

CIVIL



RIGHTS



Box 3807

Cape Town 8000

News Letter

Vol. XXII No. 10

Issued 19/11/75

"Squatters and Civil Rights"

Those who attended our annual general meeting on October 13 were amply rewarded. The two addresses and the slide show must have brought home to them the conditions under which so many of the underprivileged in the Cape Peninsula are living. We owe a debt of gratitude to the two speakers, Norman Daniels and Rev. Theo Kotze, and to Professor George Ellis for his moving collection of slides. Our only regret is that the audience was so small.

For the benefit of those who could not be there we give summaries of the two addresses.

"The right to work"

Mr Norman Daniels referred to the insecurity and danger in Coloured and African townships, the high crime rate and prison population, and said it was the League's task to educate people to realise that what happened in these townships was everybody's concern.

People, said Mr Daniels, must be told again and again that real, meaningful change must come about because, if it does not, the price we may be called upon to pay will be too high.

Mr Daniels pointed out that whereas White children leaving school had plenty of work opportunities waiting for them, this was not so for Blacks and Browns. The first obstacle to this was the migrant labour system. He quoted the Archbishop of Cape Town and Professor Monica Wilson on the effect of this system on African family life. He referred to the Pondok problem, which affected both the African and the Coloured people. He mentioned many areas in Cape Town and the suburbs where Coloured people had formerly lived, and described the difficulties under which they now lived in Coloured townships and in squatter areas.

Very few employers, said Mr Daniels, were aware, or cared, where their workers lived. Many were underpaid, and were doomed by the system to a life of poverty, or squatter housing. Dis-

crimination continued because those discriminated against had no political power to change it. Mr Daniels referred to the Acts that should be repealed, including the Group Areas Act, dummy representation, the Population Registration Act and the Immorality Act, and those governing the migrant labour system, the pass laws and job reservation.

Did the people who had the vote, he asked, really want real, meaningful change at this stage? He doubted whether the vast majority of them did. Only when the electorate changed would the politicians change.

Crime in the townships, said Mr Daniels, was our concern, and it was not confined to the townships. Decent wages and decent education were necessary. That 300,000 people were living in pondoks should not be tolerated. More land should be set aside for more homes.

Mr Daniels expressed appreciation of the concern felt by the League, which, he said, the Coloured people did not know about.

It was difficult to explain to those outside what it meant to be a member of a particular racial group.

"When you lose contact with people," said the speaker, "you create a gap - there is fear and suspicion." He hoped that the League would be able to convince more and more people of the tremendous need for change and a return to sanity.

"The right to home and family life"

Rev. Theo Kotze said that after seeing Professor Ellis's slides he felt he had not the right or the power to say anything. He expressed gratitude to Mr Ellis and Mr Andrew for their photography, and the deep insight and compassion underlying it.

Mr Kotze said that the right to a home is fundamental in any society, so much so that people are prepared to die, or to fight, for this. It was no good telling people who work here that they have no right to live here. Their need for a home and family life was basic, and this forced people into squalor camps. He urged the audience to read all available literature on the subject.

He said that in a recent article a world-famous psychologist had said that children need adults in order to become human. Children need to play and work with those both older and younger than themselves. To separate children in a world of their own was to deprive them - and ourselves - of humanity.

"In South Africa, legislation such as the Group Areas Act, migratory labour, the Mixed Marriages Act destroys homes, separates families and prevents children from developing their full potential as human beings. It is home and family that make people into responsible citizens. To separate a man from his family produces anti-social and violent behaviour." Mr Kotze gave examples from his own ministry in a Coloured church in Salt River.

"The common factor in all the circumstances is the struggle for survival. It is a matter of maintaining human dignity, struggling for the freedom to live a truly human life. In South Africa the majority of the population are fighting for survival - the struggle for the freedom to live a truly human life must be implemented, and we are all involved.

"What can we do? We know these things and agonise over them, but do we do enough? Power and privilege are in White hands. We can become better informed about facts, more involved with people where they live. We do not readily get to know as persons the people who work for us.

"We can keep at the Churches, and keep the spirit of protest alive. We should not lose hope ourselves."

Mr Kotze quoted from the Charter for Family Life issued by the Pilgrims from Grahamstown in January, 1973:

"We are conscious that the consequences of building our future upon a system which uses men as labour units whilst denying them the freedom to live a truly human life are both evil and explosive."

Saul among the prophets? (Cape Times, 29 & 30 October, 1975)

The Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, Mr M.C. Botha, told a gathering recently that the provision of such amenities as theatres, cinemas and sports fields, and eating facilities for Black workers in White areas, and hotels where needed, "could no longer be delayed". "Die Burger" supported the Minister in his desire to eliminate "the most painful side-effects which stir up Black feeling and disturb White consciences"! "The old fear that the White man's territory will be made to attractive for Black people", says the paper, "will have to make way where it is an obstruction to the dictates of practical common sense and elementary justice. We are glad that the Minister is taking the lead in this matter."

So are we. But we hope it is not churlish to point out that neither the Minister nor "Die Burger" says one word about what is an even more urgent matter - the provision for housing for

African workers and their families in urban areas.

The Minister did, some months ago, talk of possible provision for this. We hope he is still seeing it as an urgent priority. Without it, all his proposed "amenities", though necessary and desirable, will not achieve their object.

A new Voltaire? (Cape Times, 8/11/75)

Dr Connié Mulder, Minister of Information and the Interior, speaking at a Nationalist Party meeting in the Cape Peninsula recently, gave an assurance that the Government would "try to maintain a free press" under all circumstances (one cannot but wonder why they should have any difficulty about it!). He realised the value of this apparently because it impressed visitors! He said the South African press was "one of the freest in the world". It was the right of newspapers like the Rand Daily Mail and the Cape Times to criticise the Government. "I demand that right for them," said the Minister.

In Voltaire's famous remark, "I disagree with everything you say, but I would fight to the death for your right to say it!"

Taken at its face value, this statement appears considerably more "liberal" than the views expressed by Sir De Villiers Graaff and others at the United Party congress in Bloemfontein a few days later. (Argus, 15/11/75 and Sunday Times, 16/11/75)

As for Mr Louis Luyt, would-be press baron, there was a remarkable unanimity among the newspapers he wished to take over. A few years previously he had stated that he was "a Nationalist and proud of it" (Sunday Times, 2/11/75); now he said that he "would like the Rand Daily Mail to become a little more Right". He would, he said, find himself in a difficulty if he could not change the ideas of the editor of a paper he controlled. And he added, "If you are in the export market, as I am, and you have newspapers wrecking South Africa's image, you realise how much damage one-sided reporting can do..."

No wonder that the Sunday Times (echoed by the other newspapers concerned) stated flatly that "Mr Luyt is not the man for SAAN".

All who see a free press as one of the last strongholds of civil liberties will agree with him wholeheartedly.

MOYA

N.B. There will be no issue of the News Letter in December. A Happy Christmas and a Good New Year to our readers.