

PC/11910/25



KEEP THE PARTY CLEAN



Alan Paton, National President and (in the absence of Peter Brown now a political prisoner) Acting National Chairman of the Liberal Party.

IT is very reassuring to hear from Mr. Lawrence at Umhlali that the people in the Progressive Party are not a bunch of starry-eyed, long-haired idealists or impractical cranks. These idealists are a problem to the country; luckily they haven't been able to get into the United Party or the Nationalist Party for a long time, and now that the Progressives have turned against them they are pretty well foxed. Some will no doubt try to get into Japie Basson's group, and of course we are pestered with them in the Liberal Party. They clutter up the Institute of Race Relations and all these do-good societies; some are to be found in the churches and some in prison. But by and large the political parties are wise to them, and you find mighty few of them in any job that really matters.

It must really be very painful to Mr. Lawrence and his colleagues, after they have justifiably disowned these long-haired fellows, to find that those hard-hearted chaps in the United and Nationalist Parties, who can detect idealism in a party as unerringly as a geiger counter can detect radiation in a rubbish bin, really think that Mr. Lawrence and the Progressives are themselves a starry-eyed bunch of cranks. I wish I could tell you what Hopewell thinks of Butcher, and what Mitchell thinks of Townley Williams, but I have to remember the Emergency Regulations. I think it is contemptible to give Mr. Lawrence and his company a label that they clearly don't want, and I think he is abundantly justified in saying in Umhlali that

they are not that kind of people. But Mr. Lawrence must say it in bigger places too, because the lie is gaining ground that there is idealism in the Progressive Party. It is only a smear of course, and a real dirty one; but when you go round with a smear, it is not much comfort to know that it is only a smear.

I must give Mr. Lawrence a tip here, though I suppose it is presumptuous of me, because I am only a babe in politics. But I feel justified in giving him a tip, because I had to learn my politics the hard way, and never got within shooting distance of a Cabinet Minister, I mean I never got within shooting distance of being one. Mr. Lawrence, they won't stop short of calling you a starry-eyed idealist. After all, even if a starry-eyed idealist may be crazy, at least he sounds bright and healthy. But Mr. Lawrence, in two minutes they'll turn you into a sickly humanitarian. As though that were not bad enough, in another two minutes they'll turn you into an inciter, an agitator, playing with fire. And if there is anything that really revolts the imagination, it is to think of a sickly humanitarian playing with fire. And, hey presto, before you know where you are, Mr. Lawrence, you'll be in prison.

I must admit that before Mr. Lawrence spoke at Umhlali, many people had unjustifiably assumed that the Progressives, though not as starry-eyed and sickly and pyromaniacal as the Liberals of course, and not so extreme and hasty, realised that the days of change had come, and pretty big change too. But these people must now stop smearing the Progressive Party in this way. Mr. Lawrence said at Umhlali that the Party did not "advocate the abandonment of the traditional conventions of our upbringing". What a sigh of relief went up at the Durban Club and the Country Club and the Rotary Club! You see, they were inclined towards the Progressive Party, but they were a bit afraid of it too, because this fellow Jan Steytler has really been attacking race-discrimination in quite a big way. But now it is all right, because what could Mr. Lawrence have meant, if he did not mean that we would not have to abandon the colour bar? I will try to be scrupulously fair, and say that I think it is Mr. Jan Steytler and not Mr. Lawrence who has exposed the Party to this unfair smear that they are a lot of idealists. Another one who is

a shade too idealistic is this Ray Swart, and he ought to get together with Leo Boyd and discuss just how to put this whole thing over in a nice smiling way. This whole thing is going to come right without too much idealism, never fear.

There are people who fear that the Progressive Party has got too far away from the U.P., but this speech will reassure them. Mr. Lawrence told his audience at Umhlali that the Native is more interested in "bread and butter, blankets and beer" than in politics. It only goes to show, I think, how different our Natives are from these Africans up north, and I'm sure Mr. Lawrence's assurance must have been a great comfort to the people of Umhlali. And it proves that it is not only the Nationalist Party and the United Party that know what is really interesting other people, but now the Progressive Party too. And here I must admit that the Liberal Party is very idealistic in these matters. It doesn't say what interests other people, it doesn't even "consult" them, it just gets them all together, which I suppose is a kind of abandonment of the traditional conventions of their various upbringings.

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Mr. Lawrence, what the White voters of Umhlali need is not an assurance that they do not have to abandon the traditional conventions of their upbringing. They need to be told that an epoch has come to an end, and they must adjust themselves with speed, good sense, courage, and idealism to a new one. Of course you want to win elections. But you must learn one hard truth, if you will allow an idealist to tell it to you. You won't win Umhlali by promising to preserve the traditional conventions. Mr. Mitchell can do it better. You must try to win Umhlali by confronting it with the facts of 1960. If you lose, that will be grim, but you have to take the risk. If you don't take the risk South Africa will have gained nothing at all from your emergence.

The function of your party is to move White enlightened conservatives towards a policy of political non-racialism. It is an important function. But you will not fulfil it by assuring White conservatives that they won't have to move much at all.

They need to move, and to be quick about it. I wish your party all success in the responsible task of persuading them.