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THE LONG VIEW

VIII

Hats off to SABRA! The Stellenbosch Conference was one of the most hopeful held in South Africa for a long time.

- * Professor Kotze said that the period of trusteeship was nearing its end.
- * Professor Bruwer said that our problems must be seen as those of adaptation and not of race or colour.
- * Rev. W.A. Landman said that we do not have unlimited time at our disposal.
- * Mr. J.D. Bassan, M.P., condemned the slogans "white baasskap" and "white supremacy".
- * Mr. Bourquin said it was clear to all who understood the problem that "Natives were being overadministered".
- * Finally, SABRA decided to hold a Conference with non-white leaders later this year and called for a restoration of "broken relations".

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One could write a small book on this Conference. But I shall try to pick out its most hopeful features.

- * The Conference showed an independence of thought which many feared was being lost. Mr. Bassan, for example, was in fact condemning slogans once dear to the Prime Minister, and still dear to his brother-in-law, Mr. "Blood River" de Klerk.
- * The Conference decided to meet with non-white leaders in spite of the fact that Dr. Verwoerd has already advised private bodies

to leave "relationships" to himself and to his officials, and has made it clear that he disapproves of such meetings.

* Mr. Bourquin's remark ~~that~~ can only be construed as a sharp criticism of Dr. Verwoerd and his Native Affairs Department.

This was definitely not a thank-the-Minister" Conference.

In fact it was a Minister who provided the least statesmanlike speech of the week, namely, Mr. Paul Sauer, who in his opening address fell far below the objective standard set by his successors.

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I take my hat off to Mr. Basson. I wish we could hear him more often. He accepts the philosophy of apartheid but inside that framework he talks a lot of honest (and honourable) common sense.

Especially I thank him for his round condemnation of a senior politician who said he was disgusted (gewalg) to see a Coloured member take his seat in the Provincial Council.

Mr. Basson was not pleading for Coloured representation in the Council. So far as I know he is against it. But at least he finds it indefensible that white people should think it disgusting.

The great hope of this SABRA Conference is that its ~~part-~~icipants are humane people. They are distressed when apartheid laws hurt individual persons. They find the humiliation of persons intolerable.

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Is there time for this Afrikaner leaven to work? This is the obsessional question of all South Africans. There is only one

possible answer to it.

Go on working as though there were time. Go on working steadily and honestly. Go on trying to persuade white South Africa to act more reasonably, more humanely. Go on trying to create stronger bonds between white and non-white persons.

In the obstacle race it is the time-obsessed man who is the first to fall into the pit.

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I should like to say a few sober words to my fellow-South Africans in SABRA from the point of view of a Liberal.

- * It is my view that the "disgust" felt by that anonymous "senior politician" ^{one of} is the ultimate and fundamental motive behind apartheid. Apartheid is for me essentially a rejection of one's fellow man. Justice is really a modern motive.
- * Total apartheid is really a way of having justice and rejection simultaneously. It is therefore opposed in its very essence to morality and is destructive of personal integrity in the psychological sense.
- * In spite of the immense powers of this Government and its devotion to apartheid we are not substantially nearer total apartheid than we were before.
- * Total apartheid is justice plus rejection. If in the near future (we have not unlimited time, says Mr. Landman) it is seen to be as remote as ever, must we not turn to justice plus acceptance?

On our answer to that question depends the whole future of South Africa.

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With all my heart I wish success to the SABRA Conference with non-white leaders. I hope it will be characterised by the same honesty and charity that has marked this Conference at Stellenbosch.

What hope have we of an evolutionary solution to our problems if responsible Afrikaners do not participate in the search for it?

Alan Paton