

PC16/5/2/5/105

P.O. Box 71,
Hilton, 3245.



6th March, 1977.

Dear Geoff.,

Regard that date up there as provisional. All it means is that today I started to answer your letters.

On the whole I share your views on the way academics talk and write -- especially David. I also don't know why he can't speak English. He often irritates me to distraction but, when he does that most, I remind myself that he has often been pretty brave and that, while the students of UCT might get on just as well without his lectures, they probably wouldn't get on just as well without his presence there and the support I think he often gives to them when they face a crisis with authority.

It's an interesting thing, about the unintelligibility of academic language, that while I am sure that consociationalism isn't going to turn the world upside down until its called something else, Marxism has, and I find the language of Marxism largely unintelligible and generally boring. As a matter of fact I rather doubt whether consociationalism will ever turn the world upside-down, even if it is called something else, but I don't, for that reason, write off all this academic inquiry, either at the universities or at something like the race relations conference, although it is not my line. It is just possible that these people might one day produce an idea which can help get us out of our mess. Nor do I think you can write off what Liberalism has tried to stand for in South Africa. The Liberal Party may have come too late, and certainly the Black/White polarisation which apartheid has produced, makes it unlikely that we will see here the kind of society that the Party stood for, but that doesn't, in my view, mean that it wasn't worth standing for, or that one shouldn't continue to hold it up as an ideal, even if most people, or a least a great many, have rejected it. I changed from "most" to "a great many" in that last sentence because I think most people would still accept our idea of a common society, if it came now..... and most of those people would be Black. If the fact that so many Black people would still opt for our kind of ideal society is, I think, quite an achievement. The fact that we won't achieve, or ^{and} unlikely to achieve, that society is ^{because} that liberals after 1910 never got together with Blacks to organise a broad non-racial political movement and ^{because} that, when they did in the 1950s and '60s, the people with power flattened them.

So my view is that people with our ideas should continue to put them, even if not many people want to listen, and even if the language some of ~~them~~ use is sometimes too pretentious. But I also agree that we must get on and do what we can about the practical problems Blacks have to live with.

Enough ! Yours,