

PC16/5/2/3/9



TELEPHONE 23-4044
P.O. Box 1935

725 INNES CHAMBERS
PRITCHARD STREET
JOHANNESBURG

17th April, 1972.

The Editor,
The Sunday Times,
LONDON.

Sir,

At the risk of the comment that the politically impotent have nothing to defend but their pride, may I question the use of the word "liberal" in Hugo Young's article on South Africa? (Sunday Times April 9, 1972). Mr. Young does speak of liberals with a small "l", but there are in South Africa still a small group of liberals who, before it was illegal to conduct a non-racial party, were Liberals. To that extent, liberal in South Africa has a more precise connotation than Mr. Young has given it.

Mr. Young's thesis is that hardline Nationalists and optimistic liberals regard the Nationalists' halting efforts to cure the economic difficulties of South Africa, caused by the failure to use African labour in skilled jobs and a galloping rate of inflation, as a victory of economics over apartheid. Mr. Young suggests that "such liberal optimists contend that" this and all other problems will be solved by economic growth".

It is true that there are non-Nationalist business interests in South Africa, which believe that economic growth will lead South Africa into a political paradise. This is, however, not the view of people whom South African Liberals would recognise as liberal. Liberals have never believed that in a changing world a policy of gradual change at a snail's pace is any prescription for a stable future for a society in which a white minority, politically and economically privileged, faces a black majority, politically and economically under-privileged. While Liberals share the belief that apartheid is unworkable in South Africa, and that it inevitably leads to political, social and economic

disorder /

The Editor,
The Sunday Times

17th April, 1972.

disorder, they have never seen the solution as the introduction into the economic machine from the bottom up of even large numbers of blacks. It is the introduction of blacks at the top levels of all fields of life that might hold some hope for South Africa.

Had we world enough and time, we in South Africa might be able to watch the economic forces work their way out, but this is not the view that Liberals have of South Africa and its future.

It is true that a capitalist version of economic determinism is in vogue in South Africa. Its protagonists are, however, not Liberals, nor yet in many cases, even liberals.

The confusion caused by an indiscriminating use of the word "liberal" is seen in the references to Mr. Arthur Grobbelaar, General Secretary of the T.U.C. and Mr. O'Dowd, an alternate director of Anglo-American.

Mr. Young says that Arthur Grobbelaar "is not what Britons would recognise as a liberal". With due respect to some sterling work which Mr. Grobbelaar has done, he is not what South African Liberals would recognise as a liberal.

Mr. Michael O'Dowd, however, is called a liberal in Mr. Young's article. Mr. O'Dowd is the arch apostle of this version of economic determinism and one wonders who is more offended by calling Mr. O'Dowd a liberal; Liberals or Mr. O'Dowd?

Yours faithfully,



E.M. WENTZEL.