

# MULTI-RACIAL JOHANNESBURG

## *Apartheid in Action — A Black Sash Forum*

**S**PEAKERS from the floor at the one-day multi-racial forum held in Johannesburg on 15th April, repeatedly urged that a resolution be adopted calling for a National Convention of all races to discuss the future of South Africa.

Mrs. Jean Sinclair, chairman of the Southern Transvaal Region of the Black Sash which arranged the forum, pointed out from the chair that it had been decided in advance not to take any resolutions.

### **R. N. HARVEY**

After her opening address, Mr. R. N. Harvey, a former City Councillor and past-president of the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce, addressed the meeting.

Some significant facts emerged from the statistics given by Mr. Harvey. The population of Johannesburg is now over 1,000,000, almost exactly double the figure of the 1936 census. The White population numbers 375,000, the Asiatic and Coloured 28,000 and 39,500 respectively, and the remaining 594,000 are Africans. It is estimated that 230,000 African males are in day-to-day employment in the city.

An analysis of the earnings of the three non-White groups reveals that the majority are very poor; 50% of the Coloured people and 60% of the Indians earn less than £40 a month, and a great many Africans earn incomes far below the poverty datum line of £23 a month.

With regard to the minority enjoying adequate incomes, Mr. Harvey said: "Such persons form the backbone of any community anywhere in the world; their children, generally speaking, are not to be found among the ranks of the delinquents; and the parents, because they are able to provide adequately for the support of their dependants, have a dignity in their own lives and a respect for others which are absent when they are confronted with grinding poverty."

### **Housing**

The urban non-White worker, said Mr. Harvey, sought security, a fixed job; he wanted promotion and pay rises, dignity in his working life, satisfaction in the job itself; and he was keen to learn. It was encouraging to note that employers were becoming increasingly aware of the advantages to be gained in co-operation with their non-White workers. Many

employers were raising wages voluntarily and were adopting more enlightened personnel policies to improve relationships.

In dealing with housing for non-Whites, the speaker said he felt that sub-economic housing schemes should be provided for the lowest income groups; for the middle income group, houses at low economic rentals within their capacity to pay should be provided; and home ownership schemes should be devised for those in receipt of incomes of over £40 a month.

Mr. Harvey pointed out that the entire structure of our economy, agricultural, commercial, industrial and mining, had been built up over 300 years by the interdependence of the racial groups. It was difficult to imagine how South Africa could have developed without the capital, technical skills and superior cultural and educational standards of the White man, but it was equally difficult to imagine how the present degree of development could have been attained without the labour of the three non-White groups.

"Johannesburg is a multi-racial community, each constituent element dependent on the others, and that is why it is essential that we learn to understand, appreciate and respect the value of the contribution made by the groups different from our own to our national well-being, so that we may all prosper in the land of our birth."

### **Trade Union Rights**

In the discussion following Mr. Harvey's speech, points raised by White members of the audience included the need to extend trade union rights to non-White workers; the need for all people to learn to look upon members of other races as fellow human beings; and the desirability of having non-White representatives on the Johannesburg City Council. In reply to this last point, Mr. Harvey said that as far back as 1950 he had advocated the admission of two non-Whites to the City Council. Now, in 1961, there was still no non-White representation, and he considered it a disgrace to Johannesburg.

Many non-Whites complained about inadequate transport facilities to and from the townships: the trains were over-crowded and the services irregular. Workers had to start queuing from 3 a.m. in order to be sure of transport to work. A member of the Black Sash said that the Council's plea for permission to provide a fast bus service had been disregarded; the reason was that the Railways, having

built a line costing £8½ million, were not keen on competition, despite the inadequacy of the services provided.

An African woman criticised the City Council for establishing beerhalls right next to the railway stations. She suggested that a better plan might be to replace them with crèches, so that working mothers could conveniently deposit and collect their small children on their way to and from work. The same speaker criticised some of the concrete houses provided by the Council as being like "ovens in summer and fridges in winter", and complained bitterly about the non-provision of bathrooms. Other speakers supported her.

Two members of the Council who were present argued that the type of house which could be provided was dependent on the funds available. A good point made by one of the Councillors seemed not to be understood by the audience in general. This was that the Council was not permitted by the Government to provide houses on a *sub-economic* basis, but was obliged to charge rentals that would bring in a fair economic return on the capital outlay. The Council was therefore limited to the building of houses to a value commensurate with the rentals the tenants were able to pay, and this, of course, was very low.

