

CIVIL



RIGHTS

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News Letter

The Climax of legalised discrimination"

The Prohibition of Political Interference Bill (its final title) has passed through all its stages in Parliament and may, by the time this letter appears, have been signed by the State President and thus become law. In a letter to the "Cape Times" the League described this legislation as "the climax of 20 years of legalised discrimination", and pointed out that it followed the steady implementation of apartheid measures since the Nationalist Government first attacked the common roll franchise of the Cape Coloured man in 1948. We stressed that all "political" issues are moral issues, and called upon all the people of South Africa never to rest until this injustice was redressed.

In spite of all the "window-dressing", some government spokesmen have been frank about the origin and implications of the Bill. It has in fact imposed political apartheid. Thus the Minister of the Interior told the Senate during the third reading debate that "as far as he and the Nationalist Party could foresee", the Coloured people would never have "exactly the same say" as the Whites in the country "which was governed by the White man". There was "no reason", he said, to give the same political rights to Coloured people as to Whites "if this were impossible from a practical point of view".

Incidentally the Minister stated that he "shared the fears of the Opposition" that the provisions of the Bill "left too much room for contact, and even indirect support" from Whites for Coloured political parties. One Senator, apparently, had said that the Bill as it stood could not stop leaders of the Progressive Party from propagating their views among the Coloured people or helping them with funds and pamphlets; another had said that it would be possible for "quasi-political cultural and other groups" to intervene politically in the affairs of Coloured people.

One wonders what organisations the second speaker had in mind, and why the United Party apparently was not concerned about the Bill making it impossible to put its own views before the Coloured people!

While the main guilt in respect of this legislation is

undoubtedly that of the Government, the historian may well see other causes that contributed to it. The failure of the United Party to encourage Coloured men in the Cape to vote, and to press for the extension of the then existing franchise to all Coloured men and women in South Africa, has made the Coloured people, or most of them, politically indifferent. But they too must bear a share of the responsibility. Until the separate rolls were established, they could vote on equal terms with the White voters; but all too few of them even troubled to register as voters. All this made it easy for the Government to take its present steps.

Now that they have succeeded, however, what is the next step? One cannot but agree with those who advise the Coloured people to make all the use they can of their new "Coloured Council" in working for their own advancement and gaining political experience. Then, again, the more they equip themselves with education and training, the more they establish themselves in the business and professional world, the more unanswerable will be the claim that they will eventually make for equal rights in every sphere of life. To that extent, the future lies with themselves. For us who are more privileged, it is a matter of conscience that the rights we enjoy should be extended to all our citizens. And in the non-political sphere every one of us can strive to maintain and extend friendly contacts across the colour line.

One helpful move

In Simon's Town, since the proclamation of that area as a white group area, there has been set up a "Christian Churches' Advice Office" to help and advise those (the Coloured folk of the town) who will have to move. We are indebted to one of our members for sending us a copy of a most valuable pamphlet of "Preliminary Information for those affected by Group Areas Proclamations" issued by that body, which answers fully and clearly the questions these people will be faced with. Copies at 5c each may be obtained from Mrs B.D. Willis, Boulders House, Simon's Town, and will be of value to anyone who wants to be well informed on this subject, as well as to those affected.

No curfew for the Council

The Executive Committee of the Cape Town City Council has endorsed the recommendation of the Health and Housing Committee not to accede to the suggestion of the Chief Bantu Affairs Com-

missioner to introduce a curfew between 10 p.m. and 4 a.m. for Africans in Council-controlled areas of the Cape Peninsula.

The Committee did not think there was any reason to believe that "the high incidence of crime and disturbances in some parts of Cape Town" could be attributed specifically to the presence of Africans "or any other one group of people", and considered that the introduction of a curfew "would merely create an additional statutory offence" which could be committed, "sometimes unintentionally", by Africans. "... it seems unreasonable", said the Committee, "that only one - and the smallest - section of the community should be penalised by further restrictions on movement because of circumstances for which the committee is not satisfied that that section is responsible."

"Surplus" Africans ..."

In contrast to this is a reported situation at Riversdale, whose Town Council has requested the National Roads Board to remove from within the municipal boundaries Africans working for it in that area. The Council could grant permits for Africans to work there, but is "against it", and has stated that in "keeping the area clear of them" it is "complying with government policy". The District Roads Engineer has protested that his department has been unable to recruit Coloured labour to replace the Africans. Comment seems superfluous ...

And yet the zealous Mr Froneman, chairman of the Bantu Affairs Commission, says that the Government's policy is "based on the non-integration of the Black workers who were now working in the White areas", and that Africans must be brought to realise that they are "temporary" workers in and inhabitants of "White" areas; while those not "economically active" must be resettled in African "homelands". No question, of course, of where they want to live or what work they want to do ...

The Deputy Minister of Bantu Administration, Mr Blaar Coetzee, told the House at question time recently that 7,049 Africans had been removed from the Johannesburg urban area alone to their "homelands" in the past six months - and that handcuffs had been used in cases of resistance and to prevent escapes. How does he reconcile this with the Government's frequent statement that the Africans "accept" separate development?

Free school books

It has recently been announced that White children are in future to receive free school books.

This seems a typical case of "to him who hath shall be given", and as such lacks any justification that might be found if it applied to all schoolchildren. Letters to the press have pointed out that

* Coloured children have to pay for their books except in specially needy cases. (They fall under a different department, that of Coloured Affairs, while the present concession to Whites comes from the Cape Education Department.)

* Although the Secretary for Bantu Education has stated that "the only books which Bantu children in primary standards must pay for are stationery", the position is reported to be that, in the primary standards of African schools, one in every three (Sub A - Std II) or four (Stds III-VI) of the children receives a free book in English, Xhosa and Afrikaans (nothing else, apparently!). In the secondary schools, they must pay for all their books (up to R15 a year).

Remedy for subversion?

A Nationalist Senator recently suggested in the Upper House that university students should be required to take an oath of allegiance before starting their studies "to ensure that they did not behave subversively". This, he said, would "prevent activities which corrupted a university and helped communism".

It is not surprising - though it might be considered ill-advised - that the President of NUSAS, bearing in mind the Senator's remarks, should have commented that students at the English-speaking Universities would refuse to take such an oath. Such a suggestion, he said, was "a reflection of that super-patriotic mentality which regards any criticism of the government as treasonable".

A contributor to the letter page of the "Cape Times" has condemned this attitude of Mr Daniel as "arrogance", and referred to the United States custom of starting the day in every school with a "Salute to the Flag" which is a pledge of loyalty.

It might, however, be pointed out that the alleged motive of introducing such an oath detracts from its value. There is a vast difference between children at school taking an oath (or a pledge) in order to develop a sense of patriotism, and adult students at a university taking an oath, under compulsion, to prevent them from indulging in "subversion". And what is subversion, anyway?