

CIVIL



RIGHTS



Box 3807

Cape Town

News Letter

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Subscriptions and membership

Our warm thanks to those members who have sent their subscriptions since receiving our reminder. To those who are still meaning to do so we would say, "DO IT NOW!". Please also notify us of any change of address. Receipts are enclosed.

Our thanks also to those who have sent us the names of possibly interested friends. Forty letters are going out - but we would gladly send more.

"Legislatures and Human Rights"

We have been asked by the Graduate School of Public Affairs of the State University of New York to make known to our readers a conference under this title to be held in Dublin in September, 1976, in conjunction with the Irish Institute of Public Administration in that city. Its purpose is to "explore the rôle of legislatures in matters related to human rights", and participants from all regions of the world are expected. Apparently the organisers will pay the fares and expenses of participants. Further particulars on request.

Unbanned (Cape Times, 17/2/76)

We are pleased to note that the Minister of Justice has lifted the banning order imposed on Mr Clive Keegan (one of the eight NUSAS leaders restricted on the recommendation of the Schlebusch Commission) "because (says the Minister) of the fact that for a long period now he has strictly adhered to his banning orders and I have had indications that he has to some extent changed his views".

We hope the Minister will continue to review the cases of similarly restricted persons and to remove these restrictions whenever possible. Mr Keegan is probably not an isolated case.

It is, however, unsatisfactory in the extreme that the life and liberty of individuals, against whom no charge has been brought (much less proved) in open court, should be so seriously interfered with. The whole system of bypassing the courts calls urgently for review. With due respect to Mr Kruger, the imposition of such penalties is not the best way of persuading people

to "change their views".

The war on squatters

The Athlone Advice Office in its October-November, 1975 report gives grim details of the "stepping up" of the removal of women from the squatter camp at Crossroads. Women who were previously found guilty of being illegally in the area, and warned, are now being removed in vans early in the morning, put on a train at Langa with rail warrants and food parcels and made to sign a request for their belongings to be railed to the railhead nearest their destination. Not surprisingly, some of them leave the train at the first opportunity and return, when the procedure is repeated. Once their house is empty, it can lawfully be demolished. The husband may be at work and return to find his wife gone, his belongings stacked for removal or vanished.

The Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, Mr M.C. Botha, stated (Cape Times, 3/2/76) that 793 women at Crossroads were convicted during 1975 of being in a prescribed area illegally. 79 women, 68 of them accompanied by children, were removed to the "homelands".

The Archbishop of Cape Town, visiting his flock in Crossroads, said recently (Argus, 7/2/76) "When you come here, it is obvious that you cannot defend the indefensible. This is a symptom of a very serious disorder in our society, and a cause for deep distress."

The S.A.B.C. on February 17 broadcast an appeal from the Prime Minister for all South Africans to "stand together" in these difficult days. Does Mr Vorster really expect these people to respond? We would respectfully remind him of his own statement some years ago, that the one thing for which one would never be forgiven was taking a man's home away from him ...

Another aspect (Argus, 20/12/75)

Meanwhile, a Divisional Council scheme to rehouse 80 000 shanty dwellers from Elsies River is finding difficulty because many of the tenants cannot afford the rents of their new homes and are moving back to pondoks. The Council says some concessions will have to be made by the Department of Community Development.

In the long term, of course, better qualifications and higher wages would ease the situation: but until that comes about, it is surely the responsibility of the Government to subsidise such housing schemes.

"Mirror of unrest" (Sunday Times, 15/2/76)

We respectfully congratulate Mr Justice Snyman on the fearless honesty of his report on disturbances at the Black University of the North (Turfloop). Their immediate cause, says the Judge, is to be found in the "extreme and alarming hostility" of Black students to Whites.

As the "Sunday Times" comments, the Government was warned when it set up its "ethnic" universities and excluded Black students from the previously "open" universities that in so doing it was "institutionalising Black racism" and creating "breeding grounds of Black exclusiveness and hostility".

"A university", says the Judge, "is a mirror of the conditions within the society in which it functions. And the nature of this society in South Africa is influenced, even determined, in so many spheres of life by contacts between Black and White."

The Judge's report specifies particular aspects of South African life which cause hatred and frustration, including

* Separate development, and more particularly that part of it - fundamental to the ideology - that decrees that a Black man may only love, work and study within his own ethnic group. The student is "dissatisfied because he is compelled to attend the university established for his own population group, because he rejects ethnic grouping as it is seen by Whites".

* White "guardianship or paternalism": the university is under White control, White salaries are higher than Black salaries and Whites are not employed in positions inferior to Blacks. Blacks have no "meaningful say in their future".

* White attitudes in society and the treatment Blacks receive from officials and in public places are discussed and resented.

"It was soon clear to the commission", says the report, "that their hatred of Whites, their rejection of separate development, their rejection of the university, their refusal to accept anything that was planned and offered purely for their benefit; their acceptance of SASO's destructive policy - all these things actually spring from the sense of impotence and frustration that has built up in them in the face of the Whites' position of power over them, their powerlessness to fight it and to obtain what they believe to be their due."

"Their real grievance", says the report, "was not so much against separate development as against the manner in which the measures are implemented.

"They contend that Blacks are not consulted in the formulating of measures, that all sacrifices have to come from the

Blacks and all the benefits go to the Whites.

And finally: "They maintain that many restrictive rules take no account of a new dimension among Blacks in South Africa, the sophisticated, educated or Westernised Black man, but that the Whites will not see this ..."

The Judge points out that by the end of this century there could be 50 000 Blacks at university in South Africa. If attitudes on both sides of the colour line do not change, the potential for "country-wide revolutionary activities" will be enormous.

The "Sunday Times" (to which we are indebted for the details of this report) points out that last year only two out of every ten Black students who applied to enrol at White universities were allowed to do so, and that the University of Natal's medical faculty has been instructed to refuse to admit any first-year African medical students this year.

Pass law trials (Argus, 15/1/76)

In its annual Survey the Institute of Race Relations says that during the year ended June 30, 1974 a total of 511 163 Africans were sent for trial under the pass laws. This was a small decrease on the previous statistical year, but represents 25 per cent of all the cases sent for trial for infringements of the law. It is equivalent to 1 400 trials for every day of the year, including Sundays and holidays.

This proves conclusively

- * that the pass law system fails completely to control the influx of "surplus" Africans to the cities.
- * That such cases cannot possibly be given the necessary consideration for justice to be done.

Such a system must build up not only ill-feeling and frustration, but contempt for a law whose transgression is no longer regarded as a crime.

Xhosa in the Cape (Cape Times, 27/1/76)

One hopeful development is the institution of Xhosa teaching in the Cape Province in 45 primary (White) schools. We hope that this will be extended to all primary schools and, in time, to high schools also so that White pupils may get a real grasp and appreciation of the Xhosa language. We have not yet heard of similar developments in the other Provinces but hope they will come.