

CIVIL



RIGHTS

News Letter

Box 3807

Cape Town

February, 1961



PC16/21/5/15

Taking Stock

Parliament has assembled, but it has not yet got into full swing. This fact allows us to take stock of things and to consider what our aim and programme should be in 1961. We hope our readers will bear with us if they are asked to do some of the thinking: and we shall be grateful if they will share the results of their thinking with us.

TALK Civil Rights!

Further reflection on the Human Rights Day meeting suggests some points for consideration. What stands out is that, in spite of our having brought a distinguished speaker from Rhodesia, the City Hall was only one-third full. Although our own members turned out nobly, it was noticeable in the weeks preceding the meeting that there was a much smaller demand for tickets than there had been for our similar meeting in 1958. This suggests that for some reason our members did not succeed in interesting their friends. It is true that the help we got from the Press was negligible: but this just shows how much we depend on our members to create public interest. It is not too late to make a resolution now - TALK Civil Rights in 1961. That is the best way to end the apathy of so many of our citizens. Our members can be more effective than the Press if they really take their job seriously. Don't think you have done your duty to the League when you have read your news letter and paid your sub.

Programme for 1961

There are many issues which demand attention in 1961. Such proposed legislation as the Education Advisory Council Bill and the Censorship Bill (Publications and Entertainments Bill, to give it its characteristically innocuous official title) should be enough to rouse public concern and protest in any democratic country. The political and economic future of the Coloured people; Bantu Education; Group Areas; the pass laws; the unrest in Pondoland and other places - how much do you know about all these issues?

Our Limitations

The League is sadly limited by its meagre financial resources.

These have been seriously drained lately, especially by our City Hall meeting. The result is that when any activity is contemplated for some considerable time to come one of the governing considerations will have to be: Can we afford it? To make any impact on the tasks we ought to be doing requires a full-time staff - and we limp along on a small part of the time of one person. In saying this we do not want to seem unappreciative of the support our members give us: we could not have continued for twelve years without their generosity. But we do appeal to you - THINK BIG ABOUT CIVIL RIGHTS. That is the first step towards getting your friends to do likewise. Help us to find more effective ways of getting our message across to more people.

President Kennedy says ...

"There are few among us who do not share a portion of the blame for not recognising soon enough the dark tendency towards excess of caution."

... and Abraham Lincoln ...

A recent communication from our "opposite number" in America had a postage stamp bearing the word "Credo" and a quotation from America's most famous President which is as true to-day as it was when he said it: "Those who Deny freedom to others Deserve it not for Themselves." When will our Government put out a similar stamp?

Authoritarianism

"All power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." This is being increasingly brought home to us in the relationship between our City Council and the Provincial Administration. During the last few weeks our Administrator has seen fit to censure the City for not introducing apartheid in its public libraries, and to declare that it will be enforced from June 1962. This will mean increased expense, inferior service and, as Dr Wellheim has said, "a direct insult to the Coloured people" - and, of course, to the Africans as well. The Provincial Librarian has stated in mitigation that apartheid will not be enforced in reference libraries, and that separate reading rooms will be provided. "We want to be positive about this," he said. "We do not want to deprive anybody of anything." Except equality, of course.

Again, our Administrator has taken it upon himself to suggest to our City Council that it should not hire our Orchestra to a welfare organisation which is actually recognised by the Government, because such an action might have "political implications", and might

even lead to the withdrawal of the Provincial subsidy to the Orchestra. We are glad that our Council refused to be blackmailed, and hope that the Administrator will be firm with anyone who suggests his taking such action.

We await with interest the result of a motion shortly to be debated by the City Council asking committees of the Council to consider reviewing and rescinding previous resolutions on separate facilities for whites and non-whites. Should the Council decide to take this step the Administrator is, of course, empowered to enforce the apartheid arrangements.

Council Raids

We hope, too, that the Council will take an early opportunity of going into the question of the early morning "routine inspections" which its officials carry out at Windermere, and of what practical steps it can take to make such raids unnecessary.

The Corrugated Iron Curtain

On January 5 Mr C. W. Prinsloo, Chief Information Officer of the Department of Bantu Administration, told the "Cape Times" that rumours of hundreds of arrests in Pondoland were "the biggest lot of nonsense this side of the Limpopo", and were simply attempts to create a bad atmosphere before the arrival of Mr Hammarskjöld.

On January 27, in the House of Assembly, the Minister of Justice stated that 4,769 Africans and two whites had been detained during the Pondoland disturbances.

Says the "Cape Times": "Can it be that the chief information officer of the Department of Bantu Administration knew nothing of the arrest of more than 4,000 Bantu in an area which had for months been the main bugbear of Bantu administration? Or what?"

Hammarskjöld's Mandate

The comments made by Dr Verwoerd and Mr Hammarskjöld on his visit hardly convey the same impression. Under the circumstances it is pertinent to recall the resolution adopted by the Security Council of the UN in April, 1960, which declared that that Council "calls upon the Government of the Union of South Africa to initiate measures aimed at bringing about racial harmony based on equality in order to ensure that the present situation (the Emergency) does not continue or recur, and to abandon its policies of apartheid and racial discrimination". Refusing to recognise the right of UN to interfere in our "domestic affairs" will not get us very far against that.

Now! Now!

The keynote, perhaps, of the recent Council meetings of the Institute of Race Relations was urgency. The tone was set by the presidential address of Dr Edgar Brookes, which called for "action now, radical action now. We cannot save our country from 'red ruin and the breaking up of laws' by a few minor reforms on the periphery of life, nor by benevolent intentions to do something in ten years' time. We come face to face in battle (and let all men pray that it will be a peaceful battle) for the right of the African to a fair place in his own country, as a son not a slave, as a citizen not a foreigner, as a man not a child, nor can we be fobbed off with some concessions to the Coloured man or to a few carefully selected Africans. We want all parts of the Non-European population to have a share in a genuine liberating process, and however gradual it may be, it must begin and really begin now."

Dr Brookes appealed to the Europeans of the Union to offer something real and tangible to their Non-European fellow citizens now; to people whose apathy and complacency had failed to keep pace with present-day needs to cease allowing themselves to be deceived; and to leaders of Non-European opinion to accept any real change of conviction, any real and tangible offer, as an earnest of better things to come - the fact that "concession will breed concession".

The real issues

Professor H. du Plessis of Potchefstroom has posed the following questions in "Die Transvaler": To what extent is the Government's policy total territorial separation? Are we whites prepared to make the necessary sacrifices for such a vortical separation? Will the Native territories, with the necessary acceleration of an intensive development of their possibilities, be able to absorb all the Natives? If not, can the reserves be expanded to such an extent that this can happen, or will it be possible to realise a common Southern Africa plan for total territorial separation? ... Everything indicates that we are now confronted by the inescapable responsibility of justifying the policy which we advocate and its implementation on Christian and moral grounds, not merely by complying with the principles and standards of right and justice with regard to the Natives only but also as regards the whites."

Yet the "Oosterlig" warns against "making Afrikaners adopt an attitude in public on the Johannesburg church conference and 'Vertraagde Aksie'". Which is more important - justice or Afrikaner unity?
Tailpiece

"You cannot preach the gospel of peace to a frustrated people"
(Rev. E. E. Mahabane)