

CIVIL



RIGHTS



Box 3807

Cape Town

Vol. XVI No. 1

Issued 24/1/69

News Letter

Subscriptions

Owing to an overhauling of our mailing and subscription list, we regret that it is not possible to send the usual statement of subscription position to members until next month. But any subs that members wish to send in the meantime will be welcomed and duly acknowledged (minimum, 50c per calendar year). Our thanks to those prompt people who have already paid for 1969.

Naboth's vineyard

We publish here in full the statement issued by the League regarding District Six, only part of which appeared in the press.

"The announcement by Mr Blaar Coetzee, Minister of Community Development, regarding the redevelopment of District Six as "a superior White residential area" is perhaps the most shameless statement issued by the Government in its twenty years of office.

"The Minister justifies the decision on the ground that "the area referred to is a White area". This is true only on paper and in intention. Moreover, as recently as April, 1967 the Secretary of Community Development informed a meeting of residents in the Cape Town City Hall that they would be allowed to stay in the area from three to eight years - perhaps even fifteen - if their housing conditions were "decent enough". Has this promise been forgotten?

"The Minister refers to District Six as a "slum area", responsibility for which has been taken over by his Department. In so doing he ignores the fact that the Cape Town City Council, which embarked on slum clearance before World War II, had in 1962 submitted plans to that Department for the replanning of the area for Coloured occupation - plans which were not accepted because of the Government's determination to declare District Six a White group area. This in itself constitutes a grave interference with the local autonomy of Cape Town.

"The Minister now promises that the present inhabitants of District Six "will not be put on the streets", but will be

"provided with alternative housing in a responsible way". From his statement it appears that this means on the Cape Flats ("between Bellville and False Bay"), where "building plots as well as properties which can be hired" will be available.

"The Civil Rights League wishes to condemn in the strongest possible terms these unrealistic and callous proposals.

"The proposals are unrealistic, because even the Minister surely does not envisage that the Coloured community he proposes establishing on the Cape Flats can become viable and self-contained in the foreseeable future. They may be forced by legislation to live there, but the hard facts of economics and the demands of the "white" business world will force them to work in Cape Town.

"The proposals are callous, because there has been no attempt to consult the wishes of the people concerned. An elementary human right, that of choosing where they will live, has been taken away from them.

"The final inhumanity lies in the reasons the Minister gives for the removal. The area's "special situation on the slopes of Table Mountain, in close proximity to the central city, the beautiful view and the attractive scenery" demand "the establishment of economic housing of a relatively high standard ... with due regard to the historic atmosphere and background of Cape Town". The Coloured people, who have played so large a part in creating all this, are to be housed "in a responsible way" in Bonteheuwel, Heideveld, Manenberg and similar areas which will never be able to provide comparable amenities.

"The homes of Coloured citizens in Walmer Estate (adjacent to District Six) and elsewhere are ample proof that they desire and appreciate a high standard of living as much as their White fellow citizens, and that they are increasingly becoming able to provide this for themselves. District Six is an ideal area for such a Coloured community. Cape Town should voice an emphatic protest against this interference with its traditions, and against the indignity and injustice being perpetrated by the Minister on a large and respected section of its inhabitants."

We respectfully suggest that this is a matter which the Coloured Council should take up with the Minister on behalf of the voters it represents.

It has been justifiably said that nothing could have shown more clearly than this latest action the real intention of the Group Areas Act - to keep all the best areas for the White community. To reverse this decision would at least go some way to

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disprove this statement.

"The quality of mercy ..."

Mr M.D. Arendse, national leader of the Labour Party of South Africa, while commenting frankly on the hardship imposed on those who have to leave District Six, makes a special plea for the elderly folk in the 50-65-year age group, and suggests that the Cape Chamber of Industries and the Cape Town Chamber of Commerce approach the Minister to set aside a part of District Six for such people. We hope this suggestion will be acted on.

In A.D. 2000

If anything were needed to pinpoint the unrealism, apart from any moral considerations, of this and similar moves, it is supplied by no less a publication than the Government's 1966 Statistical Year Book, wherein it is estimated that both the Coloured and the African population will in fact increase much more than Dr Verwoerd thought in 1956. The Coloured people in the Cape Peninsula, according to this estimate, will in the next 30 years increase from their present $\frac{3}{4}$ million to over $2\frac{1}{4}$ million. How can any politician imagine that it will still be possible to restrict them to the areas now being allocated, already obviously inadequate?

Apartheid without the "only"

The Government has apparently now decided to remove the words only and slegs from all apartheid notices on State property - whether to soften the impression on non-Whites, or on the outside world, is not clear. It is not clear either what the legal effect will be, as in terms of the Separate Amenities Act the notices must make it clear that areas or facilities are for the exclusive use of particular racial groups. The general impression seems to be that though the notices will perhaps be less irritating, the practical effect will be just the same.

What about beaches and playgrounds?

It seems somewhat inconsistent that the Government should be removing notices (or part of them) with one hand while making efforts to enforce them in new spheres with the other. The Cape Provincial Administration, having failed to get Cape Town's City Council to put up apartheid notices on beaches and in playgrounds, has erected the former itself and is now embarking on a comprehensive survey of all parks in the Cape Town municipal area to determine to which racial group each should be allotted.

These are of course not "state property". Will their

notice boards include the words "only" and "slegs"? If not, what is the effect of the exercise?

The muzzled dogs ...

There has been considerable condemnation of the moves to enforce beach apartheid. It is reported that police constables have patrolled with dogs and -not surprisingly - have met no resistance from those asked to move. The dogs have apparently been muzzled. One cannot help wondering what would have happened if people had refused to move. Would the muzzles have been removed?

Says the "Argus": "... it is true that the police have in general been sympathetic and patient in enforcing beach apartheid ... But no amount of courtesy and muzzling of police dogs, and no amount of generosity in handing over the least accessible beaches to the least politically influential people can heal the hurt that has been caused. Beach apartheid ... is as petty as apartheid can become. This is no longer a matter of party politics. It is a matter of real human hurt ..."

Supply and demand

There are two aspects of the "repatriation" of Africans which must engage the attention of the Government. The first is the crippling effect on industry in the Western Cape (and eventually on agriculture, if the prophecy of government spokesmen is fulfilled and Coloured workers leave the farms to replace Africans in the towns). The second, perhaps more serious in terms of human values, is the mounting unemployment and the increase in the crime rate in the Ciskei on account of the influx of "repatriated" Africans for whom there is insufficient work. This is aggravated by the drought in the Ciskei, which drives African men and women to seek work in urban areas.

Who was it that said some years ago that if the laws of economics were incompatible with "separate development", those laws must bend?

Aid centres

The "Cape Times" reports that plans are afoot to set up aid centres in the main cities for Africans who infringe the law while seeking work (a purely technical offence). Since, as the paper says, about 250,000 Africans are prosecuted annually for pass offences and an estimated 600 are arrested each day on their way to or from work, this step is certainly overdue and we hope it will be effectively carried out.