

CIVIL

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RIGHTS

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News Letter

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"Dissent" - verkrampte censorship?

Since our last news letter appeared we have heard that the May issue, which we recommended to our readers, has been declared undesirable by the Censors (for no adequate reason that we have discovered), and the July issue has been announced as being similarly treated. We hope this action may be reconsidered and reversed. At the very least, it proves the desirability of reasons being given for bannings and of the right of appeal to the courts being restored.

Tearoom apartheid (Cape Times, 8/8/75, 9/8/75)

It is at least something that the Minister of Community Development (Mr A.H. du Plessis) has promised to review his Department's rejection of our City Council's application to open the Gardens tearoom to all races. It would be even better if the Minister instructed his Department to treat such applications favourably unless there is any really cogent reason for not doing so. In Cape Town there is a real need for such facilities. Café and restaurant owners say that the absence of open facilities here leaves a "shocking impression" on visitors, especially from ships (and most ships calling at Cape Town today have mixed crews). It was recently reported that an Indian ship's captain stayed on board his vessel for three weeks in the Docks, saying he was afraid to go ashore because he did not know where he could or could not go. And what about our own Coloured citizens?

... but why not here? (Sunday Times, 3/8/75)

It is reported that all apartheid signs in South West Africa are to come down by September 14 or as soon thereafter as possible, and that the SWA Legislative Assembly is to hold a special session on September 15 to change the liquor and pass laws and to speed up the opening of hotels, restaurants and holiday rest camps to Non-Whites.

Fair enough. But will opinion at home and abroad be satisfied if the same steps are not taken in South Africa?

"Symbolic gestures" (Cape Times, 14/7/75)

The Minister of Economic Affairs has stated again that the Government will proceed with its movement away from race discrimination. Says the Cape Times, "It is important to note that the supposed beneficiaries of this new trend in Nationalist policy detect little change in the conditions of their daily lives." The "movement", says the paper, "so far has been confined to rhetoric and symbolic gestures which have little bearing on the lives of the mass of the population."

Mr D.M. Curry, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and an Executive member of the Coloured Representative Council, says (Cape Times, 14/7/75) that the talk of moving away from discrimination is "eyewash" as long as there are apartheid signs on entrances and toilets even in the offices of the Department of Coloured Affairs. Mr Curry calls for talk between all groups about constructive change "towards a unitary system in education and sport, a budget for the total population and not for particular race groups ... about the abolition of the Group Areas Act ... about scrapping the pass-laws system and giving Africans true citizenship in South Africa..."

We believe that the CRC is in a position to work effectively for these things, and hope that it will do so uncompromisingly.

Steps towards change (Sunday Times, 10/8/75)

It is reported that the Federated Chamber of Industries is considering a "national manpower development policy" which could not only speed up South African economic growth, but would have profound implications in the field of civil rights. Key elements in the policy, says the Sunday Times, are:

- * the greater geographical and occupational mobility of workers
- * the improvement of skills in the total labour force;
- * the phasing out of the migrant labour system as it exists;
- * the relaxation of statutory and traditional job reservation;
- * the preparation of Black workers for more meaningful involvement in the collective bargaining process;
- * the fixing of minimum wage levels "in accordance with the basic necessities of life";
- * the extension to the total labour force of adequate unemployment, pension and sickness benefit schemes;
- * the abolition of discrimination against women in the labour market;
- * the co-ordination of the labour policies and practices at present administered by four government departments - Bantu

Administration, Labour, Health and Mines.

Comments from the FCI's director, Dr H.J.J. Reynders, are summarised by the Sunday Times as follows:

Geographical mobility: Not the unqualified removal of influx control, but improved use of labour bureaux.

Migrant labour: Improved facilities for workers to visit their homes, and allowing Black workers "with a history of employment in industry and certain minimum educational status" to live in "White" areas on a family basis.

Greater freedom for industry to acquire Black workers on a longer-term basis. Present migrant worker system and annual contracts to be gradually phased out.

Trade unions: Full use to be made of works and liaison committees, but government and industry to ensure orderly transition to Black involvement in trade union movement, increasingly recognised as inevitable by South African industry.

Responsibility of industry to introduce or improve social security benefits such as unemployment, pension and sickness benefit schemes for all workers.

Increased attention to entry and re-entry of women into the labour market, including vocational guidance, training, hours of work adapted to family responsibilities, and establishment of day nurseries.

... and a warning (Sunday Times Extra; 10/8/75)

It is noteworthy that the same issue of the newspaper reports concern among trade union leaders about workers' lack of interest in their unions. The Industrial Conciliation Act requires 51% of paid up members from joint trade unions to legalise an agreement between trade unions and employers, and the Minister of Labour has recently indicated that unless there is marked improvement in the present situation he will not publish any future agreement (the present one terminates in February, 1976).

Mr Arthur Stanley of the S.A. Woodworkers' Union has appealed to workers to "rescue the situation" by becoming members of their unions.

Free District Six (Argus, 17/7/75; Cape Times, 1/8/75)

We commend the determination of our City Council in its efforts to have District Six rezoned for all races. Since it was zoned White in 1966 the Council has repeatedly asked that this action be reversed, but to no avail. Not only has the City lost thousands of rands in rates from this now derelict area, but -

more important - thousands of people have been forced to leave their homes, with the inevitable social disruption and bitterness. The Mayor and Deputy Mayor have been authorised to seek an interview with the Minister of Community Development, when they are likely to urge that the Minister await the report of the Theron Commission on the future of the Coloured people before taking any further action.

It is at least a slight step in the right direction that, at present, presumably on account of the chronic shortage of housing, no "disqualified persons" (says the acting secretary for Community Development) are being forced to leave their homes. We hope the Minister realises that that consideration is likely to hold good for many years.

The same arguments apply to Maitland Garden Village, and we are glad that our City Council is still trying to have the declaration of this area as a White group area reversed. (Cape Times, 15/7/75)

Cato Manor (Sunday Times, 20/7/75)

It would appear, too, that the Government is having second thoughts about Cato Manor (Durban), from which about 40,000 Indians had to move when it was zoned white in 1963. The South African Indian Council has approached the Prime Minister, and the Minister of Indian Affairs (Mr Marais Steyn), having inspected the area with the Council, said recently that there was "every possibility" that it would be given back to the Indian community.

New deal for women teachers (Cape Times, 4/8/75)

Has International Women's Year touched the hearts of the Cape Provincial Council? After many years of fruitless campaigning against the discrimination against married women teachers, some steps are now being taken to improve their position. This is to be welcomed, but apparently married and unmarried women teachers are not yet to be put on exactly the same footing. It is interesting that the Cape Province's Executive Committee is apparently ready to accept the principle of equal pay for men and women teachers, although in terms of national legislation they cannot act in this direction unless the other Provinces do the same. We hope the teaching profession will not let the matter drop.

Advance notice

Annual general meeting, Monday October 13. Details later.