

And how will we live?

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MOST of us feel that we live relatively simple lives and that we are not extravagant or ostentatious. But by what yardstick do we measure our simplicity and lack of extravagance? There would be difference of opinion about these concepts within the Black Sash itself. And if we moved into a black community the difference would become an almost unbridgeable gulf.

What we in the white community regard as household necessities are rarely seen and enjoyed by most black families. Your children and mine grow up taking three meals a day for granted. Hunger is something one feels occasionally; but it can always be appeased. Your children and mine have never had to drink water to fill their tummies and so to stifle their hunger pangs.

Unless divorce or death have intervened, your children and mine grow up within a family. They are secure in the knowledge that they have a home, and that their home will be there when they return from school, work, play or holiday. They do not have to live with the threat of bulldozers, or with inadequate protection against the cold, the heat and the storms. They have never experienced arbitrary action on the part of government officials. Running hot and cold water, electricity, a bed of your own (for some, their own rooms), are all taken for granted.

Our children are far removed from the world where one lives, eats and sleeps in one room that is always shared with others. They know nothing of a world where homework is always done by flickering candlelight or with the help of a paraffin lamp, and usually against a background of other people's voices.

I am not suggesting that it would be a good thing if experiences of this kind became part of our children's day-to-day lives. But it may, of course, very well become part of their experiences unless both economic and political power is shared in South Africa. And here I don't mean a 'sharing' that would safeguard white privileges. Nor do I mean a 'sharing' that keeps the wealth of this country tightly clutched in white fists. I mean a sharing which will place all of us who have talked about equality, liberty and brotherhood of man at some risk.

I believe that our credit, and our credibility, is running out and that we are now being asked to pay the bill for our belief in these ideals. It is a bill that asks for structural changes on the part of the Government, changes which we can and do ask for and protest about: the abolition

of pass laws, the migrant labour system, the immorality legislation, the race classification legislation, detention without trial; and all the other things on which we have taken a stand. But because we have no access to the power structure our petitions and protests can be brushed aside.

Even that strange animal, called the 'verligte Afrikaner', is finding that his voice is of little consequence in the battle for power. Some people have become frustrated because of their failure to make themselves heard and have resorted to violence. And some of them have been caught and have paid the ultimate penalty. On the other hand, there are those who are alarmed because of the escalating violence in our situation and have suddenly become strong advocates of 'non-violence'. Unfortunately, some advocates of non-violence are very selective. They condemn the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism, but they remain silent about South Africa's escalating defence budget and her retaliatory raids into neighbouring territories.

The bill which we have to pay asks for more than protests and condemnatory statements. It is a bill which demands that we explore with honesty the whole question of violence and non-violence. Anyone who honestly believes that the only solution to South Africa's injustices is a violent one has to accept that events like the Viscount shootings, and the Rhodesian retaliatory raids, are simply part of a cycle of violence. In this cycle each side deals in the same coin and often pays back more than it has received. Anyone who believes in this kind of violence ought to have no objection to a son, or other young men of whatever colour, undergoing military training and becoming part of the war game.

On the other hand, anyone who adopts a non-violent stance must also be consistent. One cannot condemn the Viscount shootings and condone the retaliatory raids. Neither action can be justified by someone who adopts a non-violent stance; both are a dreadful waste of lives. But the matter cannot be left there.

What is important is the way we react at home to violent political events. What sort of vibes do we pass on to our children about the Viscount shootings, the retaliatory raids, the SA Defence Forces' incursions into neighbouring territories? Do we talk about alternatives to violence? Or do we leave it until the call-up papers appear in the letter-box? Do we think about how we OUGHT to react to violence? Or do we simply think and

talk about how we WILL react to violence when our family or our property are threatened?

The bill which we are now being asked to pay requires us to try to set right the mistaken notion that the privileges that we and our families enjoy at the moment are a normal standard of living. They are not. South Africa may be one of the wealthier countries on the African continent but her economy cannot support her population in the way that you and I are accustomed to live. We will have to rid ourselves of the competitive materialism which creates a whole set of artificial needs which it alone can satisfy.

How do we come to grips with the hard fact that sharing political and economic power in South Africa means having to do with less than we now have? Please note that I am not talking about having to learn how to live in a slum. There is a vast difference between simplicity and slumming. And please note that I cannot answer that question for anyone else; each of us will have to find our own answer. But it is impor-

tant to remember that, at the moment, the choice of simplifying our lifestyle is our own. Later on we may not have that choice. How can we help our children to live the future now? What sort of society are we preparing them for?

Questions of this kind are ones we have to think and talk about, and try to answer.

A poem by Sydney Carter underlines the main point I have tried to make; that there really is no alternative to trying to live the future now.

*Lean on the future. There
if anywhere
you walk upon the water.*

*All that was true at first
is true at last
but there is no way back
into the past.*

*But through the future. There
if anywhere
the miracle must happen.*

STUDY GROUP ON INTERNAL RELATIONS

Speakers said:

"At this point in history most Afrikaners still believe that given time and goodwill the black man can be convinced of the genuine benefits of Apartheid, its philosophical and historical justification and Christian content especially if the benefits of a full stomach are brought home to the ordinary man in the street. The majority of black people including those who have opted for independence will never accept Apartheid and all that it stands for."
(Prof H. W. E. Ntsanwisi)

"The innumerable restrictions imposed by law and white traditions exclude black business from the best benefits that the free enterprise system offers."
(M. J. Mogale)

"What today accords status to a black man in his own community? . . . 'being an anti-Government politician'."
(Sen Dr A. Scheepers)

"Black workers were always subjected to discrimination since the promulgation of the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1924."
(Lucy Mvubelo)

"The interest of black workers at this point in time is not to be given hand-outs over a certain period. They want acceptance of their rights as they have always been contributors to the economy of the country"
(Lucy Mvubelo)

"Blacks' education was not geared for participation but for purposelessness."
(T. W. Kambule)

"Blacks don't need separate education — such education breeds suspicion on either side of the colour line, perpetuates ignorance. Blacks hate to be told by non-blacks that it is educationally sound principle to be taught in their mother tongue. Nonsense."
(T. W. Kambule)

"In South Africa it is clear that power is narrowly concentrated in nationalist Afrikanerdom and its leaders . . . The economy is under highly centralized direction. The Government will use its massive power to ensure that basic Afrikaner interests are full protected."
(A. de Crespigny)

"If people don't care about being governed democratically, they are unlikely to be so governed."
(A. de Crespigny)

"There is a lesson politicians never learn, namely, that the man under you may be above you tomorrow; therefore treat him as if he was already your master."
(Dr Manas Buthelezi)

"Inasmuch as black proposals for constitutional co-existence rest on premises such as the maintenance of democracy, non-discrimination, dignity and the worth of the individual and rejection of communism, they constitute more than anything else a hand of friendship which we, the whites, clinging to our own desire for domination, dare not reject."
(M. Wiechers)

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