

CONTACT

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PASSPORTS

THERE can be very few people opposed to the Government who don't heave a sigh of relief at the end of each session of Parliament. There would be something wrong with them if they didn't! This year, what with the July Handicap receiving support from two different series of Test matches, it has been easier than usual to drift into a state of mind which allows us to imagine that nothing too bad can happen while the recess is on and that we can now relax and enjoy ourselves. But the unpleasant truth is that we have to keep just as wide awake during the Parliamentary off-season as we do while Parliament sits. In fact, while the session is on, our attention often tends to become fixed on legislation which is before Parliament, and the effects of previous Acts and the administration of these Acts can very easily pass unnoticed. Once the session ends, however, and there is no Parliament to distract us, we are able to concentrate on the unpleasant facts of what Nationalist legislation means in practice. This has been brought home to us once more, during the last few weeks, by the refusal of two more passports.

Mrs. Jessie MacPherson and Stephen Ramasodi have been refused passports. In Mrs. MacPherson's case the pattern is familiar. She is a courageous and outspoken critic of the Government. She must, therefore, be kept quiet. God forbid that she should be let loose to say what she thinks about Nationalist policies outside South Africa. Not only will she blacken our name but think of all the taxpayers' hard-earned cash which will have to be poured into the State Information to counter her malicious statements. No, far better that she should not go at all! After all, the taxpayer must be protected. Perhaps too (who knows?) the ingenuity of the State Information Office may not stretch so far as effectively to answer all she has to say.

And what of Stephen Ramasodi? He is a schoolboy, so it is unlikely that he will be giving interviews to pressmen or making public statements. No, he will not do that. But surely it would be most unfair to him to introduce him into an environment to which he is not used? Would it not be quite wrong to subject him to the risks and dangers implicit in an education which does not take into consideration "his inherent racial qualities", his "distinctive characteristics and aptitude"? Quite clearly this would place intolerable strains upon Stephen's character. How would he ever "fit in" when once he returned to South Africa? No, a benevolent government could not possibly allow a boy to be subjected to such risks. His parents and his teachers are misguided. The decision must, on no account, be left to them.

So, possibly reason our benevolent rulers. So, do they give us the measure of their self-confidence. So, do they hint to us the precarious foundations upon which apartheid rests even in their own minds. What possible future can there be for a government which fears criticism as this one does? What future can there be for a government which must muzzle its opponents and deny opportunities to its citizens: which must walk in terror lest the ideas which inhabit the world should stray into its domain and take up residence in the minds of those it seeks to confine to "development along their own lines"? What prospects can there be for a government as terrified of criticism and of ideas as this one is? In the long run surely none.

No doubt the apostles of apartheid will continue in power for some time. No doubt their policies will gain adherents from people of all races who see in them some prospect of immediate personal advantage, as well as from those who see in them the solution to South Africa's problems. No doubt, as time goes by and the currents of world opinion blow more hotly against them, those whose benevolence kept Stephen Ramasodi from Kent School will show a similar concern for many others who might suffer from some contact with the outside world.

No doubt those, who in their fear of what she might say and do, kept Mrs. MacPherson at home, will clamp down more and more harshly on the issue of passports to their critics. Where and when will it all end? It can only end when the last critic of Nationalist apartheid has been silenced and when only those who will either say nothing or who will sing apartheid's praises, will be free to leave our shores. Until there is conformity there will have to be restriction. And what chance can there be of conformity when the world itself will not conform? There can be none, and the Nationalists know it and won't admit it. Their terrible fear of the ideas of the twentieth century and their pathetic attempts to keep them at bay would be laughable if they did not mean so much in terms of individual suffering today and promise so much of general suffering tomorrow.

Now is the Chance for the Liberal

by Jordan K. Ngubane

THE apparent invincibility and the singlemindedness of purpose of the Nationalist Government are driving the most powerful groups opposed to apartheid to the extreme of relying more and more on expediency instead of principle in the fight against authoritarianism.

In 1951 the United Party, the biggest opposition group on the White side, found no difficulty in making it clear that it would restore the Coloured vote on the Common Roll if it were returned to power after the Nationalists had set up a separate roll. In 1955 the United Party finds it expedient to retreat from its 1951 stand and to conceal its real intentions on this issue behind a maze of reservations which can cheer only the Nationalists.

The biggest opposition group on the African side, the African National Congress, committed itself to a fight to the bitter end against the removal of the African people from the Western Areas of Johannesburg. On the actual day of removal the anticipated resistance did not materialise. There has been extremely muddled thinking on the type of resistance to put up against Bantu education. To crown all this, the African National Congress, as co-sponsor of the Congress of the People, which met at Kliptown last month, is now morally, if not officially, pledged to a Charter of Freedom some of whose provisions would find a place of honour in any orthodox Communist programme.

Two important factors are responsible for this state of affairs. On the one hand opposition to authoritarianism is not united in sentiment and is confused on the real issues at stake in the Union today. On the other, the process of coming to terms—with Nationalist Party authoritarianism in the case of the United Party and Communist authoritarianism in the case of the African National Congress—is a confession of impotency by the two biggest opposition groups in the face of Nationalist strength, unity of purpose and determination.

The inevitable outcome of all this is that both the United Party and the African National Congress will progressively become paralysed for effective opposition to the march to a Police State.

The paralysis is so advanced in the United Party that disintegration has been allowed to set in and develop to spectacular dimensions. If the fissions in the African National Congress are not yet as spectacular, they are deep enough to confuse the movement's thinking and immobilise it for effective action on a national scale.

There are two ways out. The U.P. and the A.N.C. might recast their outlooks in the direction of a liberal democratic South Africanism which will regard merit and not colour as the criterion by which to assess human worth. If they did that, the way would be open to a new spirit of solidarity among the peoples of South Africa; to an alignment of anti-apartheid forces which would bring apartheid to its knees in our lifetime.

Or, they might allow the fissions in their ranks to go on unchecked. In that event either movement would gradually discard its liberal wing. (This process has already started.) This in turn would strengthen the forces of extreme nationalism on either side of the colour line. Before many years were out this is the pattern events would take in this country: at the extremes we would have two powerful