

# CIVIL



# RIGHTS



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## News Letter

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Sept. 4, 1977

### Note the date - and the speaker

We regret having to change the date of the Annual General Meeting, which is now to take place on Monday, October 17 in the Congregational Church Hall, Main Road, Claremont at 8 p.m. We hope members will be able to come, especially as we have been fortunate enough to secure as our speaker Dr André du Toit, of Stellenbosch University. We have not yet been told Dr du Toit's subject, but his interest in civil rights is well known and he will certainly be worth hearing. Come and bring your friends.

Committee nominations and notices of motion may now be submitted till October 3.

### "Black" majority rule? (Cape Times, 24/8/77)

Mr P.W. Botha told the Cape Nationalist congress recently that urban black participation in "the new constitutional plan for coloured people and Indians" would lead inevitably to black majority rule.

One can only say that the longer consultation with the black citizens of this country is postponed, the more inevitable black majority rule will become. There are still blacks, as well as coloured people and Indians, who genuinely want a shared democracy. But as the younger generation despair of such a state ever coming to pass, and become increasingly intransigent, South Africa is rendering such a solution increasingly unlikely. How long does the Government think it can continue to rule by force?

### Twilight of democracy (Cape Times, 31/8/77)

Whatever may be the merits of Mr Vorster's new constitutional proposals, there seem to be at least two grave arguments against them.

The first and most serious one is the omission of any plan for the urban blacks, which understandably has been condemned uncompromisingly by Africans, coloured and Indian citizens alike, as well as by many responsible white leaders. (As Mrs Suzman

has pointed out, this excludes 18 million out of a population of 25 million.)

The second is the way in which the proposals are being launched through congresses of the National Party. When South Africa was considering the question of becoming a republic, the omission of African, coloured and Indian people from the decision was quite rightly criticised, but at least white citizens opposed to the change were given the opportunity to say so. There is no such opportunity this time. The new proposals are simply being rubber-stamped by Nationalist Party congresses. That the final decision will be given through Parliament is, in view of the Government's enormous majority there, hardly the authentic voice of democracy.

### Black property rights and squatting (Cape Times, 25/8/77)

A book entitled "Urban Black Housing: A review of existing conditions in the Peninsula, with some guidelines for change" has just been published by two members of the Urban Problems Research Unit of our University, which is linked with SHELTER. Points made by the writers, though perhaps not original, are worth recapitulating here:

\* It does appear to be a fact accepted by many that the urban blacks are a permanent part of the city population.

\* This being the case, no basis exists for withholding property ownership rights from those whose presence in the area is within the law ...

\* Apart from the many social advantages, the introduction of home ownership for blacks in the Cape Peninsula would ease the situation and allow the substitution of private-sector finance for the present government investment in housing stock, thus permitting further greatly-needed expenditure on facilities and services ...

\* Although long leasehold has been introduced at other centres, the Peninsula Bantu Affairs Administration Board (which owns all property and is not permitted to sell it) may only lease family houses to tenants on a monthly basis.

\* Since 1972, no new-scheme houses have been built. The shortage at December 1975 was 1440 houses, and families on the waiting list have to live as "lodgers", sharing a house with a tenant family.

\* Overcrowding has driven some lodgers into the squatter settlements where they simply erect temporary houses of their own.

In December 1974, 54372 Africans (over 44% of the Peninsula's total black population) lived in single quarters. While not supporting the migrant labour system, the writers say that "even those who argue that it is unjust and should be abolished cannot use this as an excuse for allowing men to continue living under conditions which deny even basic human comforts".

The Cape Town City Council has urged the BAAB and the Department of Community Development to provide emergency housing for squatters pending investigations of individual cases (Cape Times, 31/8/77).

Sixteen Dutch Reformed ministers and theologians have, in a letter to the Burger (30/8/77), made a public plea for the stopping of demolitions and for "a more reasonable approach".

#### Squatter misery and the answer

Public interest in the squatter problem is certainly higher than on any other question for many years, and the activity of Peninsula people in providing shelter, food and clothing for those whose homes have been demolished is heart-warming. But the task is a gigantic one and the legal obstacles make it almost impossible. The League commends warmly all those who have given practical help. We support wholeheartedly the appeal to the authorities to halt the inhuman process of breaking up homes and families, and hope they will take practical note of the widespread public concern.

We have noted with appreciation the letters on this subject which have appeared in the daily press, a considerable proportion of which come from our own members. Keep up the good work!

#### And the roof hasn't fallen in ... (Argus, 26/8/77)

One of our old-established Peninsula Dutch Reformed churches, that at Three Anchor Bay, after years of holding gradually growing meetings for coloured people, has now thrown open its Sunday services and weekday meetings to coloured people, without restricting them to any particular seats. Says the Argus, "It is a most welcome and Christian decision and one that should be followed by every church ..."

#### Modern literary criticism (Sunday Times, 7/8/77)

A decision recently in the Pretoria Appeal Court means that publishers and editors may be convicted retrospectively for publishing "undesirable material", even though it was not banned at the time of publication, says the "Sunday Times".

A lawyer has described this decision as "startling". "It is unique in criminal law. It means that a person can be convicted by a decision of a committee and has no means of defence... The judgment of a court has been superseded by a decision of a committee. Never before has there been such a concept in criminal law."

The Publications Board has told student editors that it objects (sic) to the often "anti-capitalist, pro-socialist, and New Left line" followed in student articles.

It would appear that the word "undecidable" can cover a multitude of sins.

Domination? (Cape Times, 19/8/77)

Dr Piet Koornhof, Minister of Sport, among whose sporting pursuits is certainly egg-dancing, was recently reported to have said that mixed club teams were contrary to government policy because they were contrary to decisions of National Party congresses.

Multi-national sport, he said, proposed sports free of discrimination on grounds of race or colour - a sports dispensation based on equal opportunities for all regardless of colour.

Other than multi-racial sports, said Dr Koornhof, this did not presuppose mixed teams with the possibility of one population group being dominated by another.

One would have thought that mixed teams would be an effective way of preventing such domination.

It is hardly surprising that spectators overseas, unable to follow these refinements, should view our sincerity with a certain amount of scepticism and that the efforts of some of our sportsmen to re-establish us in world sport should meet with so little encouragement.

D O N ' T   F O R G E T   O U R   A N N U A L  
G E N E R A L   M E E T I N G   -   O c t o b e r 17,  
Claremont Congregational Church Hall (main road)  
Bring your friends to hear Dr André du Toit.