

When we came to live in Pietermaritzburg over thirty years ago, I had not heard of Selby Msimang. It was not long before I did.

I did not hear of him as the man who had been secretary to Dinizulu, or who helped found the South African Native National Congress (later the African National Congress) in 1912, or who had organised a strike of black workers in Bloemfontein soon after the First World War, or who had served on the Natives' Representative Council, or who had helped Chief Albert Luthuli achieve the Presidency of the ANC in Natal, his first important political office.

All these things Selby had done, but they were not what I first heard about him. I first heard about him, in the public offices in which I then worked, and to which Selby used often to come as a representative of the Edendale community, as the black man who always used the white lavatory. This was regarded as a radical act in Pietermaritzburg in 1951, and maybe still is.

But Selby was no radical. He was the most moderate of men. Moderate in the steps he was prepared to take to achieve what he wanted for South Africa, but absolutely firm about what these steps should lead to in the end. He believed quite simply in a single South Africa in which every South African should enjoy exactly the same rights as every other and be expected to perform the same duties. The rights included the right to vote and the duties included the obligation to serve.

In the early 1950s we formed here in Pietermaritzburg a small multi-racial group which used to meet in our house to discuss a counter to the policies of the Nationalist Party, which were already starting to tear the country apart. Selby Msimang was a founding member of that group, which later became part of a liberal association, which later joined together with other similar groups in other parts of the country, to form the Liberal Association of South Africa. In 1953, after the Nationalists' second election victory, a meeting of this Association was called in Cape Town, to which Selby and I went as the two Natal delegates. There the Liberal Party of South Africa was formed, and a long, close friendship and working relationship between us started.

Until we were both banned, he when he was already over 70, most of this work was on behalf of the Liberal Party. There was hardly a black community in the whole of Natal which Selby did not know and where he was not known. He was particularly familiar with the people of the "black-spots" and their history, and, in those years, in spite of their growing and well-founded mistrust of white governments and all their works, he helped build in those areas a net-work of branches of people committed to a shared future for us all. This priceless asset the Gov-

ernment threw away, first by banning Selby Msimang and then by forcing the Liberal Party to close.

Even this did not deter "the old man", as he became affectionately to be known by all his old associates. When he was unbanned, although he was already almost 80, he started his fight for justice again, with the same unsparing doggedness/^{and determination} which had characterised his whole life. Just before his last birthday (there was a difference between us as to whether it was to be his 95th or his 96th, for he always argued that the day on which he was born was his first birthday) I took him to meet a deputation of people who had once lived at Charlestown and who were undergoing great hardships at the resettlement area to which they had been moved. Selby had associations ~~going~~ with the people at Charlestown going back many years. He had seen unfold there a story of the exploitation and final destruction of a whole community, at the hands of representatives of both the main white groups of South Africa, which should be made compulsory reading for every voter in the country. So, when their call came for help again, tired and old and near death (as it now proves) ~~xxxxxxx~~ as he was, he would not refuse it.

The life of Selby Msimang is a marvellous example of endurance under adversity. Like Albert Luthuli he spent most of it knocking on doors which never opened. But he never gave up. In his life he saw very little of what he strove for achieved, and ~~as~~ a great deal of what he ~~xxxxxx~~ thought worthwhile destroyed. Does this mean his life was a failure? Of course not. It just confirmed once more that the full life comes not necessarily from winning but from keeping on fighting for what is right. One final word. There was little room for either hatred or despair in Selby Msimang, but he hated with every fibre of his being, the Nationalist Party and ^{all} its works, ~~And~~, as a lifelong Christian, he despaired totally of the vision of Christianity expounded by the Government-supporting churches, which to him was incomprehensible.

These things should be known to the people concerned, for if somebody of Selby Msimang's infinite tolerance ~~had~~ had come to feel that way, what must others be feeling?