One cannot but feel, however, that a little more imagination might have been used, and slightly better houses provided for those people who wanted them and were able and willing to pay higher rentals.

### G. M. PITJE

Mr. G. M. Pitje, a former school teacher and anthropologist, said that the Africans were intensely proud of Johannesburg, as their own city. They bitterly resented the suggestion that they were only temporary sojourners, and that Johannesburg was a wholly "White area"—most of the Africans living in the townships were completely urbanised and had no tribal roots, yet Dr. Verwoerd had said that the land occupied by them was part of the "White areas" and could no more be looked upon as belonging to the Africans than the portions of the White farmers' land occupied by them, or the backyards in the White men's homes.

Mr. Pitje said that all the affairs of the urban African in Johannesburg were controlled by the City Council through the Non-European Affairs Committee and Department. The only representation enjoyed by Africans was through the Advisory Boards elected in the townships, which held regular meetings with municipal representatives; but Africans in general had no faith in these Advisory Boards, the members of which were regarded as mere lackeys, whose "advice" might be given but was never taken.



"... Eight! Nine! Out!"  
— Cape Times.

The Africans wanted direct representation on the City Council.

The pass laws, said Mr. Pitje, were bitterly resented by the city Africans—no other race had to bear them, and it gave them a sense of inferiority. In the words of Dr. Jabavu, they felt that the main function of the pass laws was "to harass black men for being black." After displaying his own reference book, and showing how bulky and inconvenient it was to be carried constantly on the person, he detailed the many indignities, hardships and restrictions imposed by these laws. The pass had become such a vital document to an African that many abuses were rife: there were "Pass Consultants" or "Social Consultants", who claimed to be able to provide passes and permits in return for extortionate fees.

### Bantu Authorities

Dealing with Bantu Authorities, Mr. Pitje said that this system professed "to allow the Africans to develop along their own lines," but the lines were chosen by someone else.

On the question of so-called "Ambassadors" (representatives of Bantu Authorities in the urban areas), Mr. Pitje mentioned the names of two men who were next in hereditary succession to the chieftainship of a certain tribe. Both are well-known urban African leaders, highly educated on Western lines; both are lawyers qualified to interpret South African law. "Would such men," asked Mr. Pitje, "be happy to administer tribal law? Could they do so. Both are completely urbanised, and now have no links with tribal custom." The Government, he said, expected the Africans to move backwards when the rest of the world was moving forward.

—Continued overleaf



## MULTI-RACIAL JOHANNESBURG—Continued

Mr. Pitje said he wished to make it clear that the Africans did not want to displace the White man — they only wanted to take their rightful place in a multi-racial society.

Points from the floor were that Africans wanted to be regarded as human beings; that they did not want exemptions and concessions, but a new South Africa; that the urban African was regarded simply as a source of cheap labour, and that Africans in the cities were gradually being reduced to a people without a home.

Mr. Pitje was asked what he thought of the common thesis that the urban African is protected by influx control. He replied that in his opinion there was no protection — influx control did not in fact prevent entry into the urban areas. Under influx control the White man was not permitted to choose his own labour, and labour was prevented from finding its own market. It was an economic fallacy to claim that housing for the labour force had first to be provided, and influx regulated accordingly.

One of the City Councillors present made a spirited attempt to defend the policy of influx control, but was somewhat hampered by his own admission that it was morally indefensible! He felt that a certain measure of influx control was essential — and is to be commended for his courage in saying so to an audience that was obviously predominantly of the other opinion.

### R. A. BHULIA

Dr. A. B. Kazi was to have addressed the forum on behalf of the Indian community, but as he was unavoidably detained at the last minute, Mr. R. A. Bhulia deputised for him, reading a paper prepared by Dr. Kazi and adding comments of his own.

Life for the Indian on the Witwatersrand, said Mr. Bhulia, was the same as in other areas of South Africa—he was so hedged about with restrictions that he resembled a caged animal. Restrictions on the movements of Indians in the Transvaal went back to the time of Paul Kruger's Republic.

Of the 60,000 Indians in the Transvaal, 20,000 were in trade, or sought a living through trade, on the Witwatersrand. Few other occupations were open to them. There were two high schools for Indians on the Witwatersrand, and about twenty primary schools. There were no facilities for recreation or sport. In addition to rigid residential segregation — Indians were obliged to obtain permits to move from one Province to another — and passport refusals had imposed another hardship on them.

