

CIVIL

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RIGHTS

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News Letter

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After the Poll is over ...

Now that the political dust is settling, it is possible to make a cautious assessment of the position, especially as regards civil rights.

It is clear that the determined effort of the Nationalists to swing more English-speaking support behind their Party has misfired. Confident predictions by the Prime Minister have been falsified. The Opposition vote has risen, particularly in the towns, and Nationalist majorities, even in their traditional strongholds, have been reduced. The Prime Minister denies that there has been any "swing" away from his party, but this is - at best - juggling with words.

Why did it happen?

It would be cheering if one could feel that the reduced Nationalist representation was due to public indignation over BOSS, 180-day detention, the restricted role of the courts, group areas, "endorsing out", the misery caused by race classification. But this would be unrealistic. We have heard of one case where two previously convinced Nationalist supporters, indignant over the endorsing out of an African maid, voted against the Government; and it seems probable that the threat to remove African servants from the largely Afrikaans community of Randburg contributed considerably to reducing the Nationalist majority there from over 3,000 in the previous election to just over 140 in this one. It is even possible that Mr Blaar Coetzee's move towards "keeping Sea Point White" helped to swell the Progressive total in that constituency. And Dr de Wet's threat to withhold African labour from Mr Oppenheimer may have helped to reduce his own majority. But it would almost certainly be a mistake to give too much credit to moral indignation.

Mesmerism weakening

It does seem, however, as if the mesmeric effect of the apartheid appeal is decreasing. Voters (especially the younger ones) have not been stampeded into voting for apartheid as the

only safe policy. Their minds may be more open, not only to economic considerations, but to humanitarian ones. They may be less ready to condone manifest injustice as a means to "saving" the White community. This, we hope, will not be without its effect on the Government, which may (in "brushing up its image", to quote Mr P.W. Botha) be prepared to move away somewhat from the rigidities of influx control and even possibly of such things as the Immorality Act and race classification.

It should also strengthen the attitude of the Opposition to such measures. They are now in a better position to press the Government, and to lead public opinion, towards more humane policies and better race relations. We hope that they will do both vigorously.

Our own role is just as important as ever, and with the possibility of being more effective. The more we can touch the public conscience, and educate public opinion, by bringing civil rights issues to light, the more hope there is for South Africa. Let us get on with the job.

Discarded people

We would commend to our readers "The Discarded People", recently published by the Christian Institute, by a Franciscan Catholic priest, Father Cosmas Desmond, who has written it to report on a 24,000-mile tour in which he visited more than 60 emergency and transit camps for "resettled" Africans in South Africa. The review published in the "Cape Times" shows what a valuable and challenging document it is.

This book is not at present being sold. Its printing cost per copy is R2.50, but we are informed that any donation, less or more than this, will be accepted from those who wish to obtain copies.

The Cape Town address of the Christian Institute is P.O. Box 363 and its telephone number 2-3027.

In her introduction to the book Miss Nadine Gordimer says: "... as citizens of South Africa the subject is our responsibility, and as human beings it is our concern ..."

Re-thinking?

Dr M.D. Marais, leading Afrikaans business man and a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, told the "Sunday Times" (19/4/70) that while government policy had to be followed, it was up to individual members of the Afrikaanse Han-

delsinstituut to promote goodwill between the various racial groups in South Africa. "We have a large percentage of non-Whites who form an integral part of our social-political-economic structure and we must at all times be realistic about this", he said. A motion was to be introduced by another prominent Afrikaans business man at the Handelsinstituut Congress that the body should promote goodwill between the White and non-White groups.

Dr Marais emphasised that his approach was non-political and that he did not wish to involve the issue in politics. It is surely time that such issues were recognised as essentially non-political. Then there would be some hope of solving them.

No wonder!

Professor J. Verkuyl, prominent Nederlands theologian, who recently visited South Africa as the guest of the South African Council of Churches, told the "Sunday Times" (19/4/70) that he was "shocked and disturbed" that people with whom he had had talks had subsequently been visited by the Security Police, and that a Dutch television team which had covered his visit had had tapes wiped clean in Durban and films removed from their hotel rooms in Johannesburg. "South Africa", he said, "is more of a police state than I had visualised". He referred also to the "apartheid, authority and police-dominated existence" of the many Africans and other non-Whites he had met. He had, he said, found great bitterness, anger, resentment and hurt among them.

Influx laws to be relaxed?

Paramount Chief Kaiser Matanzima was reported recently as telling the congress of his ruling Transkei National Independence Party at Umtata that negotiations were in progress between his government and the South African Government concerning the relaxation of influx control regulations. The South African Government, he said, was sympathetic and he was optimistic about the outcome of the negotiations. This, he said, would enable Transkeians to seek employment anywhere in the country.

We shall look forward with interest to developments.

It cuts both ways ...

In this connection it is interesting that a former manager of the Johannesburg City Council's Non-European Affairs Department, Mr W.J.P. Carr, recently told students of the Witwatersrand University that Johannesburg's future requirements of African labour could not be met by the natural increase of popu-

lation, and continued immigration of African men would be necessary.

After giving details of the wages and needs of Africans in Soweto, Mr Carr said:

"Does anyone doubt that this is a multi-racial society, and that every aspect of our daily lives is affected by the impact of our fellow non-White citizens? We are daily in contact with them from infancy to death and yet, tragically, most Whites have no contact or knowledge of them outside the master-servant relationship.

"Our society and our standard of living is utterly dependent on them and their labour, just as they are utterly dependent on us for employment, education, housing, medical services plus all the other trappings of orderly, civilised society."

The Chinese puzzle

The Chinese community in Port Elizabeth has recently been receiving the attentions of the Department of Community Development, which has laid down that its members need a permit before playing golf, or snooker, or skating in a "White" area. Other incidents from various parts of the country have also been reported. The departmental action seems to have been inspired by complaints from White people. Mr Schoeman, Minister of Transport, told a questioner at Uitenhage that Chinese, though falling under the Group Areas Act, had travelled in first-class railway compartments. No one, he said, had ever complained except the Herstigtes.

Port Elizabeth citizens publicly stated that because of the treatment of Chinese there they would no longer vote for the Nationalist Party. Port Elizabeth Central was regained by the United Party. May one hope that the Government will think again?

Our justice ...

In a British television programme on "The Afrikaner", Mr Justice J.W. van Zyl is reported as saying, inter alia:

* It is better to put a recalcitrant individual into solitary confinement rather than to allow a crime to go unpunished or to be continued.

* Other countries practise third degree, and we don't.

* A detainee is not being accused of anything. He is only failing in his duty to tell the police all he knows.

* Do you think the police would waste their time with him if he knows nothing? Well ...