

PC/117/35-85

Osborne Mansions

Breda St.

Cape Town.

March 6th, 1965.

*Spending my declining years here, in the hope of being able to do something for my country
A. P. van der Merwe*

Dear Mr. Paton,

Thank you for your letter. I may of course be wrong about the originator of the Union Jack being likened to a scab. It was the degree of my offence at it that caused me to remember it. I listed it with other remarks by Dr. Visser which were offensive, & meant to be. E.G. The Dutchman is baas today in S. Africa. That means he is baas in Natal, (interruption Yes, he is baas in Durban too. The remark about the scab was I think made in Natal, not in Parliament, soon after agreement was reached about the flag. I read it in the Star. I never remember Malan being offensively vulgar, however bitter & uncompromising. I always credited him with the feelings of a gentleman.

Whether it was that Christmas vac. or a later one I forget. But this happened. The senior Afrikaans reporter of the Star was holidaying in the N. Transvaal when he saw a crowd at a farm. So of course he went & joined it. There he heard a speech from Dr. Visser, & duly sent the content to his paper. Subsequently Dr. Visser denied the accuracy of the report, saying that the Star could not depend upon the understanding of Afrikaans by its r.

English reporters. The reporter published a signed statement that his report was accurate, & the Editor said he had full confidence in him. There was a parallel instance in the career of Lloyd George. Some time between 1905 & 19¹⁰~~00~~ the senior Welsh reporter got leave over the New Year, & went to his home at ~~Llegefni~~ Llangefni in Anglesey. He heard that Lloyd George was to speak there, so of course he went, & sent a report to his paper. Lloyd George denied angrily the accuracy of the report, and attributed it to an Englishman's ignorance of Welsh. Roberts the reporter wrote that he, as ~~e-a~~ an Angleseyman, knew Welsh as well as Lloyd George, & stood by what he had written. The Editor expressed full confidence in Roberts. In both cases those men could not have held their jobs had they made such a mistake. Such are the morals of some of those who govern us. Tielman Roos made an outrageous speech in the Free State, animadverting on Ex-service-men. Padre Strathern approached him to protest on their behalf. 'My dear fellows, you must not think I meant it. Of course not. But, you, see, I must say that sort of ~~thi~~ to keep these people together.' I had that from Strathern himself. Knowing that sort of thing, you understand how I valued Hofmeyr, who was not self seeking, and was honest with himself.

I boosted your book at the Cambrian Dinner on St. David's Day, when I had to propose the ^A hundred Societies

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I reminded them of how Hofmeyr was an honoured guest at many of those gatherings, and how he valued the contribution made by all these varying traditions to the common life of the S. Africa he hoped was coming into being. Olwen Williams, who works for your publishers, & from whom I had your address, was delighted. It was at a Cambrian dinner in Pretoria that I first met Hofmeyr, also Edgar Brookes. I was at school with Rheinallt Jones for a term. His father was the Calvinistic Methodist minister at the place where my father's family came from. He became the Secretary of the Welsh Liberator Soc. & edited its Magazine. By the irony of history, I committed Cleaton Jones's eulogies to the ground in the words of the Book of Common Prayer in Welsh. Who could have foreseen such a thing? Our family was as strongly Church as Cleaton & Rheinallt's was strongly Chapel. Hofmeyr knew that we Welsh have had our hard times, & were always sympathetic to others who desired to get on & resented denial of opportunity.

I think Mr. Thomas has himself to blame over St. George's Grammar School. If he had not made that speech accusing the clergy of ~~hypocrisy~~ hypocrisy, & challenging publicly the authorities of the school, & if he had applied privately, he might have been successful. As it was, a public challenge puts people's backs up. Whether one coloured boy would have been happy there I am

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