

CIVIL

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RIGHTS



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News Letter

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Subscriptions

Enclosed our members will find a statement of the position of their subscriptions which we hope is self-explanatory. Our sincere thanks to those who have already paid for 1973. To the others we would say, do it before you forget! Please do not hesitate to phone or write to the Secretary for any elucidation you require. (phone 2-7020)

Our Patrons

We regret to record the deaths of two of our Patrons, both of whom had held office since the League's inception in 1948 - Mrs N.B. Spilhaus and Professor Donald Molteno - and would add our tribute to those already paid in the press to these two eminent citizens, whose support meant much to us.

Migrant labour - facts and challenge

It is significant and encouraging that items appear almost daily in the press about the condition - especially regarding wages - of African workers, and that even the more conservative white trade unions are beginning to urge the narrowing of the wage gap and even the formation of black trade unions. During the past month the issue was highlighted in a different way by the pilgrimage of eight white men from Grahamstown to Cape Town of eight young men and the culminating service, attended by some 4000 people, on Rondebosch Common. We hope that the awakening of conscience that must have attended this pilgrimage will not be allowed to die down. Dr Francis Wilson told the Rondebosch gathering, "The pilgrimage itself was not difficult: the difficult part begins now". An "Office for Family Life" is to be established in Pharmacy House, Johannesburg (headquarters of the Christian Institute and Spro-Cas), and no doubt we shall hear more of possible avenues of support.

Some critics of course dismissed the Pilgrimage as "politics", and the Dutch Reformed Church's Moderator refused to

participate in the Rondebosch Common service on the ground that his Church "did not take part in demonstrations". This comment was adequately dealt with by Rev. David Russell, one of the Pilgrims, who said, "Before I consider the charge of a political demonstration as being valid, I must first be convinced that Christ does not want stable happy families."

We would commend to our readers Dr Francis Wilson's book on "Migrant Labour in South Africa", which appeared just after the end of the Pilgrimage. Produced at the request of the S.A. Council of Churches, it should be studied and pondered by any - students, business men or the ordinary citizen - who are interested in humanity and justice. To inhabitants of Cape Town, for instance, the description of conditions in adjacent Langa and Guguletu must be revealing and shocking, and the same must hold for other centres. Facts, tables and photographs contribute to a shattering picture of the reality that so many of us contrive to forget. Space precludes our giving adequate details, but the book is obtainable from Spru-Cas or the S.A. Council of Churches, Pharmacy House, 80 Jorissen St, Braamfontein at a cost of R1-95.

Charter of Family Life

The following principles were adopted by those present at the Rondebosch Common service:

- * We recognise that the South African economy will always need large numbers of Africans to work in the established urban areas.
- * We believe that man must not separate those whom God has joined together.
- * We know that the present system of migrant labour does violence, not only to the families concerned, but also to the moral principles without which no just and responsible society can exist.
- * We are conscious that the consequences of building our future upon a system which uses men as labour units while denying them the freedom to live a truly human life is evil and explosive.
- * We acknowledge our common responsibility for this abuse of power.
- * Therefore we dedicate ourselves to work with our fellow South Africans for a society in which the rights of all people to live a secure family life in the place where they contribute to society by their work is firmly established by law."

"The urgent voice of black moderation"

Under this heading the Argus recently published interviews with Chief Lukas Mangope, Chief Minister of Bophuthatswana, and Chief George Matanzima, Minister of Justice in the Transkei, both remarkable for their moderation and for their frankness. Both rejected uncompromisingly anything savouring of discrimination in either status or wages. Said Chief Mangope: "You just have to be discriminated against once to know how much it hurts ... I know what it is doing to my people. It is causing bitterness and anger among them." He quoted instances of unequal pay for equal services. "How does one justify this?"

Both Chiefs stressed the need for "dialogue" between equals to bring about the needed changes in South African society. It will be interesting to note how things develop from there.

"Ophir"

One of our members has brought to our notice two publications of modern verse - one, "Ophir", which apparently appears three times a year, and the other "The Making of a Servant and Other Poems" (translated from Xhosa). We commend these to any of our readers who want to know how Africans and other champions of human rights are thinking. Address, Box 3846, Pretoria (or, in Britain, Martin Booth, The Sceptre Press, 15 Keats Way, Rushden, Northants NN10 9 BJ). Here again, frankness is challenging. "Ophir" costs 35c per issue or R1 per annum.

Censorship prospects

The report of the Inter-departmental Committee of Inquiry into the application of the Publications and Entertainments Act, 1963 has appeared in a special issue of the Government Gazette (No. 3743 of 22/12/72). The Gazette invited comments on the report, and the League, which had submitted a previous memorandum to the Committee, submitted a further brief document. It was interesting to note that our views were shared, independently, to a considerable extent by the South African Society of Journalists. We look forward to the Minister's Bill during the coming session of Parliament with considerable interest.

The right to education

Parents trying to obtain admission for their children to schools in Langa and Guguletu have, in many cases, been met (as reported in the Cape Times, 16/1/73) been met with the reply, "I am sorry I cannot accept your child. He does not qualify to

be educated in the urban areas." If they do not qualify in the area where they live, they are not likely to be admitted in any adjacent area (though, for instance, the Langa High School is reported to have plenty of room). And how do the parents get them to a boarding school in a "homeland" at this stage, even if there is room there?

Other difficulties are lack of space, lack of staff, lack of school books and furniture. One school principal has applied for five more teachers and has about 80 pupils on his waiting list. Another has first year matriculation students accommodated in a kitchen with no school furniture, and had to turn away 50 first year J.C. pupils for lack of room.

It seems that the Argus TEACH project is still highly necessary and we hope that it will be able to help in the provision of additional facilities; but we hope also that the authorities will speed up provision of what, after all, is their responsibility.

Coloured development

Mr Vorster's announcement of a multi-racial commission to be established to investigate "the socio-economic and political future of the Coloured people" opens up interesting possibilities. Its membership has not yet been announced and its terms of reference are, of course, in general terms. Its value seems to us to depend on two factors: the genuine intention of the Government to improve matters, and the determination of the Coloured people to obtain what they regard as their rightful place in South African society and politics. It is understandable that, for instance, leaders of the Labour Party, which has not been involved in previous consultations, should regard it with some scepticism. We hope this is not justified.

General Smuts thought so too ...

Mr Schalk Pienaar of Rapport recently suggested that "the considerable measure of common cause to be found existing between the two (white) language groups" might find "a common political expression", and "creates an atmosphere of white security which would enable them to accommodate black aspirations without fear".

We hope he is right: but history suggests that it is doubtful. What we need is not unity, but the willingness to face a moral challenge in faith ...

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