

CIVIL



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News Letter

Christianity and Apartheid

All Christians should be grateful for the forthright statement of Archbishop Selby Taylor in opening the recent Anglican Synod in Cape Town. It is right and necessary that church leaders should draw the attention of their people to social problems such as drug addiction, juvenile delinquency, divorce and the like. But it is even more necessary - and much rarer - for the attention of Christian people to be drawn to injustices which they are all too apt to forget, and which, as long as they acquiesce in them, should make them, as the Archbishop said, "hang their heads in shame". The Archbishop drew attention to the injustices which are perpetrated in the enforcement of such aspects of government policy as group areas. When this Act was passed, he said, "the country was given the assurance that there would be equality of sacrifice. Yet in spite of this assurance it is almost always the economically less privileged who suffer hardship and deprivations." He said it would have, for instance, caused less hardship and injustice if Kalk Bay had been declared a group area for coloured people instead of for whites. He referred to the moving of coloured people (e.g. at Paarl) from established homes to new, and undeveloped areas. "... People are being compelled to abandon houses in which they took a great joy and pride, and they are being provided with hovels to which they are ashamed to invite their friends ...". People, he said, had to abide by the law of the land; "but what we cannot accept are the injustices which are perpetrated under the cover of this Act."

The Synod decided to establish a "board of social responsibility" to "educate the public conscience and fulfil Christ's command to be good neighbours". We shall look forward with interest to the working out of this idea, which seems to us an essential part of Christian activity.

The Archbishop also referred to the Government's policy of banning, and compared it to the methods used by Old Testament rulers to silence the great Hebrew prophets.

"These men knew that they had a responsibility to speak out boldly in Jehovah's Name, and they continued to do so," said Dr Taylor. "We have a responsibility to speak the truth as we see it. I cannot subscribe to the theory that there are areas of life outside the sphere of the Christian faith ..."

The need for the "board of social responsibility" was emphasised by the fact that three motions dealing with racial discrimination were rejected by the laity of the Synod. We hope that the board will be able to encourage more contact between the white and non-white members of the Church and that other Churches will move in the same direction.

Mr Pelser and the law - and bannings

The Minister of Justice is reported as having told a Nationalist gathering in the Free State recently that South Africa had "one of the best - if not the best - legal systems in the world".

He said: "If we have deviated from certain legal procedures it has been done for a very sound and good reason. We have done it to deal with those people who wish to further the aims of Communism and to undermine the country.

"If we have restricted them we have only done it for very good reasons and on the basis of valuable information we have received from sources which it is not in the interests of the security of the country to disclose.

"All we have done has been to prevent these people from using the legal machinery to defeat the ends of justice.

"If we have restricted people without allowing them a hearing we have done this in the interests of the country.

"We only restrict a person if we have conclusive evidence that that person has been furthering the aims of communism.

"We cannot divulge our source in a court of law because if we do so we lose an invaluable source for good."

We have quoted this report ("Argus") at length because it is the frankest statement yet of the Government's attitude to banning and the administration of justice. It will be noted

- (1) that the Government acts on secret information which it is not willing to disclose in a court of law;
- (2) that it is not prepared to allow the "restricted" people a hearing, even behind closed doors;
- (3) that it regards the courts as a place where "the ends of justice" may be defeated by allowing defence of the accused.

One can only say that decisions arrived at by such methods must be suspect, however great a confidence one may have in the integrity of the Minister and his officials. We are reminded of a candid statement by a high police official some time ago that it was only by means of 90-day or 180-day detention that the police could secure convictions because the judges' rules in the courts made it too difficult! But how does one define justice?

Special treatment for "communists"

Recently Mr Vorster, referring to the extensive action his Government has taken under the Suppression of Communism Act, especially against members of NUSAS and Dr Raymond Hoffenberg, said: "If the English-language Press expects us not to take any further actions against communists or people promoting the aims of communism, they are making a very big mistake."

The "Cape Times" has replied that what it and other newspapers object to is not "actions against communists". "We object", says the paper, "to a man being tried without a charge being presented, without being given an opportunity to defend himself, without knowing the evidence against him or cross-examining the prosecution witnesses. And we object to a conviction and sentence arrived at in secret by almost anonymous officials and politicians and put into effect without any possibility of appeal on the facts or the law." It points out that persons suspected of such crimes as rape, arson and fraudulent bankruptcy are not tried in secret with no opportunity of defending themselves. ... "Most civilised countries", says the paper, deem it "essential that the machinery of justice shall be separated from the executive government and that an offender ... shall be shown in an objective manner to be guilty... In nearly every country in the world the prosecution has to convince a jury of the facts. Even on the law, the most eminent judge can be challenged by appeals to other courts ..."

In these days, when so many tend to accept that "the Government knows what it is doing", it is necessary to emphasise again and again these elementary rules of civilised justice.

Self-interest on the farms?

It is significant that the Secretary for Coloured Affairs should have told a gathering of farmers at Vredendal (aimed at the replacement of African by Coloured farm labour) that if they wished to keep coloured labour on the farms they would not only need to give them better housing, more realistic wages and bonuses, but also schools for their children and communal services such

as churches, clinics, places where they could relax, and facilities for the spending of their free time.

It is good to know that the Department of Coloured Affairs is taking an interest in so essential a matter, as well as providing welfare services for the Coloured folk in the urban areas. Such work is highly necessary, and desirable whether through the machinery and for the purpose of "separate development" or not. At any rate, it is development.

Chief Kaiser and the Government

Hard on the heels of Dr de Wet's latest announcement that he is not prepared to grant permission for new, or to extend factories in the Western Cape if this involves the use of African labour, comes a forthright statement from Chief Kaiser Matanzima, Chief Minister of the Transkei. At a recent meeting of his Transkei National Independence Party at East London he said that influx control regulations "were crippling industry in the Western Cape while protecting the Coloured people, who do not want to do manual labour".

"I will fly to Pretoria to discuss labour problems with the South African Government", said the Chief.

The Urban Areas Act, he said, was a burning issue as far as the Africans were concerned.

"We are no beasts. A man slaughters his beasts any time he wants to and we are not allowed to work where we want. We have to depend on the dictates of petty officials."

It will certainly be interesting to see what comes of Chief Kaiser's proposed visit to Pretoria. While he is there, he might also make representations about such matters as the endorsing out of African wives and families from the urban areas, and the limiting of even "contract" labour to twelve months, as well as the exclusion of Africans from a number of jobs they have previously done (because, as he says, Coloured people do not want them).

Tailpiece

"... the authorities responsible for government and authority can easily mistake Christian witness for something political, because the influence of that witness undermines the basis on which their rule rests." (Dean E.L. King)