

CIVIL



RIGHTS



Box 3807

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News Letter

Our Annual General Meeting

We are happy to announce that Mr Robin Hallett of the UCT History Department has agreed to be our speaker on Monday, September 25. His subject is to be "Wild Men and Cool Heads", and the venue is St Saviour's Hall, Claremont. Time, 8 p.m. Our members know that this is our thirtieth Birthday! Come and bring your friends.

An erratum and an apology

By an unfortunate oversight Dr André du Toit was referred to in the pamphlet of his address as "Professor". Please insert the enclosed erratum slip in the pamphlet sent to you last month. We much regret this inadvertent error.

The absurdities of censorship (Sunday Times, 3/9/78)

Dr André du Toit has commented vigorously on the impossible situation being created, especially for academics, by the increasing banning of books, especially over the last ten years. "With the rate at which books are banned," he says, "it is impracticable, if not impossible, to keep up to date ..."

The number of books submitted to the Publications Directorate, says the Sunday Times, has increased steadily from about 800 in the late 1960's to more than 2000 in 1977. In 1974 the Publications Act was amended to make possession of "undesirable" books, as well as distribution, an offence. In 1975, 285 books were added to the list and in 1977 another 325.

The ban, originally intended to prohibit only pornography, now applies also to items (81% of those banned for possession) in the "political" categories - those listed by the directorate as "prejudicial to the safety of the state", or "harmful to relations between various sections".

To quote Dr du Toit again, "The chances are very high that anyone interested in politics would have some banned works which he bought when they were freely available, but which he is now not even allowed to possess.

"It would be quite easy then to see how the authorities could take action against someone whose activities they disliked by using the Publications Act ..."

Mr Jan Rabie, Sestiger author, says censorship is power politics, a way for the authorities to keep tight control of the people's thought. But, says Mr Rabie,

"Even if this country is to go up in flames we have to continue striving to write good books ... I predict no knee-falls before our censorship bosses, because repression creates courage."

On the other hand, the black ecumenical-newspaper, Voice, a number of whose issues were banned, has now been allowed by the Chairman of the Publications Board to appear again pending the result of an appeal against the bans.

Giving with one hand ... (Argus, 9/9/78)

It is reported that, following on a motion adopted by the Coloured Representative Council calling on the government to admit all students to the country's universities, technical and agricultural colleges, a limited number of coloured students may be trained at the Elsenburg Agricultural College, on condition that satisfactory arrangements are made to accommodate the students elsewhere (!) The Minister has said he cannot fully agree to the request "because of limited facilities at the institutions, and that priority has to be given to white farmers".

Proposals that will "institutionalise conflict" (Argus, 9/9/78)

Professor Marinus Wiechers, of UNISA, whom members in Cape Town had the privilege of hearing last year on the government's new constitutional proposals, has appealed to the government to keep its constitutional plan fluid and open to change in order to avoid "institutionalised confrontation". Unless consultation and public debate on the proposals were maintained, he said in an interview, racial attitudes would harden and prevent conciliation. The proposals could not be implemented without consultation with and the co-operation of black leaders. "And it appears this consultation is not going on."

Inter alia, Professor Wiechers said that

* the plan had to be clarified "in order to know whether there would be genuine power-sharing or whether the coloured and Indian parliaments would be subordinate bodies under the white Parliament.

* The major political problem - that of the urban blacks - has to be solved.

* The coloured people and Indians will be hesitant in collaborating in a scheme which could turn black feeling against them.

"At the moment," said the Professor, "the future looks bleak. It is crucial to keep the debate open and on-going because, as the proposals now stand, they will institutionalise conflict."

We hope the government will take these remarks to heart and will hold meaningful consultations outside its own party congresses - where, by all accounts, discussion of alternative plans was not encouraged.

Houses at Stellenbosch (Argus, 9/9/78)

We congratulate the Oude Meester group and its associated companies on the housing project for their coloured staff at Stellita Park, Stellenbosch. There are to be 60 houses, initially for letting, but also to be available for purchase, to be ready by March next year. We hope this will be followed by many other such projects.

TUCSA and employment practices (C.T. 4/9/78; Argus, 6/9/78)

The Trade Union Council of South Africa has undertaken the highly necessary task of monitoring local and foreign codes of employment practices applicable to firms in South Africa. It has called on its membership of 230 000 in 61 unions to report back on employment conditions. The Council will publish the names of all overseas firms who have, and those who have not, subscribed to the codes to which they should subscribe, and will approach South African firms that have not yet subscribed to the code of the Urban Foundation. This they will do by direct approach to top management and through reports from the trade unions.

Our respectful congratulations to TUCSA on taking a step that, in South Africa, is long overdue.

It is significant that Inkatha is also reported (Cape Times, 16/7/78) as planning to enlist the help of foreign trade unions in putting pressures on international companies which violate fair labour codes.

Crossroads - tragedy and possibilities (Cape Times, Argus, 14/9/78)

This morning (Sept.14) the Cape Times carried an item saying that 35,000 people had signed the "Save Crossroads" petition and that a delegation proposed to present it to the Prime Minister. The petition urges that Crossroads should not be demolished until alternative accommodation can be provided for its 20,000 inhabitants.

But this afternoon the Argus has announced two massive police raids on Crossroads, one shortly after midnight and the other about 7 a.m., by police and Administration Board officials. It is reported that hundreds of residents have been arrested and (in the second raid) also the Chairman of the Western Province

Council of Churches, other clergymen and a number of social workers.

The police used teargas, carried batons and were accompanied by dogs.

No wonder the Western Province Council of Churches describes the action as "insane", and calls again for a cessation of such acts.

It is difficult to imagine how the government can justify such a policy. The argument generally used - that the people are there illegally - is no justification for such inhumanity. There are other methods which could be used and which could create a happy and settled community, under healthier conditions.

It is ironic that, according to the Argus, the man at the head of all this should be the Chief of Riot Suppression. We can imagine few actions more likely to provoke riots than these raids, although we must pray for everyone's sake that this will not happen.

And in the same issue the Argus, reporting the welcome to Cape Town's Miss Universe, quotes her as saying, "Life is one big ball of excitement ..."

The Argus points out that Crossroads, with its 20,000 people, is larger than Beaufort West, Mossel Bay, De Aar, Knysna or Nyanga.

No one, says the paper, could claim living conditions are satisfactory, yet the agglomeration of wood and iron shanties does provide shelter and is, to many, a preferable alternative to living away from their families, in single quarters, or sharing a small house in one of the black townships with another family or families.

Communities, the paper urges, should be judged by the morals of their inhabitants, and the interior of their houses, rather than the makeshift structures or the condition of public spaces.

"By these standards, Crossroads should be spared and developed rather than demolished. For these people it is still possible to build up their own homes," says a Cape Town architect and planner.

Wouldn't it be possible - and wise - to let them do so?

REMEMBER THE INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS MORNING
MARKET AT ST SAVIOUR'S, CLAREMONT, SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER
30 - SUPPORT IT!