

CIVIL



RIGHTS



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News Letter

Disappointment

To his great disappointment, and ours, Professor Thompson has had unexpectedly to cancel his visit to South Africa in order to undergo a serious operation. We know that our members will join us in wishing him a complete recovery.

Change of date

Meanwhile the date of our annual general meeting has been postponed to September 25 (Monday). It will be held in St Saviour's Parish Hall, Claremont on Monday, September 25 at 8 p.m. At the time of going to press we have not yet finally found a speaker, but the name will be announced in our September issue.

The time limit for motions and committee nominations has consequently been extended to Monday, September 11.

A suspect ideology (Argus, 11,12/8/78)

It is a sorry commentary on our laws when those who enforce them have to call for heavier penalties on employers of "illegal" blacks in the Peninsula.

They would be better advised to report to their superiors that the policy of influx control, as at present imposed, is both inhuman and impracticable, and to advise that it be replaced by the provision of adequate housing to render squatter camps largely or - if possible - wholly unnecessary. It is true that some housing is planned, but it should be regarded as an urgent priority and done on a much larger scale. This would of course cost money, but it would be constructive, and more likely to produce peaceful and contented citizens.

Says the Argus, "It is humanly and morally unacceptable that (migrant workers) should be expected to work here for perhaps most of their lives without their families. And any ideology that dictates that they should is suspect and should be reconsidered." We are happy that the recent ASSOCOM regional congress supported this view.

As regards the argument sometimes put forward by government spokesmen, that migrant labourers qualified to stay in the Cape take away the jobs of coloured workers, ASSOCOM has pointed out that the Africans qualified under Section 10 number only 15 000,

and this represents only 15% of the coloured labour force. Coloured people, the paper points out, do not believe they need the protection against black competition that the government claims they do, and in many cases they refuse to accept jobs at present held by blacks.

Enlightenment at Stellenbosch (Argus, 12/8/78)

In this connection it is encouraging to note that the Stellenbosch district council of the National Party has sent a motion to the Cape Provincial congress calling for the status of urban blacks to be put on a par with that of whites in the commercial, industrial and professional fields, including blacks in the Western Cape, who should, they say, be included in the 99-year leasehold scheme.

Leadership from the Transvaal (Sunday Times, 30/7/78)

Nelspruit and Barberton have decided to open their cinemas to coloured people and Indians (only 8 objections out of 100 canvassed). This may be, as the director of one cinema said, largely for financial reasons: but "good race relations and neighbourliness also played their rôle".

Says the Mayor of Nelspruit: "I do not find it in the least strange that we should be setting the pace and showing the rest of South Africa how things should be done."

North of the Vaal, of course ...

"Plus ça change ..."? (Cape Times, 9/8/78)

It is interesting to find leading Nationalist thinkers like Dr S.P. du T. Viljoen and Professor Gerrit Viljoen (of the Broederbond) advocating federalism and a decentralised system of government as a means of doing away with racial discrimination.

We are all in favour of decentralisation and more effective powers for local government, municipal and regional. How these would work with a "co-ordinating central government" depends, however, on the willingness of the government to abandon racial discrimination - which so far has been more evident in carefully worded theory than in practice.

But more power to these Nationalist academics. The real danger is that the constant dropping may not wear away the stone in time ...

Detention - without trial (Cape Times, 17,24/7/78; 9,10/7/78)

The Cape Times recently reminded the public that in terms of Section 10 of the Internal Security Act, individuals may be detained who will never be brought to trial. Of over 50 such ar-

rests made last October, more than 29 people are still in detention, the total in this category at present (including some members of the Young Christian Workers) being 53. There are also, according to the Institute of Race Relations, 302 persons held under Section 6 of the Terrorism Act, many of whom may probably never be brought to trial either. We support the Cape Times in urging the Minister to proceed with any trials that may be pending and to release all who are not to be charged - not only because (as the paper says) the system is "deeply subversive of the national interest", but because it is blatantly unjust.

Note: The Minister of Justice, Mr J.T. Kruger, is reported to have said that there are 55 security trials pending, including 151 accused persons; that 144 people are being held under Section 6 and 21 in "preventive detention" under Section 10 of the Terrorism Act.

The Minister has stated that unannounced visits by the two government-appointed "watchdogs" are conducted in private. But this, though a step in the right direction, does not take the place of the full-scale judicial commission of inquiry that has been repeatedly urged on the Minister.

The language problem (Cape Times, 19/7/78)

It is reported that some African students at UWC have complained that because some of their lecturers "refuse to give their lectures in English", they cannot fully grasp the material and consequently are liable to fail their exams.

There are two possible remedies for this. One, which is probably ruled out on financial grounds, is to have lecturers in some faculties in both languages. The other - which in any case has much to commend it - is to allow students to attend the university of their choice instead of restricting them to one where the facilities are not geared to their practical requirements. We hope that the authorities will have the moral courage to adopt this latter attitude.

Group areas and humanity

Of all the various proclamations of group areas during the past twenty-five years or so the one that is most notorious is undoubtedly that of "District Six" - proclaimed white by the government in 1966. At that time there were 61 000 coloured people and Malays, 800 whites and 600 Indians living there. By the beginning of 1976 most of the coloured and Indian families had been moved and much of the area bulldozed. Since then the whites have shown no inclination to move in for either residential or

trading purposes. Now the government is proposing to declare as "coloured" adjacent areas of Woodstock and Salt River, which are a mixed community including a considerable number of whites. The Department of Community Development has announced its intention of moving the inhabitants (white and coloured) from certain admittedly dilapidated blocks of flats in order to renovate them as part of a "prestige area". The inhabitants, especially the whites have protested against this disruption of a contented community and have urged the difficulties regarding access to schools and employment which it would cause. Representations have been made to the Department to allow the area to remain as it is. We hope that these will be successful and avert the tension and unhappiness that would inevitably follow such a move.

(We are indebted to a Black Sash report dated May, 1978 for the figures given above.)

Right-wing terror (Cape Times, 21/8/78)

Every now and then an instance of right-wing urban terrorism is reported in our daily press. It is usually stated that the police are investigating, but that is generally the last one hears about it. So it is salutary as well as horrifying that the Cape Times has now compiled a list of incidents (about 1600 are known) over the past ten years. "In the past seven years," says the paper, "hardly a month has passed without some reported right-wing attack on a known opponent of Nationalist race policies." There have been not only attacks on the homes and property of individuals, but attempts to disrupt protest meetings at Sea Point and Rondebosch, and routine election meetings, during the last year. It was disclosed before the Christian Institute was banned that it had received at least 10 threatening phone calls a day for three years. In the only instance where two men were brought to trial, the State dropped the allegation that one of them was "Scorpio", although both received sentences for their activities. The identities of those involved in these outrages are still a mystery.

We call on the Minister of Justice to take stern measures to root out this cancer in the life of our community, and to eradicate the impression, obviously prevalent in some quarters, that opponents of the government may be victimised with impunity.

Pamphlet

We enclose, with apologies for unavoidable delay, Professor Andrédu Toit's address to our A.G.M. last year. See enclosed leaflet for further particulars. Further copies available on request.