The Group Areas Act had borne very heavily upon the Indians in every way, many abuses had arisen from it, and in particular it had hit very hard at the spiritual development of the individual, as an affront to human dignity. There were, of course, some feel-



ings of frustration, but these were largely offset by the ability of the Indian to carry himself with self-respect and dignity.

Mr. Bhulia concluded by quoting the words of Mr. Nehru, "Those who submit to an evil today, will not have much of a tomorrow."

From the floor, a speaker pointed out that a clause in the Factories Act providing for separate cloakroom amenities for the different racial groups was having the effect of excluding Coloureds and Indians from work in the factories, as employers were unwilling to provide four separate cloakrooms for men and four for women. As a result, Africans were learning skilled jobs in the factories, and Indian and Coloured people were, in effect, being excluded. In Natal, Indians were gradually being ousted, while in the Cape the same thing was happening to the Coloured people.

### GODFREY BECK

Mr. Z. Gamiel, who was to have represented the Coloured community, was unfortunately unable to attend, and Mr. Godfrey Beck found himself deputizing for him. He read the paper that had been sent in by Mr. Gamiel, adding his own comments.

The lives of the Coloured community in Johannesburg, also, are governed by "apartheid" laws, such as the Group Areas Act and job reservation, he said. When a Coloured man reaches the age of 21, he has to apply for a permit to enable him to live with his parents, in the home where he has grown up!

Mr. Beck said that the Coloured people's greatest grievance was the dreariness of their living conditions



and the inadequacy of the housing provided for them. They felt that they were the forgotten people. Many of the houses in Noordgesig township had no ceilings, no floors, no electricity, and — again the same cry! — no bathrooms. Mr. Beck said that when he had married, he had been obliged to leave his parents' home for an inferior house in Noordgesig — he had come down in the world. There was no bathroom in his house, and no inner doors, and now, with a growing family, all toilet operations had to be performed behind a curtain. There were no recreational facilities in the township, nothing to do, nothing to look at.

Many Coloured men would like to buy their own homes, but could not raise the necessary deposit. There were Government-assisted schemes whereby White people in the lower income groups could purchase their homes without deposit, and pay them off as rent. There were no such schemes for Coloured people.

Many of the Coloured people were extremely poor, and had the greatest difficulty in finding the money to pay for food, clothing and rent. When they fell into arrears with their rent, they were given no time to pay, but were turned out of their homes without warning. It was a shocking thing for a man to come home from work to find his possessions in the street and his family homeless. Evictions were also carried out for reasons other than non-payment of rent: the tenancy of a house could not be transferred from one member of the family to another. Mr. Beck spoke of a family of six girls, the eldest of whom was 18. The mother had died several years



*The Black Sash, June, 1961*

## RACIALIST REPUBLIC

On May 31st South Africa becomes a Republic. . . . As a South African I could have been proud, and one day I may be — today I find it hard to be because I belong to a racist Republic which is propagating a way of life based on fear, mistrust and a desperate rationalisation of Christian principles.

—*The Very Rev. E. L. King,*  
Dean of Cape Town.

previously, and when the father died, the girls were told to leave the house.

Mr. Beck said that as in all other groups, the majority of the Coloured people had no interest in politics as such: the ordinary man merely wanted a job, security for his family, a comfortable home, the chance to educate his children. But the shabby treatment meted out to them had made the Coloured people politically conscious. They had no effective voice — they had no faith in the Coloured Advisory Boards. They were tired of asking for citizenship — they wanted direct representation, a share in the running of the country. And because there were many Whites, such as those present at the forum, and because world opinion was on their side, they were confident that they would be successful.

## JEANETTE DAVIDOFF

The day ended with a short summing-up by Mrs. J. Davidoff, who had convened the forum on behalf of the Black Sash. She quoted the words of Sir Basil Schonland at the Rhodes University graduation ceremony: "Strive with all your might to seek and find and defend the truth; if you do this, you are a free man or woman; if you do not, you are a slave!" Mrs. Davidoff stressed some of the truths we had learned — the harassing effects of passes and permits on non-White people, their deep sense of injustice, their feelings of inferiority stemming from lack of security, their deep-rooted desire for a share in a full life in South Africa, a share in education, culture, recreation, sport. We had seen that they faced a future that offered them no hope — the rainbow of South African prosperity spoken of in Parliament was not for them. Above all, we had been shown the responsibility of the White man for all these things, and the heavy indictment he had to face. Mrs. Davidoff concluded by saying that we had sought and found some of the truth, and must now defend the fuller truth "that human rights and dignity have no price."