

CIVIL



RIGHTS



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Cape Town

News Letter

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New Year greetings

Our sincere good wishes to our readers, and our warm appreciation of their support over the past years. We hope that 1970 will see the developing of a climate of greater humanity in our country, and that you will enlist your friends to strengthen our efforts in that direction.

Subscriptions

Statements of members' sub. position are enclosed with this issue - which explains its lateness. May we respectfully inform overseas readers that we lose appreciably on foreign cheques, and would appreciate payment by postal order if practicable. The enclosed statements give some idea of the exchange position for foreign currency.

Group Areas inhumanity

Recently the "Natal Mercury" made an investigation of the group areas situation at Verulam - an area with a considerable Indian population. Mr Eric Winchester, M.P., who has made a detailed three-year study of group areas and the work of the Department of Community Development, told the "Sunday Times" that * half of the entire Indian population of South Africa have been forced to leave their homes and businesses as a result of group areas decisions made by Government officials who showed a "callous disregard for the fundamental principles of human justice".

* More than a million South Africans of all races have been ordered from their homes in terms of Group Areas legislation. (Mr Winchester said that by May, 1967 more than 1,000 group areas had been proclaimed and by September, 1968 more than 1,100,000 people had been uprooted from their homes. It was estimated that two million Africans would have to be resettled and rehoused in Natal during the next five to ten years.)

While agreeing with Mr Winchester that more sympathy and

rtail the rights of millions of our fellow citizens ..."(Uys Krige)

consideration might be used in the administering of these laws, we feel it must be emphasised that the blame does not lie wholly or even mainly with the officials, who are after all bound by the law as it stands. It is not possible to administer justly and humanely a law which infringes such fundamental human rights as the choice of where one lives, the choice of which school one selects for one's children or of which entertainment one goes to. The whole basis of apartheid legislation is wrong and the only remedy is to abolish it. Said Mr Uys Krige recently in an address to the boys of the Diocesan College, "Just put yourselves into a Coloured man's place for twenty-four hours and see what it's like".

We support wholeheartedly Mr Winchester's call for a commission of inquiry into the whole group areas system.

Censorship of thought

In an article in the "Cape Times" recently Mr Stanley Uys gave startling details - all too often forgotten or not known by the general public because the process is largely administrative and unpublicised - of the loss to South African culture and knowledge through the activities of the Censorship Board. Literature that the rest of the world can read is excluded from our country; sources for historical study are withheld even from our universities. "South Africans", says Mr Uys, "have grown accustomed to this cultural deprivation ... Increasingly, South Africans are losing touch with contemporary trends ..." Mr Uys adds that the climate of thought thus created inevitably affects the quality of the writing even of our distinguished South African writers.

And what of the embargo recently imposed on the memoirs of our distinguished Patron, Dr Margaret Ballinger? The book, "From Union to Apartheid", was held up by the Customs "for inspection" after it had already been largely featured in South African bookshops. Thanks perhaps to vigorous protests in the press, the embargo was lifted within a few days; but that it should be imposed at all is a sorry reflection on what officials apparently think is expected of them by their employers, the Government. Reviewing the book in the "Cape Times", Dr David Welsh described it as "nothing less than a full-scale political history of these times as she saw them from inside Parliament". We need not commend it to any of our readers who are interested in South African history.

"Eternal vigilance ..."

The "Cape Times", in a vigorous protest, described the embargo on Mrs Ballinger's book as "an impertinence"; and so it was. And yet, here again, one cannot so much blame the officials responsible (who might well be penalised if they were considered to be lax in doing their official job) as the whole system of fearful control of mature thought in South Africa. Let us never lose sight of what is being done to us. This, we are sure, would be Mrs Ballinger's own reaction to an irritating but ominous incident.

"Who cares?"

We respectfully commend the "Cape Times" for its recent news and leading articles under this heading, which must have been a revelation to many and - we hope - stirred their consciences. Comment is unnecessary on such stark suffering as lies behind the cases, too, instanced by Mrs Eulalie Stott in cases that have come within her personal knowledge. It is, as Mrs Stott says, a dreadful reflection on our "Christian National Democratic society" (the term *is hers) that "a minority of the people in this country ... can continue to make and rigidly enforce so many inhuman laws". *(also the inverted commas)

Space does not permit of our recalling in detail the case of Everett Bakana, fighting to keep his wife and five children with him in Cape Town after twenty-five years of marriage; of Margaret Mkandwana, mother of five, contemplating divorce so that she can stay with her husband; of Jacob and Geslina Ntuli, who have to live 1,200 miles apart except for rare and expensive visits to Cape Town; of all those African families, at present legally in Cape Town under Section 10 of the Bantu (Urban Areas) Act, who if the proposed legislation is passed this year will no longer have that right. These are only isolated instances of a fear and a suffering which must be beyond our imagining.

The least we can do is to keep ourselves and others informed of what is being done. We can only pray that, if common humanity does not persuade the Government to change its policies, the harsh facts of economic realism may do so before it is too late.

Coloured realism

At a national congress of the Coloured Ex-Servicemen's Legion the President said that the loss of the common roll vote "had set back the political development of the Coloured people for many years" - "and we shall never get back to normal until

such time as we get back the vote".

Twenty-five years ago, said Mr Kearns, the Coloured had a say in the administration of the country through the common-roll vote, "which made us a force to be reckoned with, specially during election time. Today we have a limited vote which has no bearing on the administration of the country for which many of the Coloured people gave their lives.... The present vote means nothing to us. A vote is useless if it is controlled by a counter vote."

It will be interesting to see the use that the Coloured Representative Council will make of its limited opportunities.

Bureaucracy and the Archives

We wholeheartedly support the City Council in its protest to the Minister of National Education about the proposed removal of the State Archives from Cape Town to Stellenbosch. Apart from the obvious undesirability of such a move from almost every point of view (we have not yet seen one really convincing argument in its favour), it is in the highest degree deplorable that such an important step should apparently have been decided on without any consultation either with the civic authorities or with other interested bodies. We hope that the Minister will abandon the idea.

The Election ...

The Civil Rights League has since its inception kept itself apart from identification with any political party, and would not presume to suggest to its members which party it is desirable for them to support. But we do urge on all to take an active interest in the election, to give practical support as far as they can to the party they do support - and to make sure that civil rights issues are put to candidates and their support of civil rights principles requested. The time is past, if it ever existed, when members of political parties can claim that civil rights issues are "not our business".

Having it both ways

Mr and Mrs Joseph Jacquesson were charged under the Mixed Marriages Act presumably because Mr Jacquesson was born in South Africa. After acquittal, they were deported, presumably because Mr Jacquesson held a French passport...

Tailpiece

"We are not dabbling in politics when we are naturally involved by our minds and hearts in seeing law upon law being made which cu