

THE LONG VIEW

— by Peter Brown

What Transkei Chiefs Voted for

— *Serfdom, Rightlessness in "White" Areas*



DURING May Parliament passed the Transkei Constitution Act. The Transkei Territorial Authority, which the Act abolished, sent a telegram of congratulation to Mr. de Wet Nel, Minister of Bantu Administration and Development, for piloting this new law through Parliament. Will the chiefs and headmen of the Transkei send a second telegram of congratulation to the Minister when the Bantu Laws Amendment Bill becomes law?

To be consistent they should, for when with one hand they accept the new Transkei Constitution, with the other they accept the right of the Minister to refuse all rights to all Africans in what the Republican Government regards as "White" South Africa.

The Bantu Laws Amendment Bill provides that in an area comprising roughly 87% of the surface of South Africa and inhabited by roughly 60% of her African people, no African person will have any permanent rights whatsoever. African supporters of apartheid and Bantustans should know that they are condemning over six million of their fellows to perpetual serfdom.

CONTEMPT FOR VIEW

When the great meeting of Zulu Chiefs took place at Nongoma in March, resolutions were passed asking for relaxation of influx control and objecting to provisions of the Bantu Laws Amendment Bill. At that time the Government was circulating the draft of the Bill and asking for comments. From the apartheid point of view the meeting of Zulu Chiefs could not have been more representative of Zulu opinion. Yet the Government has shown its complete contempt for the chiefs' views by disregarding them completely. For the Bantu Laws Amendment Bill, as it has now been brought before Parliament, does not only entrench existing forms of influx control, it makes them much worse.

It provides for complete control over every aspect of the lives of all Africans living outside "Bantu homelands".

Here are some of its provisions:

● In the past an African person born in a town or who had a record of long residence or loyal service there, had a right to remain there. Under the new law it will not matter whether you were born in a town, or have lived there all your life, or have worked there

loyally for years—you will have no right to stay there if the Government decides to remove you.

GOVERNMENT DECIDES

● In the past the influx control system only applied to certain "urban areas". Now it will be possible to apply it to every city, town, dorp and farm outside the Bantustans.

● The Government may now decide at any time that Africans should not work in a certain area at all, or that they should not do certain kinds of work there, or that only so many Africans should be allowed to work there. In the first case all Africans will lose their jobs; in the second case those who are doing jobs the Government decides they should no longer do, will lose theirs, in the third case all Africans in excess of the number the Government decides should work in the area will lose theirs.

● Control of the employment of women will be much stricter. So will restrictions on the right of women to visit their husbands or fathers who are working in town.

● The Government may designate as "undesirable" African people who have opposed it politically and may remove them from the place where they live and send them to a "work colony" for up to two years.

● Only one domestic servant may in future be accommodated on a White-owned property in town. Many domestic servants live under terrible conditions but the Government is not trying to remedy abuses. It is trying to reduce numbers without providing alternative employment.

● The right of Africans to congregate on any land, whether for church or any other purposes, will lie entirely in the Minister's discretion.

TERRIBLE LAW

These are some of the worst features of a terrible law. These are

the restrictions which will govern the lives of every African in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and every other town and village in South Africa and which can be applied also to every African on every farm.

As "compensation" for these disabilities such people will be given a vote in Umtata or Nongoma or Sibasa. With this vote they will elect people who make laws to regulate life in Umtata or Nongoma or Sibasa but who will have absolutely no right to make laws to improve life in Johannesburg or Cape Town or Durban.

From now on an African living in "White" South Africa will be no more than a "labour unit", some one to be paid, housed and perhaps fed by White South Africa, but only for as long as the White South African Government decides that it is in White interests that he should stay there.

When they decide that this is no longer in those interests, they can send him back to his "homeland". The fact that a man may never have seen his homeland, and may have no desire to see it, will not help him. The fact that he may have a good job will not help him. The fact that there is no job for him to go to won't help him either. After all, how many Africans ejected from the Western Cape have jobs to go to?

RIGHTLESSNESS

The Bantu Laws Amendment Bill aims to control the life of every African in "White" South Africa at every turn. The only escape from this control will be to return to a "homeland" where not even the present residents can find work. The choice is rightlessness in 87% of the country, subject to removal at the whim of the Labour Officer, or starvation in the other 13%.

This is apartheid. This is what the majority of Transkei chiefs have voted for. This is what chiefs elsewhere, who are concerned for the welfare of their people, should make sure that they vote against.