

CIVIL



RIGHTS

Box 3807

Cape Town



PC 16/2/1/5/30

News Letter

March, 1962

Matters to note

1) Defence and Aid Fund: This organisation, which we have commended to our readers before, is holding its annual general meeting in the CONTACT Board Room, 47 Parliament Street (4th floor) on Thursday, March 15 at 8 p.m. All interested are welcome to hear about and discuss the excellent work that the organisation is doing, and its plans for the future.

2) Petition on Slanted Broadcasting: The Black Sash is still collecting signatures for this. Any of our readers who can help, or who have not yet signed the petition themselves (and who listen to Radio South Africa) may obtain forms at our office, 527 C.T.C. Building, Plein Street, Cape Town or from their local Black Sash.

Contempt of Parliament?

At Potchefstroom on February 16 Senator de Klerk, Minister responsible for introducing the National Education Advisory Council Bill in Parliament, stated that "with a view to achieving a national character", legislation to establish this Council would be passed this session. Such education as the Bill would provide must, he said, be "religious or even Christian".

In view of the fact that the Bill in question had been referred to a Select Committee which is still hearing evidence before reporting to Parliament prior to the second reading of the Bill, the League has written to the Chairman of the Select Committee and to the Speaker of the House of Assembly drawing their attention to this speech of Senator de Klerk's and asking if it does not constitute contempt of Parliament.

In passing it may be noted that not only is the Minister introducing a principle which is nowhere mentioned in the Bill (i.e. the question of the "Christian character" of education), but he spoke of "achieving a national character" through the Bill though it, as introduced to Parliament and referred to the Select Committee, is supposed to deal with education for whites only.

Our letter to the Chairman of the Select Committee (but not

the one to the Speaker) has been formally acknowledged.

Transfer of Coloured Education

We would congratulate NUSAS on its initiative in calling a conference of organisations opposed to this step, and on the formation of a co-ordinating committee to be known as ATAC (Anti-Transfer Action Committee), in which the League is to cooperate.

That Press Commission

It is heartening to observe that the Afrikaans Press has on the whole disagreed with the Press Commission's ponderous criticisms of SAPA, and it is to be hoped that Parliament will not take them too seriously. On the whole the first instalment of the Report seems to handle the matters at issue with kid gloves. Not so, however, the "Transvaler", which has seized the opportunity to go considerably further than the Commission has done. This paper describes the "English press" of South Africa as "hostile to the Republic", and says "The position therefore can simply not be left as it is at the moment. The revelations of the press commission are of such a nature that a radical change must come in the control of the English press. The manner in which these newspapers are linked with certain British interests must be completely destroyed. Another important task awaits the Government here ..."

We wonder how our new Minister of Information will deal with this frank expression of his Party's attitude. He himself has also made sweeping, though less blatant, attacks in Parliament on the "English press", accusing it of being "against the traditional policy" (apartheid), of "presenting the policy of separation as a means of suppression", and of being "the mouth piece of every agitator in the country". While patting the Newspaper Press Union on the back for the code which, he says, it has now adopted, he asks whether the "English press" cannot "decide to take sides with South Africa in this raging cold war".

We would point out to the Minister of Information that South Africa is a nation of sixteen million people and that he apparently wants the "English press" to "take sides with", at the most, two million of them.

As an Opposition Member pointed out in the debate, Mr Waring will inevitably take two further steps if he feels that the "true story" is not being put across by the English-language Press - either he will recommend further intimidation of the

Press, or control of it. The establishment of a Ministry of Information in itself suggests that the Government has such steps in mind, said this Member.

Job reservation

The Industrial Tribunal investigating the question of job reservation in Cape Town's road transport services has recommended that this be introduced in the City Tramways Company's vehicles on the basis of 84% white and 16% non-white employees. This in spite of the strong representations made by the Company that sixty per cent of their passengers are non-white and that they find it practically impossible to find suitable white staff in sufficient numbers.

Coloured employees of the Company have protested against the decision, and in particular against the fact that the Tramway Workers' Union, of which they are members "on paper", has asked for such discrimination to protect its white members. "As far as job reservation is concerned," said a spokesman, "it amounts to this - that we are paying subscriptions to a trade union that is working against us on a purely racial basis - although even the white members are divided."

It may be remembered that this sort of difficulty in trade unions was forecast when the Industrial Conciliation Act was amended some years ago.

Colour in Sport

Absurdity seems to follow absurdity in this field. Recently it was reported that the visiting Japanese swimmers would not be allowed to swim in a Coloured swimming bath because they were "white" for the purposes of the Group Areas Act. Subsequently a Communist in one of the Afrikaans papers has declared that he expects non-white athletes to be included in South Africa's team for the Olympic Games at Tokyo in 1964. One can have respect for those who adhere to principle, even if one regards that principle as wrong: but what can one say for such decisions of expediency? The Afrikaans columnist in question seemed to regard the change as a healthy one and an inevitable development: we hope he is right - and that such contradictions will ultimately make people reconsider their "principles".

And what of the Japanese "artists" who have been refused permission to come and dance in this country? Or the Chinese anti-communist supporters of Moral Re-Armament?

Liftmen

We are glad, on the other hand, that both employers and employees seem to be unanimously opposed to the reservation of this occupation for white labour, and hope that this move will be abandoned.

"Immorality"

It would presumably have been too much to expect that Mr Vorster would accede to Mrs Suzman's motion to amend the Immorality Act: after all, the Government apparently regards it as one of the keystones of apartheid. But clearly it is an increasing embarrassment to them. The number of cases in which such cases are allowed to lapse because of "insufficient evidence" is increasing. Is it too much to hope that the police will be instructed to relax their activity in this field and to turn their attention to real crime?

Group Areas and the municipal vote

It is a pity that the Government apparently does not believe in evolution. With the natural development of new areas, we might in time get "Coloured" municipalities, just as we might well have got "Coloured" universities. But these would have come about through a desire of the people concerned, and would not have deprived them of their existing rights. Whereas the present policy forces these things on people who do not want them - and have not even been asked whether they want them or not - and take from them rights which they have long enjoyed and never abused. This is not to say that we are in favour of such segregation in principle: but to bring it about by compulsion makes it infinitely worse.

Opportunities for Urban Africans

We are glad to note that the Native Affairs Committee of the Cape Town City Council is in favour of the removal of the present irksome restriction which debar Africans living in the City Council's area from working in the Cape Divisional Council area, and vice versa.

Africans have represented that this involves real hardship, and prevents them from seeking work outside the area they live in, even if they are unemployed, or from taking better jobs.

New members

A circular sent out in January brought us 33 new members. Can't each member find us one?