

# CIVIL



# RIGHTS



Box 3807

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## News Letter

### Our new President and Patron

We are happy to announce that the Hon. A. van de Sandt Centlivres, ex-Chief Justice of South Africa and Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, has accepted the office of President of the League in succession to the late Bishop Sidney Lavis. In his letter of acceptance Mr Centlivres says:

"May I wish the League every success in helping to maintain such civil rights as still remain and in endeavouring to restore those civil rights which have been destroyed by legislation which has made serious inroads on the liberal principles of our common law."

Our members will also be pleased to hear that Mr Leo Marquard, a former chairman of the League, has accepted the honorary office of Patron. We hope that improved health will soon make it possible for Mr Marquard to resume active membership of the Committee.

### Our pamphlet

There has been a good demand for "The New Townsman", our recent pamphlet by Dr Oscar Wollheim, M.P.C. on the legal position of Africans in the towns. Copies are still available and may be obtained from Box 3807, Cape Town at a cost of 10c per copy plus 2c per copy postage.

### Subscriptions

Our grateful thanks to those members who promptly sent in their subscriptions in response to our reminder in the last issue. Receipts are enclosed herewith so that members may know that their remittances have reached us. If you have sent a subscription and have not received an acknowledgment, please let us know so that we may go into the matter.

### The Election

Writing in his column "Viewpoint" in the Rand Daily Mail recently (12/2/66), Mr Laurence Gandar said that the "life" had "drained out" of South African politics in recent years. "There is no longer a sharp clash of ideas, a searching for new solutions,



a sense of striving and purpose ... The collapsed state of our politics is reflected in the public's almost complete lack of interest in it... The spirit of the election is one of resignation, as if it were something inconvenient and unpleasant that must be gone through with like a minor operation ... We have lost our way and no longer know what to do except to stay put, ... and fight off any suggestion that we move from where we are ... Support is consolidating around the general position of the Government, but it is lifeless support, lacking the dynamism and inspiration to give popular impetus to a national course of action. A mood of sullen defiance of the outside world is no substitute for this ..."

To us, one of the most depressing aspects of the situation is the accuracy with which the Government has gauged the attitude of traditionally Opposition supporters. In an alert society one would have thought that audience apartheid, taxi apartheid, beach apartheid and, most of all, the proclamation of District Six as a white group area would have been among the main weapons of attack for the Opposition, at any rate in Cape Town. One would (a few years ago at least) have expected considerable and sustained opposition from the citizens of Cape Town, and that the Government, with an election in view, would have hesitated to introduce such measures at this time. The fact that they have not hesitated to do so leads to the depressing conclusion that they are reasonably sure that such measures will not lose them any votes and may, indeed, gain them some in the former United Party strongholds that they are contesting. From another angle, this conclusion is supported by the fact that Opposition speakers, whom we might have expected to make great play with these issues, hardly mention them on election platforms and refer rather to such remote questions as Bantustans, agriculture and the like. They, too, apparently, do not think their voters are really interested ...

In such circumstances the responsibility rests on thinking people like ourselves to see the situation clearly and, wherever possible, to help our neighbours to do likewise. We would quote from an article by the new Bishop of George, Rt Rev. P.H.F. Barron, in Good Hope some months ago (quoted in the July issue of "Race Relations News"):

"You and I who have lived all our lives in South Africa must be careful that by long custom we do not accept the impurity of the so-called "traditional race policies" of our land.



"Protest against unchristian law is still made but there appears to be a growing apathy. Is it that we do not mind being dirty any more?" (The Bishop had said that when water was scarce in time of war one became accustomed to not washing and being dirty became less and less repugnant.)

"There is no doubt that by Christian standards many of the accepted racial traditions and laws of our South Africa are not only unhygienic but frankly black with grime.

"We accept this state of affairs easily. Do we make the excuse that we do not find Christian standards practical?"

"It is not easy when good Christian men and women around you have got into the habit of thinking that this is the only way in which they can live.

"Unfortunately, it is not the case of being a little grubby because we have slightly lowered the Christian standard. We are slowly allowing ourselves to be ingrained with dirt that just will not come off."

It is not only white people who have this problem. Says Post (20/2/66): "We have grown a crust on our consciences. Arrests without trial ... lives ruined by the Immorality Act ... careers cut short by the arbitrary withholding of passports ... the fate of detainees and others .... we are still distressed by the armour-plating of the nation's conscience. It is a soul-destroying process. And this tendency to look the other way and 'shut up' at all costs invites abuse... far too many people have, through a mixture of fear and apathy, begun to believe - quite falsely - that any form of dissent is illegal and that criticism is a crime. The few voices which cry out against this dangerous nonsense are truly patriotic voices serving the nation."

### District Six

The reaction of government and government-inclined spokesmen to criticism of the District Six proclamation suggests guilty consciences and certainly does nothing to disprove the criticisms. We cannot do better than quote the resolution passed by the protest meeting in the Cape Town Drill Hall (all upstanding except three members of the Security Police):

"This meeting of the citizens of Cape Town expresses its abhorrence of and shame at the Proclamation of the heart of District Six for the white group.

"This meeting considers the Proclamation to be:

(a) callous in its disregard of the welfare, sentiments and



- interests of those resident and working in that area,
- (b) contrary to the wishes of the vast majority of the citizens of the City,
  - (c) against the weight of considerable expert advice, as well as unnecessary for the purposes of slum clearance, and
  - (d) offensive to the religious convictions of people of all faiths.

"This meeting therefore calls upon the Government to withdraw this Proclamation and upon the Cape Town City Council to make the necessary representations accordingly."

In all the process of attempted justification there are at least two points which the Government has not tried to answer - probably because they are unanswerable:

\* The proclamation is unnecessary from the point of view of slum clearance because the City Council had already submitted a pilot scheme for the "rehabilitation" of the area which had in fact actually been approved by the Provincial Administration before the Government's commission was set up;

\* The people most concerned - the inhabitants of the area - have not been consulted and are certainly opposed to any such compulsory removal. If the area were "rehabilitated", it would be possible to find homes elsewhere for those who needed to move, without this uprooting of an established community.

We hope that, in spite of their present attitude, the Government may be persuaded to think again.

#### The big stick ...

There are not wanting those who see Senator de Klerk's response to the University of Cape Town's S.R.C. decision not to recognise the proposed all-white Students' Conservative Association as the first step in a renewed attack on the "open" Universities. His indignation at the "infringing of the freedom" of this student minority is hardly consistent with his own declared intention of interfering with the freedom of the majority, about which he obviously has no qualms of conscience.

#### Congratulations

We congratulate NUSAS on the excellent news bulletins they have recently issued, and wish these a wide circulation among those who are interested in knowing as much as possible of the facts in a situation where emotion is all too apt to take the place of reason. (Comment by Maggie Rodger, 527 C.T.C. Building, Cape Town)

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