

PRESS COMMENTS

The Cape and Natal papers have kept the Party in the news by useful and at times lengthy reporting. The Transvaal, as usual, has been less fortunate. Mrs. Ballinger achieved Union-wide coverage through inadvertently being the target for Dr. Verwoerd's ill temper, when he told her in the House of Assembly that she had no right, as Leader of the Liberal party, to ask questions concerning the principle of apartheid. His unconvincing 'explanation' of what he meant deceived no one and was certainly no better than the original attack.

The entry of the Liberals into the Provincial Government field has been well reported in all the provinces. Natal's first public election meeting at Durban was well noticed in the local papers though not otherwise reported. Arising out of this meeting the 'Natal Mercury' published useful correspondence concerned with the difference between Liberals and Communists.

In the Cape and Free State prominence was given to the Liberal meeting at Paarl, a Nationalist seat, where Alan Paton was the chief speaker. There was an even distribution of emphasis, half the papers being concerned with our 'No colour bar policy,' and the other half with our backing of the U.P. 'integration' statement. Both these points received particular prominence in the Afrikaans Press, as did Dr. Donges' statement that Mr. Strauss' integration statement had wiped out the difference between the Liberals and the U.P. at one blow.

The Afrikaans press also reported fairly the Liberal attitude towards the Budget and our contention that the principle of racial financial independence is unsound.

The 'Natal Daily News' reported at length Alan Paton's article in the 'Liberal News' stressing the numbers of non-voters that would be enfranchised if our policy were to become effective immediately; whilst the 'Natal Witness' gave prominence to the leading article in last month's 'Contact'.

An article by C. W. M. Gell in 'Indian Opinion', on the new franchise policy of the Labour Party raises an important point. He reminds us that Labour is the first European party to declare publicly 'that as a matter of principle it accepts universal adult suffrage.' He then takes the Liberal party to task for not having made this 'historic affirmation of human faith' although he agrees that adult suffrage is implicit in the 'twin policies of a common qualified franchise and universal compulsory education.' He hopes we will take courage from Labour's public stand.

At the end of March the Transvaal Division issued a Press Statement protesting against the Natives' Resettlement Bill. The statement admitted that there was nothing new in the notion of condemning derelict or insanitary dwellings and compelling their owners to maintain properties in a safe and healthy condition. 'But,' it continued, 'to persons accustomed to the principles of democratic society it is a strange and very disquieting law that disregards human dignity in permitting the forcible expulsion of persons from an area, whether or not their homes are habitable; that deprives them of their freehold title and does not restore freehold title elsewhere; that prescribes the area of residence . . . ; and that is known as the law of the land although there is no vestige of consent by or consultation with the persons affected.'

In conclusion the Bill was condemned outright, the statement ending with these words :—
'The simplest way to test the adequacy of the proposed law is to apply its provisions to a group of Europeans in a slum area and to ask what the reaction of their fellow Europeans would be if they knew that the inhabitants of that area could be thrown out of their homes summarily, whether the homes be good or bad, and dumped elsewhere. There would be only one answer to such a test and that is the rejection of the law. And on that basis the Liberal Party rejects the Bill.'