

CIVIL



RIGHTS

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Vol. XXVII No. 3
April 9, 1980

News Letter

Margaret Ballinger - errata

We regret two errors of detail in our item last month.

- 1) Dr Ballinger was never, in fact, National Chairman of the Liberal Party. She was its President when it was founded in May 1953, and a few months later became its Leader, which position she held until 1955. Until the Party dissolved itself in 1968 she remained a member of its National Committee.
- 2) African representation in Parliament was ended by the Government not in 1968 (the year in which the Liberal Party dissolved) but in 1960.

Subscriptions

If you find a reminder enclosed with this, PLEASE TREAT IT AS URGENT! It speaks for itself.

Realism (Cape Times, 2/4/80)

We support the contention of the Cape Times that the Government should consider seriously the question of releasing Nelson Mandela. As the paper points out, he has already served seventeen years - a heavy sentence compared with that meted out to Robey Leibbrandt and other Ossewabrandwag members in the last war. Has the Government considered terms on which he might be released? The call for such release has been supported by the South African Council of Churches as part of a general amnesty to political prisoners and exiles, as a preliminary to negotiations about South Africa's future. There is no doubt that black, coloured and Indian opinion would give considerable support to such a move. In the light of developments in Zimbabwe, surely the sooner white opinion embarks on frank discussion with other groups, the better. In such meaningful discussion, Mandela and other black leaders must necessarily be involved.

Incidentally, is there not perhaps something to be said for the view of the Prime Minister of Transkei that Mandela's release is a matter for negotiation between his own government and that of South Africa?

Starvation or reconstruction? (Cape Times, 12/3/80)

The Athlone Advice Office has stated in a recent report that up to 8 000 families in Ciskei and Transkei may lose breadwinners in the Western Cape because of the new heavy fines to be imposed on employers of "illegal" blacks. Many employers, they say, have appealed unsuccessfully for registrations. The Black Sash has quoted to Dr Koornhof (Minister of Co-operation and Development) a figure of 8 000 illegal female domestics in Cape Town.*

Dr Riekert, says the report, found the system of influx control was inefficient, and made recommendations to make it more efficient. "He has succeeded in doing so. It is now so efficient that thousands of people have lost their only means of survival."

The report says further, "As a minimum starting point for reconstruction, the Government could demonstrate its intention to negotiate by stopping all resettlements, allowing anyone who had a job to keep it and by putting all available energy and resources into massive site and service schemes in urban areas."

* The Advice Office comments: "These women are housed and employed. They are almost always the sole support of children and aged parents upcountry." Is further comment necessary?

Group areas loneliness (Cape Times, 2/4/80)

The incidental hardships caused by the Group Areas Act are well illustrated in the high-class residential area of Sea Point. Many years ago now, the coloured community that occupied a small section of the area was forced, by that Act, to live elsewhere. But there are still thousands of coloured domestic workers in Sea Point. Many of them travel long distances to and from work daily. But probably most of them "live in", for their employers convenience and to some extent for their own. But a proclamation under the Act forbids them to have visitors in their quarters between 10 p.m. and 8 a.m.

This seems to us a most inhuman provision. It is, of course far easier for the authorities (i.e. the police) to enforce such a blanket rule than to exercise reasonable supervision. But surely the least that our municipal authorities can do in such circumstances is to provide amenities where servants can meet their friends and enjoy normal social life. If - as is all too likely - the Group Areas Act makes even this impossible, urgent representations should be made for its amendment - and, till that can be achieved, for alleviating permits. Surely a desirable form of "community development"? (see also p.3 infra)

Group areas - hurtful discrimination (Cape Times, 18-19/3/80)

The Minister of Community Development (Mr Marais Steyn) has stated in Parliament that in terms of the Group Areas Act, 112 256 families have so far been moved - 2 234 white, 74 909 coloured and 35 113 Indian families: percentage-wise, 98,19% coloured and Indian, 1,81% white families altogether are to be moved, and 23 042 of them still have to move. A further 2 120 people have been moved from business premises under the Act and another 700 still have to move. Up to the end of 1979, 8 123 coloured and 442 Indian families had been moved from District Six.

And the Prime Minister talks about getting away from hurtful discrimination!

The petition on District Six which the League helped to sponsor was handed to the Prime Minister's Secretary with over 18 000 signatures. It expressed support for the people of District Six in the name of the people of Cape Town.

More about Sea Point (Cape Times, 22/3/80)

The Chairman of the Green and Sea Point Ratepayers' Association has directly challenged employers and others in the area to accept more responsibility for people working for them, saying that poor living quarters for employees were often breeding grounds for petty crime - "Some of these quarters are not fit for household pets," he said. He called for better housing for those working in the area, a re-structuring of the influx laws, better-lit workers' quarters and garages and greater acceptance of responsibility on the part of employers as some of the ways of dealing with root causes of petty crime in the area.

New tone in censorship? (Cape Times, 2/4/80)

The new Chairman of the Publications Appeal Board, Professor J.C.W. van Rooyen, has said that the recent, more enlightened trend in decisions by the Board is to continue, using the recently introduced criterion of the "probable reader". He aims to ensure "an image of objectivity" for the board. The Professor has served as the Board's Vice-Chairman since 1925 and has written a number of articles and a book on publications control.

The Minister of the Interior, Mr Alwyn Schlebusch, has also made three new appointments to the "panel of experts" available to the board.

Of these, two are Afrikaans. The third, a retired professor of English, has a distinctly un-English name ...

With all respect, we would ask the Minister, are there no

real English experts he can choose? Or are they all opposed to censorship?

"Magersfontein, 0 Magersfontein" - modified rapture (Cape Times, 25/3/80)

Professor André Brink, chairman of the Afrikaanse Skrywersgilde, has declared that the lifting - after three years - of the ban on Etienne Leroux's book has done "nothing to change the abhorrent censorship system". The authorities, he said, had made a "gross error" in banning the book, and if they reversed their decision there was "no reason to believe anything had changed". "Only when young writers, and in particular black writers, are allowed to write what they like, can South African authors feel safe. A few exceptions, like the unbanning of my works or Nadine Gordimer's book "Burger's Daughter", do not alter the repugnant principle of censorship in this country," said Professor Brink

National Conference (Cape Times, 25/3/80)

South Africa's first national Conference on Censorship is to be held at the University of Cape Town this month (April 22-25), and an impressive array of speakers is promised. Details from Mrs Caroline Winter of the UCT Department of Public Administration, phone 69-8531, ext. 565.

"Dangerous" integration? (Cape Times, 7/3/80)

The President of the United Municipal Executive told this organisation recently that the idea of integrated municipal councils was "extremely dangerous" and could lead to very ugly scenes" as the different race groups battled for control in a city such as Durban. The Executive, he said, should try to persuade "our coloured and Indian colleagues to accept the autonomous municipality proposals".

We doubt very much whether this well-meant proposal will meet with any success. Judging by the experience of Cape Town before the Government enforced apartheid in its municipal affairs, the President's fears are exaggerated. (Would it be unjust to suggest they may arise from a guilty conscience?) If people feel equal, the way to peace in municipal as in national affairs will certainly be much smoother than under what they regard as the stigma of apartheid. The thing most likely to provoke them would be any suspicion that the white councillors and their constituents were trying to keep the decisions in their own hands for their own advantage. After thirty years, apartheid must inevitably be suspected of leading to unequal treatment, in practice if not in theory, in municipal or national affairs.