

PC(6/5/3/1/5

P.O. Box 71,

Hilton, 3245.

Dear Neil,

Thank you for your letter. The questions which it raises, you can be reassured, are ones which have been very much on my mind ever since my ban ended, and particularly during the past six months, and even more particularly since your letter arrived to jog my mind into new consideration of them. This letter will probably not be finished very quickly, so don't be surprised if it only reaches you at the end of January -- today's date being the 7th!

With regard, first, to the idea of trying to revive something like the Liberal Party, my reservations about this -- and I think I am being honest about this -- haven't really got anything to do with anxiety about being banned again. I certainly am not keen to be banned again but I would not be put off doing something which I thought would be effective by the prospect of being banned. Let me say, though, that I think a ban does have an effect on anyone who is not a religious or a communist or a nationalist fanatic. I think that kind of person has a burning and unreasoning zeal which carries him through to the day of his death. Somebody like ourselves, ~~xxxxxx~~ lacking the same fervour and whose ideas, or so we like to think, are based more or less on reason, ~~xxxxxx~~ begins to wonder exactly what the hell to do. In my case this ~~xxxxxx~~ questioning is reinforced by what might be regarded as a rather sentimental attachment to my recollections of the Liberal Party. I do think it had something different from anything else and I find it difficult to get very enthusiastic about any of the other organisations I see around me which aim to do something of the things it tried to do. I find them all very much a second-best.

At this point you will say to me, well, start the Liberal Party again. I don't think this is possible, or certainly not at present. This is not only because the law prevents it but because the political scene has changed since the Party was closed down. In the public political arena you have Inkatha, the Black Consciousness Movement and a Progressive Party which is a great deal stronger than it was ten or fifteen years ago, and in all three of these groups you find people who were members of the Liberal Party or who would have been. You also find the same thing in the Labour Party, people who are against the Labour Party for participating in the CRC, and the same thing in Indian politics. I don't think you will persuade many people in any of these organisations, at this stage, to leave them for another political party kind of organisation. They just think that the political scene is sufficiently cluttered up with such things already and that they are likely to achieve more politically at present through working through the organisations to which they belong than through trying to start something new. For these various reasons I do not think this is the right time to try to start a new political organisation which would be competing for support in the electoral field with any of these organisations, in spite of the fact that one has real reservations about all of them.

Is there, however, something else one should be doing? Is there room for a pressure-group kind of organisation, whose members would be committed, first-and-foremost, to the idea of a non-racial, democratic society and who would be required to hold this ideal always before the members of whatever other organisations they belonged to and try to influence them to accept it. I discussed this idea briefly with Jill and Ernie after Christmas and I find it quite attractive, but unfortunately the history of such things in our kind of politics isn't very good. It has worked very well for the Communist Party and for the Nationalist Party through the Broederbond, but the influence of both of them was secret and not known to the people and organisations they were trying to

move in the direction in which they wanted them to go. We couldn't and wouldn't want to be a secret organisation, but the history of open pressure groups isn't very good. The Anti-Republican League & the Covenant movement were supposed to cut across and not interfere with people's political affiliations but neither of them lasted long or achieved what they were supposed to achieve. Could a "Liberal" organisation pushing for non-racial democracy succeed where they failed? I think it might because the issue with which it will be dealing, the future shape of our society, is fundamental and is going to be a topic for debate until change comes, and even after that. ~~The~~ But if there seems some prospect for such an organisation being able to push people our way, how detailed could the objectives to which it asked its supporters to commit themselves be? Take economic policy.

I was discussing a new LP with Jack and Beryl when I was in JHB late last year. We all agreed that the capitalist system had been a ghastly failure in ensuring everyone a slice of the South African cake & that a policy much more radical than that of the old LP was now needed -- much higher taxes, redistribution of land (even somebody as Tory as Simon Roberts agrees with this) all designed to effect a massive transfer of wealth from white to black. How much potential "liberal" support would a statement of a policy like that frighten off...?

After all, Kwa-Zulu tells us it is committed to free enterprise, doesn't it? Or does it matter if such support is frightened off? So even the pressure group idea has its pit-falls -- which doesn't mean it should be abandoned but that it should be thought out very carefully. I want to talk to Ernie and Jill about it again, probably later this month.

In the meantime, there are local organisations, like the one just formed in PMB and of which you say you think I should be the chairman

Handwritten notes:
Such Communist
others broke over road
All this question does is show that many
before deciding to do it
one has been doing a little through those organisations which are to be... & restoring ones
perhaps when the occasion offers itself
You say talk to the devil himself.
I had you are
I have great difficulty in accepting this proposition. I think it will only be worth anyone talking to the Nats when they have power, & a sufficient audience could bring power.

Wrong timing, disastrous