

PC16/2/1/5/20

CIVIL



RIGHTS



News Letter

Box 3807

Cape Town

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Correction

We apologise for having stated last month (owing to undue compression) that "Blueprint for Bondage" (Liberal Party, Box 3018, Cape Town) dealt with Education. It is concerned with the Bantu in European Areas Bill. "The 13th Step?", however, can be obtained from the Education League (Box 6475, Johannesburg). We commend both publications to our readers.

Good Causes

Please note the following coming events:-
Annual General Meeting of SHAWCO (12th Avenue, Windermere) on Saturday, August 12, 1961 at 3 p.m.
Street Collection, Institute of Race Relations, Wednesday, August 23 (collectors urgently needed - phone 3-2318 or 203 Bree St).

"Amnesty"

This publication from "Appeal for Amnesty 1961", 1 Mitre Court Bldgs, London E.C.4, gives publicity to the cases of political prisoners in all countries and appeals for information on such cases. Subscription, £1. 1. - (R2.10) for six months. It aims at mobilising world public opinion, which is valuable.

The Banned Convention

For once we have reason to be grateful to Mr Erasmus. His action in banning the Coloured National Convention aroused more unanimous condemnation than any action of the Government we can remember for some time, and certainly gave the Convention leaders a boost and a stiffening of purpose which it would be difficult to over-estimate. The whole affair received so much publicity that comment from us is unnecessary. For the benefit of those who did not get to the Rondebosch protest meeting, however (in which the League played no small part), we quote passages from an address given there by our former Chairman, Mr Leo Marquard:

"After months of preparation, a few hundred South African citizens began to gather in Cape Town for the sensible purpose of

discussing their common interests ... Then, without warning, Mr Erasmus banned the meetings because, as he said, "in my opinion there is reason to believe that the achievement of the objects of communism would be furthered" by such an assembly.

"We do not know on what Mr Erasmus's opinion was based... But of one thing we are certain: the Government was and is determined to suppress the right of free and lawful assembly... the right of free assembly is at the mercy of the Government. It has, in fact, ceased to be a right and has come to depend on the opinion and good grace of Mr Erasmus, or whoever it may be ...

"Lord Chesterfield said: 'Arbitrary power has seldom or never been introduced into any country at once. It must be introduced by slow degrees, and as it were step by step, lest the people should see it approach'. Is that not what has been happening to us? ... And, always, the excuse is used that it is necessary to take away our freedom for the time being because of the exceptionally dangerous circumstances. Not two months ago, the local mouthpiece of the Government argued that, much as it disliked the thought, we should begin to accustom ourselves to less freedom. Individual freedom must be curtailed in the interests of society. Step by step, year by year, the Government has taken legal powers for the avowed purpose of securing the public peace, of suppressing unlawful assembly and conspiracy, and for the better government of our country. And every year sees a greater abuse of those powers in order to suppress free criticism and lawful assembly.

"Such abuse of legal powers by the state portends the collapse of just government. It is the epitome of lawless rule. It is what most clearly distinguishes tyranny from democracy. Under that excuss, 10,000 men and women were arbitrarily arrested, with no charge laid against them, and with the right of granting bail removed from the Courts. And a great many people who do not ordinarily support the Government accepted this plea of necessity. Let me remind them of what William Pitt said about this kind of thing: 'Necessity is the plea for every infringement of human freedom. It is the argument of tyrants; it is the creed of slaves'." Mr Marquard assured the Convention of the support of "millions of South African citizens".

"Arrested" or "detained"?

On the day of the protest meeting the "Argus" gave a list

of individuals who have been arrested (at the end of May or since) and have appeared repeatedly in court, with a charge preferred against them, but no evidence led - released on bail, but often under stringent conditions. In other cases charges have been preferred and withdrawn, again without evidence being led. The worst case is of 16 alleged leaders of the banned Pan-African Congress, who were eventually acquitted after appearing at 45 hearings over more than a year; but a number were detained in prison for 12 days.

It would be heartening if one could believe that it was on a point of such happenings that Mr Erasmus was sent to Rome.

Pertinent

Speaking in Durban recently, Mr Alan Paton said: "People are leaving South Africa because they say that their Christian consciences will not permit them to stay. Surely that same conscience should make them stay and put right what is wrong."

TEPA and Mr Malan

The Administrator of the Cape has withdrawn official recognition from the Teachers' Educational and Professional Association because of its decision to associate itself with the Coloured National Convention, which he labels "political activity".

In the view of the present Government, of course, any opposition to it or its policies is "politics". We are glad that TEPA is not likely to allow itself to be deterred from the stand it is taking for the rights of the community it represents. We hope that the white teachers' associations will speak out in defence of their fellow organisation.

The case of Dr Jordan

The same attitude of mind is apparent in the refusal - again at the last moment - to grant a passport to Dr A. C. Jordan, a member of the staff of the University of Cape Town who had been awarded a Carnegie Grant to study linguistics in the United States and Britain - presumably because he has been a severe critic of government policy and especially of the Bantu Education Act, an attitude the Government does not tolerate in any South African, especially in an African.

Says the "Cape Times": "The bitter injustice done to an individual is the most shocking aspect."

Will our Government never learn that nothing Dr Jordan could have said overseas could do South Africa as much harm as "these

mean-spirited acts of petty persecution" (to quote the "Cape Times" again)? Perhaps it is also a hit at the University of Cape Town, which has also had the audacity to criticise the Government. But, in the words of Mr Leo Marquard, "To what other conclusion can (people overseas), and we, come but that South Africans who are critical of government policies are no longer free to travel abroad?"

Good beginning in Rhodesia

The result of the referendum in Southern Rhodesia provides the most hopeful possibility so far for the building of a peaceful and constructive multi-racial community, and we know that all our readers will share our hopes for its success. It is only a beginning; but from that there can be progress.

Professor Ben Marais, historian and theologian of Pretoria University, comments: "The big majority of voters who accepted the new constitution shows that there are some white communities in Africa who are prepared to face reality."

We wish we could look forward to any equally hopeful prospect arising out of our own forthcoming election, and we hope that such issues will be put squarely before our electorate - though it is even more one-sided than the Rhodesian one.

First steps

One heartening sign was the atmosphere of realism, friendliness and co-operation evident at an informal meeting held in July under the auspices of the League, which decided to co-operate as fully as possible with groups in other centres towards non-racial national consultations. Two practical issues for which the meeting decided to work were the unbanning of the ANC and the PAC (so that Africans could be represented by elected members of any such consultations) and the combatting of the slogan of "white unity", which for so long has been put forward as a "first step" in race relations with no visible result.

Indian Housing in Durban

We commend Councillor Higginson, Chairman of Durban's Housing Committee, for taking up the questions of unemployment, poverty and shocking living conditions of over 125,000 Durban Indians, and also for urging the employment of an Indian in the City Treasurer's department to interview Indian housewives at their homes.

Tailpiece Did you use the form we sent you last month? Would you like another one? Let us know.

MOYA