

CIVIL



RIGHTS

ALAN
PATON
CENTRE
UNP.

News Letter

Box 3807

Cape Town

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A Reminder

Bring your friends to hear GARFIELD TODD in the City Hall on Friday, December 12 at 7.45 (for 8.15). A few "early door" tickets still available from the Secretary. Subject, "DEMOCRACY".

Our New Look

Our readers may be wondering why this news letter has changed its format for the third time in four months. This is because the League's Committee, taking to heart the repeated suggestions that the news letter should have a wider circulation, tried the experiment of printing it and inviting like-minded organisations to place bulk orders for distribution to their own members. To justify the cost of printing, considerable bulk orders would have been necessary. Although our news letter was most sympathetically and even enthusiastically received, however, we have not so far received orders which would make the continuation of printing possible. We have therefore decided on a compromise which we hope will make the news letter more attractive, while not involving such a serious increase in cost.

Co-operation

We wish to express our very sincere appreciation of the co-operation of several organisations which, though unable to place bulk orders, offered to circulate copies for us, together with membership forms. As a result we have gained a number of new members, and have certainly been brought to the notice of many people who had not previously heard of us. We would again commend to our readers the idea of sending us gift subscriptions for their friends, or alternatively sending us names and addresses for our free mailing list. This is a good time to do it - so DO IT NOW.

Human Rights Day

We are glad to learn that a Human Rights Day meeting is also to be held in Durban on Monday. Two of the three speakers are regular readers of this news letter!

The Rape of the Passports

It might almost be suspected that our Government deliberately seeks unfavourable publicity. Recently it refused a passport to Mr Lewis Nkosi, a journalist who had been awarded a scholarship at Harvard University, and eventually "granted" him an exit permit which precludes him from returning to his native land. As we go to press comes the news of the seizure of Mr Alan Paton's passport on his return to South Africa. This denial and confiscation of passports is, of course, a serious infringement of the rights of the individual, but it is a singularly foolish one as well. It will receive far more publicity overseas than anything that Mr Nkosi or Mr Paton could say or write, and will do more than almost anything we can think of to bring home, both to South Africans and to the outside world, the restrictions placed on our freedom of speech and movement.

Biassed broadcasting

Almost as serious as the seizure of Mr Paton's passport is the vigorous attack on him made by the SABC in its "Topic for Tonight" on the same day. This, again, is amazingly ill-judged if it is considered that it will do any harm either to Mr Paton or to the principles for which he stands. Our allegedly impartial SABC has since refused either to allow Mr Paton to reply, or to give him an opportunity of replying to any questions asked by the broadcasters.

This should make us realise how seriously slanted our thinking would become if we had no free press to bring home to us the bias which now controls our broadcasting system.

The next step

There are persistent rumours that the next session of Parliament will see the introduction of a 'Publications and Entertainments Bill' which will provide for pre-publication censorship of all publications in this country, under the control of a Censorship Board which will operate without out the possibility of appeal to the Courts. In the draft Bill it is laid down that this Board "shall not approve any book or periodical which in its opinion is indecent, obscene or on any ground objectionable". In our October news letter we referred to an address on this subject given by Professor D. V. Cowen at the University of Cape Town, and we are glad that this lecture has now been published by NUSAS. We commend it to all our readers.

It is heartening to know that this Bill has brought forth a vigorous protest from Mr Justice J. F. Marais of the Transvaal Supreme Court, who, in an article in Standpunte, maintains that the proposed internal censorship is unnecessary, and the Bill dangerously bypasses the Courts, whereas the existing laws, if applied properly, are enough to stop the incidence of undesirable literature. The judge says that if South African publications were read with the same thoroughness as imported material, and prosecutions instituted where necessary, a few convictions would be enough to ensure that such undesirable matter was not sold. If, he says, there are shortcomings in the existing law, they will quickly become apparent when the law is applied. "Before we make changes in the system," he says, "the present system can safely be put to the test."

The "Burger" comments, "The merits of the proposal are that it is simple and that the courts retain full authority, while the alternative proposal, contained in the proposed Bill, is complicated and eliminates the courts to some extent ... No one wants censorship ... We trust that, when the Bill is considered, the Assembly will consider this newest proposal as well ..."

Natal and Human Rights

The result of the referendum has produced stirrings in Natal. Not only has the Natal Provincial Council passed a resolution demanding the entrenchment of such fundamental rights as freedom of worship and religious assembly, equality of Afrikaans and English, the right of parental choice in education, the freedom and autonomy of universities, freedom of the Press and of opinion, and the continuation of the powers of Provincial Councils. In addition, two non-racial meetings have been held, one in P.M.B. which demanded a Natal Convention on non-racial lines to "formulate new policies in all those fields in which the citizens of Natal can act independently of the Central Government", and the other in Durban, attended by about 20,000 people, supporting the Provincial Council's resolution "to secure for the people of Natal for all time those basic essentials of democratic freedom which are clearly stated therein".

These resolutions have since been conveyed to the Prime Minister, and all South Africa, as well as Natal, will await his comments with interest.

Nothing new ...

The much-heralded "new deal" for the Coloured people, announced by Dr Verwoerd this week, has turned out to have nothing new and

certainly nothing encouraging in it. Such positive proposals as there are simply fill in the framework of apartheid, and seem no more than window-dressing to distract the mind from Dr Verwoerd's refusal to give the Coloured people direct or extended representation in Parliament. Even in the economic field, job reservation is to continue. Coloured leaders have unanimously, though with varying degrees of vigour, condemned the proposals as completely unsatisfactory.

The Afrikaner Conscience

Meanwhile there have been protests even from confirmed Nationalists. Two recent books ("Die Opkoms van die Derde Stand", by Ds D. P. Botha, and "Vertraagde Reaksie", by eleven Dutch Reformed clergymen, are striking instances of this trend. Five Stellenbosch professors, active in SABRA, have called for a new approach to the Coloured people and for their election to Parliament to represent their own group. A theological professor of the Dutch Reformed Missionary Institute at Wellington has called for a new attitude to our Indian population. The vital question is whether, for people like these and those who agree with them, conscience is to prevail over group and political loyalty. There can be little doubt that this possibility is causing concern to Dr Verwoerd.

Urban authorities and the African

Mr de Wet Nel has caused considerable concern by circulating to municipalities, "confidentially", a proposal for legislation which would, it is said, cut right across local government autonomy as far as the control of urban Africans is concerned, authorising paid Government officials to attend city council meetings and influence local government policy. Among other controversial provisions is one which could revive the "church clause" controversy. Perhaps because of the storm of protest aroused, Mr Nel has hastened to announce that the Bill is "tentative", and in particular that he has no intention of depriving local authorities of their say in the implementation of the "church clause". Bills such as this need to be watched with the utmost vigilance, and we hope other City Councils besides Cape Town's are doing so.

Summer School

The U.C.T. Summer School in February, 1961 will include a course on "The Problem of Free Speech" which we strongly commend to any of our readers who can attend. Further information from the Department of Extra-Mural Studies, U.C.T., Rondebosch. There is also a course on "Changing Africa" which should be highly interesting.