

CIVIL



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News Letter

Any comment in this issue by M. Rodger, 527 CTC Bldg, C.T.
"Focus on Freedom"

We give a summary of points made by the speakers at our very successful annual meeting earlier this month, with apologies to them and to our readers for unavoidable condensation.

Professor Hansi Pollak: Surveying the developments in our personal and group relations in the past 21 years. The philosophy of race separation - belief that contact between races can have only the effect of tension, racial antagonism, conflict and loss of biological identity. One Act has followed another which has precluded normal relations between people of different skin pigmentation. Only possible form of race contact now in economic sphere, and even there, legislation has sought to perpetuate the economic superiority of the Whites.

The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act, the Immorality Act, Race Classification Act. Social Work (August issue) has now published a sociological analysis of the social implications of the implementation of the Immorality Act - a social scientist (Heydenrych) who by objective analysis has come overwhelmingly to the conclusion that the efforts of the State through the Immorality Act have not succeeded; that the fear of Whites losing their biological identity if the Act is repealed is unfounded; that the State realises the general public is dissatisfied with the implementation of the Act, and yet to limit prosecutions is to admit the failure of the Act. Heydenrych himself urges that consideration should be given to the possible repeal of the Act and of the Mixed Marriages Act, first between White and Coloured and then between Whites and all Non-Whites.

Group areas legislation - this year in Parliament the Minister of Community Development gave figures (approximately 400 Whites, 23,000 Coloured, 17,000 Indians) of removals. Disparity - one White to 94 Coloured and to 210 Indian families. Numbers resettled, not affected persons. We must not think of this in terms only of economic sacrifice or financial sacrifice, but of

the disruption of communities which cannot be recreated - loss of institutions. We have embarked upon mass removals of humanity on a scale unknown except in cases of national disaster or after war.

Fundamental human rights - peaceful assembly - trade unionism, professional associations (e.g. nursing), very many of the economic institutions, divided on racial basis, with the inevitable result of weakening the institutions. Welfare organisations from 1957 - mixed committees no longer to be tolerated. Even national co-ordinating councils have to become racial. In the field of social and recreational contact, from 1957 on, legislation under Group Areas prohibiting persons of different races from using tearooms or restaurants except in their own group area - private clubs, cinemas included in 1967; "cinema" replaced by "place of public entertainment", produced forcible segregation of virtually all cultural activities, sport, political institutions (prohibition of African political organisations, and in 1968 of mixed political parties).

We have been hermetically sealed off into a world of extraordinarily narrow, limited contacts. Whittling away of the right to work, of work opportunities - job reservation, the rate for the job (jobs to be reclassified in any recession and made available if necessary only to Whites). Interference in African employment through the National Resources and Planning Act.

Finally, the devastating worsening of the situation of migratory labour, worst of all in the Cape Peninsula. Policy today, for all Africans not entitled to be in urban areas, only contract labour, 12 months - after which they must return to the area from which they were recruited - no normal family rights, no right of residence in urban areas. Devastating effect of this both in the homelands and in the towns. Dislocation of society, maladjustment at both ends. Right of free social relations, of working together for educational, social and cultural activities - saying goodbye for twenty years - people who have known African men and women as persons, human beings - our hearts are full and we ourselves are humiliated and devastated by what has happened, and our helplessness. Think what is behind each figure - 14,000 prosecutions for influx control offences in Cape Town in one year.

Our responsibility is to keep alive the flame of hope that the things we cherish and stand for will not go under altogether.

Mr Philip van der Merwe (ex-President, S.R.C., U.C.T.): Consider the relationship between society and its attitudes on the one hand and the rôle of the students within that society on the other. South African students in relation to the apartheid society. Students' relations and attitude as affected by apartheid have almost completely escaped the attention of the political students. Students till 1959 were experimenting in student relations in a mixed society. Putting a stop to this has inevitably caused a worsening of student relations.

Student protests at interference with university autonomy - this interference has been disruptive, not constructive. Actual attacks on universities and individuals documented in the long line of student protests.

Effect on student attitudes to one another and towards the society which one day they will inherit. 1968 the year of greatest student unrest on a worldwide front, including U.C.T. Students are mostly deeply suspicious of existing social and economic systems. Although there are international elements in the various student movements, and speed of communication leads to a greater interconnection, almost every major student demonstration has been completely specific in its content. Different goals in different countries. (See Stephen Spender, Year of the Young Rebels)

The Government has succeeded horribly in entrenching many of the barriers between student groups in South Africa. It has created a situation where Black and White students are finding it tremendously difficult to communicate in any real sense, or to find common ground, because their experience and aspirations and levels of individual freedom are so different. Not even those who really want to understand each other can do so. Those less liberal, less tolerant are perhaps happily dug into an attitude of acceptance, or are government supporters of the status quo (White) or involved in separatist movements (Black).

Some hope because of the recent verligte victory at Stellenbosch. Liberal students there must push for a three-way contact with U.C.T. and Western Cape. This might mean the English-speaking students having to sacrifice much, but they might be able to achieve integration by gradual, evolutionary means.

Mr W.A. de Klerk: Autonomy - or separate freedom - cannot be dictated by people outside one's own group. No society has ever been able to tell another how it should develop.

In any democratic society the initial movement is towards anonymity - the levelling down of people. But sooner or later will come a reaction to this mass of anonymity - demands for autonomy, expression, group identity. Even if the present Government had not thought of apartheid, such demands for group autonomy would have come. No one had ever told the Afrikaner, for example, to develop separately.

When you decide how other groups are to develop, you rob them of their autonomy. To say "We shall decide the future for you because we alone can be entrusted with the future" is defensiveness. The nature of any ideology is defensive. If you are defensive, you cannot have development, because development takes place in freedom. Apartheid is the death of true advance and true development. Sooner or later the bluff will be called, because these separate groups will say: "This is not enough - we want our amenities. Why don't we have a full participation in amenities and the cultural life of the community?". You are building up an explosive situation, giving people limited cultural participation, limited educational facilities, certain dehumanised areas (e.g. Bonteheuwel) to live in. The shattering structure of defensiveness building up restrictive legislation with the idea of (White) survival. You don't survive like that! No society has ever survived that way, in all history. No society has ever been over-educated to enter the way in which it will become a nation. We have to make decisions ourselves, whether we make mistakes or not.

Autonomy or separate development cannot be dictated by persons outside your own group, within frameworks of rational security which the human being thinks out through fear of what is going to happen. We have the ironic situation that my people (the Afrikaners), who were the first to revolt against the system of British imperialism, have in the course of a quarter of a century taken over all the arguments of the English of that time ...

Separate development is a contradiction in terms - you don't develop separately. You develop by integrating, and in the course of that integration you somehow find your own autonomies, as in a family. They make their own decisions and yet integrate, and it becomes a workable community.

Our sincere gratitude to all three speakers for their contributions.

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