, an organ of the Liberal Party" (no prize offered for identifying the paragraph he referred to!).

We agree wholeheartedly with our correspondent that such a happening would be most undesirable, and must apologise for the fact that we inadvertently spelt "liberal" with a capital "L" (which, as someone once remarked, makes an "l" of a difference!). The League from its inception has made it clear that it is not allied with any one political party. We have always considered ourselves free to commend or criticise any Party when the need arose, and have on divers occasions commended a particular stand taken, for example, by the United or Labour Party; but we have never been accused of being an "organ" of either. Perhaps that is because we have no Nationalist members! This, we think, is a great pity. We would be delighted to have Nationalist members who were in agreement with our principles. Nor should we hesitate to commend the present Government for any action that accorded with those principles!

But humanum est errare, and we are grateful to any of our members who are kind enough to pull us back if we stray from the paths of rectitude. Moreover, it shows that you read the News Letter!

Group Areas and African Education

Another member has sent us a cutting from the "Southern Cross" about the threatened closing of the Notre Dame Convent for African girls at Venterspost West, Transvaal under the provisions of the Group Areas Act. The school (built seven years ago at a cost of over £30,000) stands in 75 acres of land, miles from any European dwelling, and is in every way a model school. The same provisions are being invoked against an African nursery school at Sophiatown and another at Lamontville (near Durban). The well-known Methodist Training College at Kilnerton, near Pretoria, suffered a similar fate.

The "Southern Cross" comments: "Gladdest of all (at this news) should be ... the Communists. They, indeed, should welcome yet another blow at the Christian Faith which fortifies the mind against their invasion."

University Autonomy

The Institute of Race Relations, as was to be expected, took a strong line in its representations to the Commission on the Implementation of the Separate University Education Bill. The Institute's delegation recommended

- (1) that the new colleges should, for both practical and prestige reasons, be sponsored by existing universities.
- (2) That their controlling bodies should be multi-racial and widely representative.
- (3) That full courses with high university standards should be conducted by the sponsoring universities.
- (4) That independent college authorities, and not the Minister of Native Affairs, should have the power of admitting students.
- (5) That to avoid the breeding of an anti-white, black nationalist attitude of mind in the students, the new university colleges should be established in urban and peri-urban areas, near cultural and other facilities.
- (6) That the staffs should not be civil servants, and should not be subject to a disciplinary code involving any threat to academic integrity, free analysis and discussion. Staff members should also have an ultimate appeal to the courts of the land.

It is heartening to find that representatives of Pretoria University also urged that the senates of those colleges should include African members; that U.C.T. and Wits should remain "open"; and that non-white students should be allowed to do post-graduate study there. They also felt that ethnic grouping in these colleges should not be absolutely rigid.

Representatives of Potchefstroom University also recommended that Rhodes University and Natal should continue to control Fort Hare and the Durban Medical School; that the councils of these bodies should be inter-racial, should include elected African members and should have the right of appointing their own staffs.

BUT how much weight will these representations carry? Take, for instance, a statement by Dr Verwoerd recently:

"We do not want to allow (Africans) in the same university as the young European students of to-day, who are the leaders of tomorrow. We do not want the Europeans to become so accustomed to the Native that they feel there is no difference between them and the Natives"!

And what about Mr J. H. Griesel, U.P. candidate, at Pietersburg, Transvaal? "No self-respecting white man would send his child to an

open university"!

Censorship and C.N.O.

In a pamphlet issued by the Education Group of United English-speaking South Africans (UNESSA), Miss Christina van Heyningen says: "Censorship offends against both God and man. It is not for men to decide what other men shall think. It is not for men to 'mould' other minds, as the C.N.O. policy advocates. When they do that, they are turning themselves into gods..."

"C.N.O. schools imprison children in mental coops with used-up air ... Let it be our business to open windows and let in a great rush of air. Let us open the doors too and welcome the unknown."

Miss van Heyningen urges teachers to "protest against the language medium ordinance, the Bantu Education law, the Van der Bijl Park and all similar rulings, the censorship of school libraries ... Oppose everywhere the idea that education should be taken over from the Provinces by the Government* ... In the Transvaal, sabotage the censorship of school libraries. Lend and give good books freely."

(* It is reported in the 'Star' that Coloured education is likely to be transferred to the central government and placed under the Department of Coloured Affairs.)

The New Five-year Plan

As we go to press we learn that the United Party is shortly to produce a new five-year plan for its branches. We respectfully suggest that it might well include a course on "things to protest about" - and that high on the list should come any proposals for censorship.

Censorship and Afrikaans Literature

In a recent memorandum the South African Book Trade has deplored as "gratuitous and potentially dangerous" the Cronje Commission's suggestion that an authority other than the courts should be vested with the power to decide whether certain publications are undesirable. It points out that the censorship recommendations involve the threat of absolute suppression for the Afrikaans author. If his views are not identical with the Commission's, he must sacrifice his integrity to secure publication, or be denied outlet for and return from his work.

Film Censorship

It is disquieting to hear from the Secretary for Social Welfare that the Government is considering 'taking steps against films foreign to our national characteristics'. The "Sunday Times" comments: "It is not difficult to imagine the subjects which a government-selected panel would consider 'unnational'."

Commenting on the cutting of "Island in the Sun" (about one-quarter of it was alleged to have been taken out), one writer to the "Cape Times" says: "Are we considered so immature that other views on the colour problem might be an undesirable influence?"

An Unguarded Moment ...?

At an election meeting in Port Elizabeth Mr P. W. Botha, chief secretary of the Nationalist Party in the Cape, is reported to have warned English-language newspapers that the Prime Minister would "deal with them mercilessly" when he was returned to power!

It happens in the Transvaal ...

The Krugersdorp Town Council has recently passed a resolution to ban mixed meetings in the town. The Council's Non-European Affairs Committee reported that the Krugersdorp Non-European Child Welfare Society was holding mixed meetings in the hall of St Peter's Church, and that it considered such meetings 'undesirable'!

And the National Council of Women could not hold its Biennial Conference in the Town Hall at Rustenburg because the municipal authorities would not allow non-white delegates to attend meetings there!

Their own interests

A speaker at the recent SABRA conference urged that more could and should be done about the education and training of Coloured people on farms, because, apart from other considerations, it would increase their productivity in their own interests as well as that of the farmers (*italics ours*).

Political Rights for Teachers

African teachers in Northern Rhodesia may now join a political party and speak in public. They may not, however, express their views in school or to a group of children; nor may they support a political party advocating "disrespect for or disobedience to any law in force at the time".

Well done, NUSAS!

Our congratulations on their May News Letter - valuable to anyone interested in educational matters.

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