

CIVIL

Box 3807



RIGHTS

Cape Town

PC16/21/5/34



News Letter

August, 1962

Coming Events

We hope this will reach our readers in time to remind them of the Annual General Meeting of SHAWCO, which is to take place on Saturday, August 11 at 12th Avenue, Windermere. The Eighth Annual Report of that body shows what an excellent work it is doing, and we pay tribute to the officials, staff and student members of the University responsible. To facilitate catering, R.S.V.P. to the Warden at above address.

We also give formal notice that it is hoped to hold our own Annual General Meeting on September 12. Any members who wish to submit motions to this meeting are asked to have them in the Secretary's hands by Saturday, August 25. Nominations for the Committee, which will be welcomed, should be submitted (with the signature and consent of the nominee, and signed by two members as proposer and seconder) by the same date. Present members of the Committee need not be renominated. Any further details from the Secretary on request (phone 2-7020). Details as to speaker and venue will come with our next news letter: but please note the provisional date now.

Conference on Human Relations and Communication Today: We have received further details of this Conference, organised by the Institute of Race Relations and the University of the Witwatersrand. It will be held from January 12 to 19, and will consist of "theme" addresses by distinguished overseas speakers and also addresses by South African speakers, followed by discussion in sections. The programme is extremely interesting. All who can plan to go should write at once to The Organising Secretary, 1963 Conference, Box 97, Johannesburg, as numbers will be limited.

"Forward"

We welcome the resurgence of this monthly paper under the able editorship of Mr Alex. Hepple. It is planned as "a critical political and trade union newspaper, designed mainly to provide a medium of expression for the labour movement"; subscription is 70 cents per annum.

A genuine labour movement in South Africa would be of ines-

timable value. We wish Mr Hepple and "Forward" all success. The paper's address is Box 10476, Johannesburg.

"Terrorism" and Civil Rights

Sir Edgar Whitehead is reported to have said recently in Rhodesia that "because intimidation did not mean much overseas, intimidators should be called terrorists. Then the law might be changed so that a person convicted of terrorism would be deprived of his civil rights".

We do not, of course, know what Sir Edgar means by "civil rights": but we do feel that to deprive any citizen of rights is to start on a dangerous path. Even in South Africa, as far as we know, this penalty has not yet been laid down for any offence - though, to be sure, we now have the death penalty for "sabotage", and a number of lesser but still drastic penalties.

Candid Comment

Government supporters and their press are often more candid than Ministers in Parliament. Take, for instance, this artless comment from "Die Burger": (26/7/62)

"Experience has shown that mixed parties are something which only certain people organise. It is expected that it will be precisely these people on whom certain restrictions will be placed (e.g. in the receiving of visitors) in terms of this year's General Law Amendment Act" (*italics ours*).

And the Minister said that the Act was needed to enable him to deal with saboteurs, agitators and communists. Mixed parties are not illegal: yet a penalty can be applied to those who give them if the Minister so desires. Is not this intimidation?

"English-speaking neutralism"

Commenting on a recent speech by Sir John Maud, British Ambassador, in Pietermaritzburg, the "Cape Times" said that Sir John's list of "English achievements in South Africa" should inspire "that growing group of English-speaking 'neutralists' to think deeply about their present attitude... despair, withdrawal, neutralism, a decision to detach oneself from South African affairs, are essentially negative ways to meet the result of essentially negative policies ..." It is, said the paper, completely at variance with the contribution the English section has made to this country, among which it included the rule of law, the parliamentary system and "the idea of representation of all peoples" in parliament.

Opinions may differ (the "Burger" differed sharply) upon how

much of the credit for these things should go to the "English" section: but there is no doubt that during the last fourteen years they have become numbed to infringements of human rights. To combat this is one of our biggest tasks - and it is a task in which every member can help.

Are you "political"?

The "Natal Witness", discussing the attitude of the South African Foundation to politics, says: "... in the South Africa of to-day, to speak out in favour of fairmindedness, of human sympathy and of plain common sense is to be boldly (perhaps treasonably) political. To be non-political, on the other hand, is to be content with the status quo, with the constant movement towards death of our society."

That "Advisory" Council

At its recent conference the South African Teachers' Association drew attention to the "grave defects" in the National Education Advisory Council Act, and to the fact that it had been drafted without consultation with the teachers' organisations. Among the "defects" mentioned are the following:-

- * That the organised teaching profession will not be able to nominate anyone to serve on the council;
- * That a sub-committee of the council may inquire into the affairs of individual schools, so encroaching on the powers of the provincial departments of education;
- * That it is not clear that in other respects the council will not interfere seriously with the autonomy of the provincial systems of education.

The S.A.T.A. expressed its deep appreciation of the "long-standing system of consultation" between the Education Department of the Cape and the teachers' organisations, but "both as educationists and as responsible citizens", expressed grave concern at the Act as passed.

Had it not been for the concern about the more blatant "Vorster Bill", we believe that there would have been far more widespread protests about this one. As it was, it slipped through Parliament almost unnoticed by the public and even by the Press. One correspondent of the "Cape Times" condemned it as the more dangerous of the two, as providing for the "indoctrination" of children in the ideals of "Christian National" education. There is certainly grave need for vigilance in this regard.

A Tribute

It is with pleasure that we record the comment on our South African Courts in the special report submitted to the International Commission of Jurists by Mr Peter Charles, Q.C. of Southern Rhodesia in regard to their handling of the Ganyile case.

The report says that although the two-month delay in dealing with an urgent application affecting the liberty of the subject was deplorable, "in every other respect .. the South African judicial officers and legal practitioners who dealt with the matter added lustre to the deservedly high reputation enjoyed by the South African courts and those who practise before them among lawyers throughout the world who are familiar with the working of the South African system." The report adds:

"It is clear that in spite of the existence in South Africa of the sort of repressive laws to which we have drawn attention in this report, much can still be done and is being done to maintain the liberty of the subject by a vigilant and independent bench and a courageous legal profession."

The secretary-general of the Commission says in a foreword: "In publishing this report the Commission seeks to remind its readers of the need for unceasing vigilance in the preservation and assertion of human rights."

Safeguards against tyranny ...

We are indebted to the latest issue of the "Black Sash" for an article from the "Rand Daily Mail" from which we feel the following is worth quoting as far as our space allows:

"The conflict between East and West ... is over the relationship between individual and State...

"The safeguards against tyranny which the Western world has developed centre round two institutions - an independent legal system and a free Press. They include the principles

- * that all laws require the consent of the majority of those affected by them;
- * that justice must be impartial between individual and State, as well as between man and man;
- * that every man has the right to work for changes in the government, the law, or the social system by all peaceful means;
- * that every man is innocent until he has been proved guilty;
- * that an independent Press is an essential part of any effective working democracy; and
- * that man, as man, has a right to freedom of thought, of speech of religion and of education."