

PC 16/5/3/222
P.O. Box 71,
Hilton, 3245.

4th May, 1980.

Dear Bill,

I'd better get started on this before Dingaan's Day comes round again and makes you think it's time you wrote another letter.

We were there that day you wrote, but the real old mature top quality attendance is getting a bit ~~thinner~~ thin -- only Paton, Chetty, Mitchell and myself these days, and Paton confines himself to walking up and down the road. Even Mitchell converts to whisky after only five beers and I begin to think that perhaps one day I'll have to too after about ten. Still, some of the replacements aren't too bad. Pat McKenzie, who took over the LP office when I was banned did his third stint this year (he's very good at washing up) and we also had Mitchell's step-son, who's a cook. Mitchell doesn't only have step-sons who are old enough to cook for us, he also has a grandchild, which makes you think.

In those old days, many years ago, when it looked as if Rhodesia might go in a reasonable direction, I sometimes wished I was a Rhodesian. Smith put an end to that feeling. Now Mugabe is making me feel I wish I was a Zimbabwean. How marvellous it must be to live in a place where you can feel that the worst is probably over and that you can get on and build something that might be good and even something that might last. Instead, here, there is nothing much to suggest that we aren't going to have to go through the whole ghastly business that Zimbabwe went through, but worse. There is no sign that what is regards us change comes anywhere near touching the basics of apartheid.

It is now almost three weeks since a boycott of schools was started by coloured children in the Western Cape. For the first week it was largely confined to there and, from this distance, didn't appear to have the full support of all the schools, but during the last fortnight it has really taken off, spreading throughout the Cape and into all three other provinces. Indian schools have joined in and Westville and U.Cape Universities. There has been substantial support from some of the English-speaking universities..... and so far the whole thing has been quite extraordinarily well-disciplined. Even the police have been able to restrain themselves in most places and, although there have been the usual round of detentions and arrests, there hasn't yet been a serious clash. The last statement from the school-children was that they would continue to boycott up to the end of last week. They usually seem to meet at the weekend to decide what to do next, so we will probably hear tomorrow whether it will go on or not. The curious thing about it all is that black schools and universities have taken virtually no part at all in the whole thing.

Paton is doing some writing again. I think his autobiography (the first half) is due out later this year. He has abandoned the second half and is now embarked on a novel, something which I may or may not have told you once before. Whether at his age you can start writing novels, after having not done it for so long, we will have to wait and see. Colin Gardner, whom you may not remember but who is the English professor here and has been to the Berg a couple of times, has been reading the first part of the book and seems to think it will be alright.

Mitchell's school is doing well this year. He nearly gave it up because the numbers were down so much last year, but this year he has both put the fees up and filled it to the point where he's

having to buy extra beds. Some quirk of capitalism, Hoffenberg. The more you charge the more likely some sucker is to buy whatever it is.

I have just got back from watching Anton's soccer team play the first match of the season. Organising this damned league of his continues to be ~~sur~~ his main interest. Christopher is back on the farm helping there at the moment but I suspect that it is only temporary and that the lure of the business world will draw him back to it. He left Barlows soon after Phoebe's father died last year, having realised that the only way he would get anywhere there was if he went and lived in JHB. Don't tell your friends but Vanessa gave up teaching foreigners to speak English in the second half of the year and enrolled in a course of Chinese medicine. I am not at all sure exactly what she does but she seems to be loving it, and can apparently go back to the place where she was teaching if she wants to later.

We spent a night with Martin Cox in witbank when we passed through there last year. It's a curious thing how few of my university friendships have survived but his is one of them. He used always to call in here when he was taking children to the coast for holidays when I was banned. Love to all of you,