

CIVIL



RIGHTS

Box 3807

Cape Town

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News Letter

Twilight of political freedom

At the time of writing the three Bills mentioned in our last issue are still before Parliament, with - as far as we know - no amendments of any importance. We commend to the support of our readers the following acts of protest (probably the last in which all races will be able to take part):

* Monday, April 22: Black Sash stand at the top of Adderley Street, 12.30 - 5.30 p.m.

* Tuesday, April 23: Lunch-hour protest meeting under the auspices of the Progressive Party in the Drill Hall.

The support of all interested is welcome on both occasions, including those who can "stand" for only part of the time. The Sash stand protests against both the Prohibition of Improper Interference Bill and the Separate Representation of Voters Amendment Bill.

Ave atque vale!

Dr "Bill" Hoffenberg, with his family, has left South Africa. His country and his University are the poorer for his going. In "the whole dismal business", to quote the "Cape Times", there are a few faint gleams of encouragement to those of us who remain:

* The forthright condemnation by the staff and students of our University of the treatment meted out to Dr Hoffenberg.

* The fact that, because of his outstanding qualities, this treatment drew attention, even among the non-politically-minded, to the injustice of the whole "banning" system.

* The fact that even a few government supporters went so far as to write to the press suggesting that it might have been better for the country's reputation if Dr Hoffenberg had been brought to trial - and the justice or injustice of his treatment established in open court.

Dr and Mrs Hoffenberg were keen members of the Civil Rights League, which is proud to have had their loyalty and support.

Civil rights at Grahamstown

We are indebted to one of our members for sending to us a

series of leaflets issued by the NUSAS Student Relations Sub-Committee at Rhodes University, and in particular one which explains why NUSAS has a political (though not party-political) rôle. This leaflet points out that most students are South African voters, and thus "have a duty to uphold human rights and act as a watchdog on society, regardless of which political party is in power ... They take as their basis of criticism the ideals of democracy and human rights". It therefore includes among its aims

- * To represent the students of S.A. nationally and internationally.
- * To defend democracy and human rights in student affairs at the universities.
- * To maintain and further a spirit of tolerance, goodwill and mutual respect among all students.
- * To uphold the right of all students to meet, assemble and study together on a basis of academic equality.

"This and this only", says the leaflet, "is the nature of the NUSAS political rôle."

As long as our students are thinking on these lines, all is not yet lost in South Africa. More power to them!

University autonomy

Sir Richard Luyt, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, in his inaugural address stressed the importance of a university being allowed to manage its own affairs in spite of the outside financial support it needed. It needed access, he said, to knowledge at home and abroad as well as the right to employ the best staff it could and to teach the best students who offered themselves. The pursuit of truth, he said, " - which is the purpose of a university - prospers best and with greatest integrity if these conditions are met, and only if they are met... It is not for any particular views that I, as Vice-Chancellor, must strive; it is for the university's right to have optimum conditions under which to promote the desire and ability to reach truth."

"White" jobs on the S.A.R.

The Minister of Transport, Mr Schoeman, said recently in the House of Assembly that "it was his policy that non-Whites could take over jobs formerly held by Whites - where it could be done with the agreement of the railway staff (!), and where the wages and the living standard of the White workers were protected.

The Minister added that pick-and-shovel work and the cleaning of locomotives, previously done by Whites, were now being done by Africans, and also such jobs as flagmen and pointsmen, "in cooperation with and with the agreement of the railway staff", but that "the mixed working of Whites and non-Whites would not be allowed", and that "there were certain posts in which non-Whites simply could not be employed".

This is at any rate a slight advance on the "civilised labour policy" of the Railways not so many years ago, though we cannot but wonder how the non-White worker feels at such grudging concessions. Mr Graham Eden, Coloured Representative, a few days later told the Minister that Coloured railwaymen "did not earn a living wage... The Minister", he said, "is not paying attention to 50 per cent of his labour force ... he lays himself open to criticism in making a show of the increases in wages when there are people in his employ who are living below the breadline. One might almost say that they are on starvation rates."

Mr Eden was disappointed with the Minister's reply to his request that a pension scheme be instituted for Coloured railwaymen. "His reply was that the amount of the contributions which the Coloured people could make was so small that the pension fund would not be worthwhile ... Surely that is an indictment of his own policy, that the pension fund contribution is so small, because the wages are so low, and that the pension fund is therefore not actuarially possible to establish."

Didn't the Railway Budget show a surplus this year?

Group Areas at Plumstead

It was recently (13/4/68) reported in the "Cape Times" that an Indian family who have run a grocery shop in Plumstead for 64 years are going out of business next month - they cannot afford to pay the Government-imposed rent of R225 a month. In terms of the Group Areas Act, the Department of Community Development bought the shop from the 74-year-old owner on the understanding that he would have to leave when an alternative shop became available in an Indian group area, but the rent imposed has made it impossible for him to carry on. He has no other shop to go to.

The owner's father bought the shop in 1904 when there were only a few scattered houses. The area now contains a dense White population who are served by the shop.

It may be added that even if Mr Osman does get a shop in an Indian area he may not be able to make a living. There are so many Indian shopkeepers that they cannot all do so ...

An Easter challenge

The sermon preached by Rev. Theo Kotze in the Sea Point Methodist Church on Good Friday must have been a challenge not only to those who heard it, or even only to professing Christians. It contains truths that should be pondered again and again by all South Africans, and we make no apology for quoting some of them here.

Christians, said Mr Kotze, must challenge any way of life that was contrary to the laws of God. They must challenge any authority - at whatever cost - that continues to deny the very basis of human existence, love of God and love of neighbour.

"Christians must fight with all their might and with all the power of love (which is the hard way) the sheer wickedness of segregation, the blatant anti-Christian attitudes of intolerance and racial prejudice, the utter disregard of the ordinary humanities which have permeated our way of life in South Africa.

"The Christian fight should also be directed against the dishonesty that governs decisions and the arrogant power that contemptuously sweeps aside all contrary opinion.

"Fear has gripped this country, fear has pervaded our thinking, fear is setting a man against his neighbour, fear is keeping the Church silent and emasculating the Christian witness.

"It is because we have forgotten that our allegiance first and foremost is to God. If we are true to the basic commandments - love God and love your neighbour - we should not be afraid. ..."

Jesus, said Mr Kotze, could have stuck to "spiritual things" and not upset anybody. He did not do this because He could not lead that kind of life and still remain true to His Father's will and purpose and above all, because He understood that life could not be compartmentalized.

"There is no exclusive spiritual - or secular - area of life. Because you and I claim to be Christians we must follow Jesus Christ - and obey Him alone."

Tailpiece - an outstanding date ...

As from April 9, says the "Cape Times", employees of the Department of Justice are required to address Africans in correspondence as Mr, Mrs, Sir or Madam, and to end their letters "Yours faithfully".

MOYA