

probably his first brush with the law. He has never had a reference book, he says — he has applied for one but not yet received it. The Magistrate warns him, quite kindly, that he must get his book as soon as possible — but he is still fined £1 or seven days. One wonders as he leaves the Court, as one wonders about so many, whether he has the money to pay his fine, or whether this is to be his first introduction to jail — on a criminal charge — a poor, simple, frightened boy!

We have come away from these visits torn with pity, and oppressed by a sense of guilt after our brief insight into the shocking severity and utter callousness of the pass law system.

THE LESSON OF THE CONGO

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would create a sense of responsibility and assist the development of the country.

Education, if not given adequate opportunity for expression, turns sour and is liable to lead to so-called "agitation". Even the comparatively small number of educated Africans in the Congo suffered from the frustration of being allowed too little say in their own government. It is time we granted to our qualified non-Whites opportunities for shouldering responsibility in all fields. Black nationalisms are making demands in the rest of Africa, and the Congo is an object-lesson in the necessity for laying a solid foundation before these demands are met. South Africa, unlike the Congo, already has a score of Africans capable of accepting and benefiting from responsibility. We must co-operate now with those who have been trained: not only with those selected by the White authorities, but also with those whom the Africans themselves elect as their leaders. And we must do this as soon as possible — frustration and resentment make co-operation increasingly difficult to achieve.

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WANTED:

A CHANGE OF EMPHASIS

SINCE I believe in the rule of Law, I must believe in the enforcement of Law. I expect magistrates to be uncompromising; they would fail to do their duty if they were not. But after spending a few hours in the Commissioner's Court in Johannesburg, where many "foreign Natives" were on trial for pass offences, I realised that there is something gravely amiss with our laws.

"£10 or two months," intoned the magistrate. "We do not want you here; we do not need your sort. When we are in a foreign country we must carry passports — or else we are punished."

What a brilliant analogy! Is there any democratic country in which a foreigner may be be jailed for a fortnight before being sentenced to a term of imprisonment? Are there no Consulates to assist him? If the African is indeed a foreigner he deserves better treatment.

As the scared defendants filed into and out of the dock, the bored interpreter gazed vacantly into space. "He has nothing to say . . . He does not have a permit . . . He pleads guilty . . . He says he worked for a little time so that he could eat . . . He says he left the train to collect money owed to him by his friend there . . . He pleads guilty, Sir . . . He does not have the permit . . ."

A boy of sixteen, the son of a respected clergyman, was arrested for not carrying a pass when he went shopping for his mother. His frantic father rushed to the police station to explain and to present the pass. Nevertheless, he had to wait until the morning for the Public Prosecutor to appeal on behalf of the boy, who was then released.

One merry fellow well on the way to complete contempt for the law heard his sentence with a jaunty air. He was a relief from the rest of the interminable queue with their strained faces, the hard dry swallow of their throats and their pathetic searches through their rags for the dirty bits of paper which always turned out NOT to be there.

I think that the country would be happier if there were no such restrictive documents. But even if this is not possible, much could be done by a change of emphasis; the pass would then lose some of its terror.

If our laws were made to free rather than restrain, to prevent rather than to punish, to assist rather than to obstruct, then would we not all benefit from the prosperity and peace that would follow?

—D. R.