

CIVIL RIGHTS

News Letter

(Box 3807, Cape Town)

July, 1958



Capital Injustice

We are indebted to the Institute of Race Relations for its very able analysis of the Group Areas proclaimed in Pretoria on June 6. Almost the entire built-up area of the administrative capital has been zoned for occupation by whites, although the change-over process may take anything from one to seven years. Briefly, this is how the various racial groups will be affected.

Whites: A very few families may have to move from the area proclaimed for Indians. No others will be affected.

Chinese: No group area proclaimed. Will probably be allowed to continue trading in their present premises under permit, but as most, if not all, of their properties will be in defined areas, they cannot make any extensions or alterations to their premises except under permit.

Coloured People: About 7,900 people, practically all of whom will have to move (in from one to seven years) to an undeveloped area (Derdepoort) nine or ten miles from Pretoria.

Indians: 7,300, largely traders (some established for 75 years) who will have to move from the centre of the city to an undeveloped area for Indians, thus losing their white, coloured and African customers.

Africans: About 60,000 in Lady Selborne and Claremont will have to move to locations with "economic" rents and high transport costs.

It is not surprising that Professor Pistorius has called for a Commission to go into the whole matter of group areas in Pretoria.

Alan Paton, discussing in "Contact" the proclamations in Durban, says: "There is no common good worth pursuing that allows individual persons to be broken.

"Who blackens the name of South Africa abroad? Those who protest against this evil law, or those who made it?"

More power to Professor du Plessis!

Professor du Plessis, speaking as a convinced Nationalist and a believer in territorial apartheid, has nevertheless said a number of pertinent and valuable things recently. For instance:

"It is my opinion that it is high time that we accepted our non-white countrymen, all of them, as fellow South Africans and, in principle at least, as future fellow-citizens..."

"White baasskap over non-whites purely on the basis of colour must now be rejected in principle. The practical removal of the principle can be gradually worked out together. But it must be accomplished (sic) immediately by the ideal of freedom for all non-whites to mould their own destiny with the co-operation of all Europeans.

"We cannot wait any longer to make the move. Our time is running out...

"Once we have exchanged white baasskap (which was necessary in its time) for co-operative emancipation of the non-whites and the joint development of South Africa by Afrikaners, South Africans and Africans, then we can hold valuable talks with non-white leaders with 'the right look in the eye'."

Such talks would have to be held with "those leaders among the Natives who are to-day regarded as the rebels and agitators - for it is they who represent the national aspirations of the Bantu and enjoy the confidence of the largest section of their racial group". Matters he suggests for discussion include

the joint development of the Bantu reserves with the help of overseas capital, and at the same time the removal of non-whites from white areas, as well as the compensation that will need to be paid,

the possibility of gradual federal partitioning of Southern Africa among the various racial groups, with eventual national independence for each.

"There must be a provision, however, that if such partition proves impossible we shall agree also to examine the possibility of gradual introduction of equality for all on a basis of the culture already attained.

"Many different problems can be tackled, all with the object of removing discrimination against non-whites without submerging the whites."

Probably, he says, it would be better to confer first with the Bantu; but the meetings must soon include Coloured people and Indians.

"Ilanga lase Natal" welcomes Professor du Plessis's willingness for talks with the real leaders of the Africans, and says: "The tendency on the part of the authorities in the past (and even now in some quarters) has been to choose those leaders they felt Africans should have as their spokesmen. In many cases these leaders were not acceptable to the people and their discussions

with the authorities were discredited even before they began.

"Why should leaders be regarded as dangerous, just because they will not accept what their consciences feel is not right, and when they speak out on what they sincerely feel are the needs and aspirations of their people?"

We do not agree with Professor du Plessis about the desirability or practicability of complete territorial apartheid; but we feel that the fundamental principle is that of free and equal discussion. Given that - and a willingness to accept its results - we should be in a position to begin working out a basis for our living together.

aparttheid and the Churches

Ds P. J. van der Westhuizen, speaking at the University of Cape Town Y.M.C.A. recently, said that a distinction should be drawn between segregation by law and "voluntary" segregation (which he said existed in the Dutch Reformed Church). The Dutch Reformed Church, he said, "believed in the unity of Christ, regardless of race or colour", but it was not always easy to apply the principles in practice. "If all other things were equal, the N.G. Kerk could not accept segregation solely on the grounds of colour. (italics ours). It could tolerate it perhaps as a temporary measure, but would certainly speak against the principle."

Yet even SABRA can evade this issue - at least in the Transvaal, where its Vice-Chairman recently told a joint meeting of its members and the Afrikaans Studentebond that "without blood mingling there could never be talk of integration between white and black in South Africa. The essential differences (italics ours) between the two races were too great"! The speaker referred to the "otherness" of the Bantu (their spiritual attitude and belief in ancestral care for all, their intimate personal connection with ancestors and living nature, their particular style of life of wonder at the unknown), which he said precluded integration with the whites - traits which the Afrikaner wanted to help to develop towards "Bantu maturity"!

The Archbishop

Commenting on the controversy that has flared up around our Archbishop's utterances in the U.S.A., "Contact" says:

"To the casual observer, it is obvious that white South Africa's nerves are on edge, and almost any criticism of apartheid is likely to trigger off a reaction of far greater dimensions than

the original stimulus." The paper points out that those who have so vigorously protested against the Archbishop's criticisms of the Dutch Reformed Church have never objected to that body's frequent attacks on the Roman Catholic Church!

But "Contact" makes an even more important point which other commentators so far seem to have missed. "The overriding concern of the Archbishop", it says, "has been to avoid the identification of the Anglican Church with the policy of apartheid which the past practices of the Church may have encouraged. For unless such identification is combated in the public mind, black as well as white, all Africa may be lost to the influence not merely of the Anglican Church, but of any Christian Church."

Now we know!

Mr de Wet Nel, speaking at Adelaide, recently made two unusually frank statements for a Cabinet Minister (perhaps he has not yet learned ministerial restraint). According to the "Natal Witness" Mr Nel stated that "the Nationalist Party would rule supreme when the eighteen-year-olds got the vote" (there have been considerable qualms expressed by correspondents of "Die Burger", including some under eighteen, about this proposal). He also said that as Minister of Education "he would strive for a Christian-National foundation in the schools" (and, incidentally, unity and harmony in the teaching profession!).

Quis custodiet...?

The "watchdog committee" established by Dr Verwoerd (by proclamation on June 13) to "advise" the Johannesburg City Council on African affairs is the most blatant inroad yet on the powers of a local authority. This is the kind of thing that can be done administratively nowadays without even bringing it before Parliament - far less taking the views of the local authority concerned into account.

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P.M. Brown