

CIVIL



RIGHTS



Box 3807

Cape Town 8000

Vol. XXIII No. 7

9/9/76

News Letter

A correction and a reminder

We thank those of our members who drew our attention to an error in the first paragraph of the previous news letter. The date of the annual general meeting should have been given as Wednesday, September 29. We apologise, and hope the error will not prevent members from attending what should be a most interesting meeting. The subject of Professor Dean's address is a timely one - "South African Constitution 1976". Electricity House, 8 p.m.

Determined youth (Argus, 2/9/76; Cape Times, 31/8/76)

The outbreak of protest from African and Coloured schools is a new and disquieting one in the Peninsula. The comments of the headmaster of a Coloured high school are worth quoting. Matters, he said, had "got out of hand" in the schools.

"There has always been a current of unrest and unhappiness, a spirit of protest in the community," he said. "But today's spirit is something entirely new. In the past, it was the adults who were in the forefront of protest. Now it is the children. And their objective, their single aim is to get rid of apartheid and to gain full freedom.

"You must remember these youngsters are a generation that has grown up under National Party rule. They have never had full contact with White institutions.

"They regard their own institutions - the schools, the churches and so on - as agencies of the government.

"This inevitably affects their relationship with me. I love these children but I am the headmaster of a government school and they have now rejected anything imposed on them by the Government.

"I do not think anyone has come here to give the children ideas. They have their own ideas. Their one idea is to get rid of apartheid.

"My feeling is that this thing will end only when apartheid has been ended. I think the whole community feels this."

One could hardly look for a more shattering indictment of "separate development". We hope the Prime Minister and the Government will have the moral courage to accept it.

List of grievances

The list of grievances drawn up by students of three high schools in Bonteheuwel includes

- * the system of Coloured education and the policy of apartheid;
- * the lack of compulsory education for Coloured people;
- * the lack of facilities at the Coloured schools;
- * the lack of good sportsgrounds and playgrounds at the schools and in the residential areas;
- * the general behaviour of the police during the unrest in the Black areas;
- * the interference by police in demonstrations on school grounds which were not forbidden;
- * the taking into custody of fellow students.

We realise that the police are faced with a very difficult task. But we would respectfully bring to their notice an old saying:

"It is excellent to have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant."

Informers at Universities (Cape Times, 24/8/76; Sunday Times, 29/8/76)

It has long been alleged that there were police informers among the students at our English-speaking universities. Recently a student at Natal University has confessed publicly that he worked for the Bureau of State Security in that University for about two years. Professors in some departments at UCT say they "take it for granted" that there are informers present at their lectures. The Principal of UCT has pointed out the real dangers of action being taken against staff or students because of garbled information received through such channels.

Such a situation cannot be too strongly condemned, and is bound to have an inhibiting effect on some at least of the staff and students affected.

"Preventive" detention (Cape Times, 28/8/76)

Under the Internal Security Amendment Act a large number of people - admitted by the Minister of Justice to be over 800 - have been held, not because any charge is to be brought against them or even, apparently, for interrogation, but because the Minister is of the opinion that if released they might "aggravate the present situation".

Speaking on this measure in Parliament (Cape Times,

30/5/76) the Minister of Justice is reported to have said, inter alia:

- (1) that people held under this Act would not necessarily be detained in prison;
- (2) that he did not think at present that the number would be great enough to necessitate the setting-up of special camps(I);
- (3) that people would only be deprived of their freedom (this, he admitted, was onerous enough!) - no further punitive measures would be taken against them;
- (4) that the purpose of such detention would be to remove people from circulation, away from contacts in any area where (in his opinion) they could cause trouble;
- (5) that he was introducing this as a precautionary measure and hoped he would not need to enforce it.

The Minister has, under the Act, appointed a committee of three, presided over by a judge or former judge, to go into individual cases and report to him. Neither the Committee's names nor their findings are to be published.

There is of course no recourse to the courts, though in some cases attorneys are reported to be acting for people so detained. Once again it appears that the courts have been completely bypassed. This is a shocking extension of the already vast powers held by the Minister and a further departure from the Rule of Law.

Kragdadigheid (Cape Times, 9/9/76)

The Prime Minister has stated roundly at the O.F.S. congress of the Nationalist Party that the Government "will not be blackmailed by violence" into giving "one man, one vote" in South Africa. Law and order, he said, must be restored immediately and maintained, or "other steps would have to be taken".

Mr Vorster's insistence on law and order is, of course, perfectly justified. But there is a sinister note about his warning to Whites about "incitement". How does he define this? Is it now to be regarded as incitement to advocate political change by non-violent means? The Government, he says, has now "reached the stage where it does not matter what your status or position is". Are the members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to be penalised for asking (Argus, 8/9/76) for all South Africans to be 'recognised as citizens on the same footing'?

We welcome the Prime Minister's expressed willingness to discuss and put right any "reasonable grievances" affecting the Black people in urban areas which do not affect political rights, including wages, job opportunities, amenities, facilities, local management, education and housing. This could be of great value. But

to whom was he talking when he urged "the leaders of the rioting population groups" to talk to their people and give them a lead? Are these the people with whom he is prepared to have discussions? We can only pray that he will be given wisdom in this.

The snag (Cape Times, 26/8/76)

In his recent lecture on constitutional reform for South Africa, Professor Marinus Wiechers made two interesting points:

(1) In searching for solutions to the country's problems, said the Professor, the present constitutional position had to be taken into account. Any future constitutional development had to be approved by Parliament, and "it was a simple truth that Parliament was entrusted with the preservation of White rights and privileges".

(2) While homeland development offered an important new perspective for future political development, it was "entirely unclear" how and where the Indians, Coloured people and non-homeland Blacks could find their constitutional place in the present system.

That is the problem in a nutshell. We hope the Professor and other constitutional thinkers will be able to crack it. But how much will they achieve if they are debarred in advance from any proposals involving "one man, one vote"?

Multi-racial committee (Cape Times, 9/9/76)

The League welcomes the formation of a new body to work for communication between citizens of all race groups in Cape Town, to bring information and basic demands to the authorities and the public and to assist victims of "unprovoked police attacks" in approaching the appropriate authorities. The League will be glad to co-operate with this body in any way possible. We suggest that it also keep in touch with the City Council's Executive in its contact with leaders of the Coloured community.

Quote from Chief Gatsha Buthelezi (Cape Times, 9/9/76)

"Whether we like it or not, for good or evil, the generic force of politics in South Africa today is the movement towards majority rule. I really do believe that if Whites made meaningful moves to act in unison with Blacks and accepted universal adult franchise as a requirement of pressing importance, we would have got off the ground." (Address at UCT, 8/9/76)

MOYA