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CIVIL RIGHTS

News Letter

(Box 3807, CAPE TOWN)

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The Republican Issue

To our mind Dr Verwoerd has done the anti-republicans a service - and considerably cleared the air for the Union Festival - by making his announcement regarding the proposed referendum. He has probably opened the eyes of a number of hitherto unconscious people and deprived the Festival celebrations of a good deal of what would have been quite spurious good fellowship.

We have always held that a republic was unacceptable unless it based on the decision of a large majority of all South African citizens, not merely of the white electorate - and still less, of course, on a "majority of one". (But was it not significant that Dr Verwoerd said at one point: "The number of votes is not important; what matters is the amount of support for the republic in Parliament"?)

Something YOU can do

The League will of course continue to regard a majority vote of all South African citizens as the necessary prerequisite for a republic. But in the meantime there is a practical way in which all of us can oppose an unacceptable republic. Let us at least do anything we can to ensure that the number of citizens taking part in the referendum is as large as possible. It is reported that Nationalist organisers in the Transvaal have already been busy for some months on getting all their possible supporters enrolled. Let us make sure that every possible voter is enrolled. Let us offer our services to our own political party, or to any organisation which has taken on this task. It has to be done this month. It may well be that Dr Verwoerd is gambling on the large number of unenrolled Opposition supporters. Let us give any time we can spare to reducing that number as much as possible.

Mr Erasmus and "Concessions"

Once again we have to deplore the refusal of a Minister of Justice to appoint a judicial commission - this time to inquire into the causes of the Cato Manor riots. A departmental commission is quite inadequate to the situation. Mr Erasmus's statement that "there is no principle involved" demanding a judicial commission is extraordinary. As the "Cape Times" has pointed out, the riots "raise all the principles which statesmen down the centuries have formulated for the

good government of men ... government with the consent of the governed, no taxation without representation, no supply without redress of grievances, the rule of law, and the like ... It is incredible, disastrous, that Mr Erasmus sees no connection in principle between Cato Manor and our rejection of all the ordinary principles of good government."

But the Minister made one statement to Parliament on which we have, so far, seen no comment. He said that HE DID NOT THINK SOUTH AFRICA WAS IN A MOOD TO CONCEDE VERY MUCH MORE, and that the time had come for firm action.

No one, so far, seems to have asked Mr Erasmus (a) how he defines "South Africa", and (b) what concessions he considers "South Africa" has made.

The other side ...

It is interesting to compare a recent statement by the President-General of the National Non-European Unity Movement, as reported in the "Graphic". Mr W. M. Tsotsi said, "There has been a concerted and intensified attack on the rights of all sections of non-Europeans ... We are face to face with stark oppression. It is with us day and night ... In the streets, in our homes and at our work - in town or country - it mercilessly grips our lives. Now, more than ever, it behoves the oppressed people of South Africa to get together. They have well nigh reached the limit of human endurance."

Dr S. Cooppan, an eminent Indian economist, told the Institute of Race Relations at its Council meeting in Durban, in reviewing Indian settlement in South Africa, "an undercurrent of anxiety, uncertainty, insecurity and tension is the thread which runs through the one hundred years of their history ... the torment of racial discrimination in the lives of the Indians has to be lived to be really appreciated."

Going for a holiday, putting a son into school or university, inheriting property or travelling by bus or train, renting or buying a home, getting a license for a shop or a job - all these ordinary things "which are taken in their stride by Whites are never so simple for the Indian or Non-White. Some of these things are to-day even impossible of execution".

No wonder Dr Cooppan said, "South Africa is hell under sunshine for the Indian to-day, as it is to the other Non-Whites."

Who makes the concessions, Mr Erasmus?

Emergence of African Women

"Ilanga lase Natal" regards the emergence of the women as the outstanding feature of 1959. "The observers", says the paper, "had already seen the signs of danger when these peaceful women were forced to take out passes... The authorities, when warned, disregarded these warnings and called those who warned them 'agitators' and 'trouble-makers'... But what amazed the entire world was the unity and singleness of purpose in the movements of these women who came from all the sections of the community. They had one purpose - to reach the authorities and state their grievances... We hope for a peaceful solution of these legitimate grievances (poverty, influx control, pass laws, raids) in this year of the Union Festival, for the African women have not come out with pointless political slogans, but have produced a catalogue of real complaints which must be faced and eliminated if there is to be peace in this year..."

We hope the authorities will bear these facts in mind in their "clearing up" of Cato Manor.

Criminals and housing

The "World", referring to the proposed increase of the police force, comments: "This is a counsel of despair. What is needed is not more policemen, but a fresh approach to the problem of the urban African. A major cause of crime in the towns is the out-of-date network of apartheid laws which is creating a class of permanent outlaws... Influx regulations, job reservation, Bantu education regulations are only three of the many unimaginative policies which force numbers of Africans out of steady jobs, separate men from their wives and children, and throw young children into the streets. All this is creating a growing class of men, women and children who have no prospect of permanent jobs and no hope of ever having a permanent roof over their heads. They live like hunted beasts, on the fringes of the towns, always on the move and always hungry... Laws and regulations will not let them settle down. But where are they to go and what are they to do? If the Government is offering Bantustan as a solution, it had better get a move on."

Highlights at Race Relations Council

We are sorry that space prevents us from reporting more fully on the many valuable papers given at the Council meeting in Durban, and hope our readers will obtain these from the Institute when published. In the meantime we think it worth while to quote some of the outstanding statements by various speakers on "Fifty Years of Union".

Mr D. B. Molteno, Q.C. (retiring President): "White South Africa is prepared to pay a heavy price for the maintenance of its prejudices, but the price will rise so high that concessions become inevitable."

"Non-white organisation and protest are indispensable factors in a democratic campaign, but it is vitally important that the democratic movement amongst the White minority should grow sufficiently rapidly to form an important component of a multi-racial movement which will ultimately replace the régime of unchecked white domination which was inherent in the foundations of Union."

Factors favouring the growth of democratic trends in South Africa, despite the strength of prejudice and vested interests, said Mr Molteno, included

- * the "lie in the soul" of apartheid when contrasted with the despite everything, democratic and Christian tradition of the white people of South Africa;

- * the changing world beyond our borders, and

- * the undeniable inter-dependence of our races.

Mr Molteno re-dedicated the Institute to the tasks of "educating White public opinion and also practical co-operation with the Non-white leaders".

Mr Quintin Whyte (Director of the Institute): "We must speak positively to our young people of the equal rights of black and white - the inevitability they must face."

Mrs M. Kooy (Senior Lecturer in Economics, U.C.T.): "Apartheid demands separate development, but separate development must place more stress on separation than development."

Ex-chief Luthuli: "The non-whites must be excused if they see nothing but bad in the compact of Union, especially in the political sphere. In the fifty years of Union we have lost all rights politically and have suffered most grievously, more especially during the twelve years of Nationalist Party rule, mainly because we do not enjoy democratic rights... The desire to see the vote extended to people of all racial groups has led the African National Congress to advocate a nationalism that embraces all in the country provided they give undivided allegiance to the land of their birth or adoption..."

Professor Hansi Pollak: "Twelve years ago it was the African who was regimented, dominated and controlled; to-day it is the entire South African population."

Tailpiece: "Pretoria News" on the overseas boycott

"South Africa must wrestle with its own conscience, not with alien 'enemies', if it is to achieve a solution of problems which are essentially moral. The boycott could postpone that struggle or convert it into an intransigent nationalism."