

CIVIL



RIGHTS



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News Letter

1984 - continued vigilance

A tardy, but sincere Happy New Year to all our readers! Unfortunately there is no likelihood that it will be possible to relax our vigilance in the sphere of civil rights. We would encourage our members to bring to our notice any cases of infringement of these rights. While we may not be able to counter such infringements, we may at least help to keep them before the public.

Group areas at its worst (Cape Times, 5,7,11/1/84)

We have been reminded recently of the proclamation, in 1966, of District Six in Cape Town as a white group area, followed by the more recent decision of the government to build there a new (white) technikon.

Our Chairman, Mr Brian Bishop, has described this as "an economic and practical disaster", embarked on by the government to save its face. "The central business district", he says, "cannot afford to lose this area; students do not live nearby. Transport facilities cannot handle an unnecessary inflow of students at rush hours." He might have added that an offer by the City Council of a more accessible and convenient site was refused.

To say, as one correspondent writes to the Cape Times, that the authorities decided "to remove the inhabitants and demolish the shocking slum they (the inhabitants) had created" only when they "became thoroughly exasperated and desperate" is simply nonsense. It was the group areas policy at its worst. As another correspondent wrote to the Cape Times, the area "should have been restored and offered to their former owners at rentals they were able to afford". We can only hope that the day will come when the group areas policy will be recognised for the barbarous (not to say unchristian) thing that it is, and in District Six, as elsewhere, it will no longer be enforced.

The Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town last year wrote to the Department of Community Development, following on a synod reso-

lution in which the Church refused to be party to the Group Areas Act. The Church has refused to accept any money for expropriation of the church property, and has also refused to deconsecrate the church.

Beach apartheid (Cape Times, 20,21,22,23,28,29/12/83)

Here again the ugly face of apartheid is embarrassingly evident in the holiday season. This must be particularly hurtful to coloured folk who can go to Peninsula beaches unhindered during the rest of the year. No wonder they expressed this hurt in letters to the press. "Such laws", said one, "...are radicalizing people who are not normally radical". But it is also a source of shame and embarrassment to thoughtful white people. And is apparently enforced because of the complaints of white visitors from up country!

The Deputy Minister of the Environment should think again and not merely promise "adequate facilities" for all races. It is almost inevitable that such facilities would be "separate but unequal". And it would be so easy to limit numbers - which may well be desirable at the height of the season - by charging a small entrance fee to all. And why should one section have to forego our (and their) beaches in the meantime?

Letting us think for ourselves? (Cape Times, 6/1/84)

It is reported that nearly 54% of the books and objects banned during 1982 and almost 90% of those banned for possession, though in many cases listed as pornographic, were in fact political. The bans on 31 items were lifted and those on 22 confirmed.

Students of political science will now be able, if they so desire, to read, inter alia, two volumes of Lenin's collected works, and the autobiography of Mr Donald Woods (if they already possess this

Apartheid in education? (Cape Times, 7/1/84)

Black teachers have commented vigorously on the discrimination in education and its results as seen in the difference in pass rates between white and black candidates..

Says the President of the African Teachers' Association of South Africa:

"If the political changes and educational reforms do not bring full emancipation ... then the reforms are not reforms at all.

"One cannot divorce education from politics. The two are intertwined."

The Association has rejected the restructuring of education into five ministries and called for a single ministry of education, diffe-

rentiated into geographical units only, and not in terms of race, colour, religion and sex or any other extraneous conditions of culture and language: and furthermore it has called on the government to "urgently scrap from the statutes all discriminatory laws like the Group Areas and Separate Amenities Acts, influx control and all laws restricting worship", which, they say, "interfere with full human development".

One speaker, Mr Peteni, said that teachers attributed the high failure rate in matric to factors such as insufficient textbooks, shortage of qualified teachers and the qualifications of markers and examiners for matric examinations".

These views have been strongly supported by educationists and by the Institute of Race Relations, with whom we wholeheartedly agree.

Press freedom (Cape Times, 3/11/83; Argus, 3/11/83)

We congratulate our committee member, Mr Bob Steyn, on his appointment as conciliator and registrar to the S.A. Media Council, founded jointly by the Newspaper Press Union and the Conference of Editors.

Mr Steyn has said that it will be one of the aims of the Council, by helping to ensure high standards, to create a greater public awareness of the importance of upholding and maintaining media freedom in South Africa. The Council is headed by two former Appeal Court judges, Mr Justice Louis van Winsen and Mr Justice Marius Diemont. It includes 14 public representatives - chosen by three retired Supreme Court judges from nominations from all parts of South Africa from all race groups - and 14 media representatives.

We have not yet seen a list of members of the Council, but will be most interested to do so. It is a body with great possibilities for our public life.

Mr Steyn has pointed out that the Media Council is concerned with ethics and not law.

The Council's stated aim is "to keep under review developments likely to restrict the supply of information of public interest and importance and to investigate the conduct and attitude of persons, corporations or governmental bodies at all levels towards the media, and to report publicly".

More power to it.

Subscriptions

We would respectfully draw members' attention to the remin-

der enclosed with this - and ask you to let us know if you do not agree with the details given therein.

Urgent need - and a human right (Cape Times, 7/1/84)

According to a report in the latest Municipal Bulletin, an additional R77-million a year is needed to provide essential housing for coloured people in the Cape Town metropolitan area (which includes the magisterial districts of Cape Town, Wynberg, Simon's Town, Goodwood, Bellville and Kuils River).

The government subsidy of about R50 million a year has now been cut to R26 million. At the expected rate the population will grow to 1½ times its 1980 size by the end of the century.

The government argues that employers should be encouraged to provide more housing. But the Convener of the City Council's housing committee, Mrs Eulalie Stott, has a convincing answer. Employers, she says, should use their capital to create more job opportunities. It is not their job to use money at low interest rates to provide housing for their staff (and one might add, it might well provide an embarrassing situation for the staff member concerned). The government's attempt to push this responsibility on to employers is, says Mrs Stott, "irresponsible".

For the sake of the peace of Cape Town we hope that the City Council will be able to convince the government of the need to increase, rather than decrease, its housing subsidy.

Postscript to Press Freedom (continued from page 3 above)

The Chairman of the Media Council summed up the principles he saw as governing the Media Council's operations, saying, inter alia:

"I wish to emphasize that the Council does not stand alone in its responsibility to advance the cause of Press freedom. An obvious responsibility to make a contribution also rests with John Citizen ...

"A democratic system of government depends on a thoroughly informed body of voters. An absence of Press freedom has a hampering effect on the proper forming of a balanced judgment by the voters.

"A consciousness by the voters of the great value of Press freedom in the exercising of their choices must be aroused among members of the public."

It's up to us!

P.S. REMEMBER THAT SUB. REMINDER!

MOYA