

# CONTACT

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THE NATAL SOCIETY  
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## STANDARDS OF VALUE

**P**EOPLE often sneer at the Liberal Party because it claims to be a party of principles. Nevertheless, that is what it is. Its principles are laid down in black and white, they are a compass in what can only be described as dangerous seas.

Meanwhile in the last eight years, principles, and especially moral principles, have suffered serious erosion in South Africa. This largely due to the fact that the Nationalists uphold a race morality, not an absolute morality. There is only one way to resist this erosion, and that is to reject race morality absolutely.

That is why many of the opponents of the Government fail to oppose; they do not reject race morality absolutely. They think the Group Areas Act is good, if only it can be applied justly; they think University Apartheid is good, if only the various tribal universities are equal to one another; they think it reasonable to give greater power to Location superintendents, so long as they do not abuse it.

The plain truth is that moral values have changed radically in the last eight years. Each and every one of them has lost its old validity. There are global as well as local causes of this, but we are concerned with those that are peculiar to us. What has happened to us is that the values, after centuries of absolute rule, have today only secondary validity. They are valid only in so far as they can be fitted into a race morality.

Whether a man is dying by the roadside is no longer an all important fact; a prime consideration is whether the ambulance that rushes to his assistance is intended to carry people of his race. The ambulance may be sent back even though the man may die.

Whether a child's life may be ruined by expulsion from a school is no longer important; what is important is that his race should be forever determined.

Such cases could be many times multiplied. There is one feature common to all. In all of them the life, liberty and happiness of the individual person has taken second place to something else. The greatest of democratic values is under relentless attack.

In such times of erosion some people lose their heads. Whether they know it or not, their standards of value change. Sometimes they do know it; they change because it is easier to do so. Sometimes they do not know it, having been deceived, even self-deceived, by fear.

There is no doubt that the Government's arrest of 140 South Africans on charges of high treason has further spread fear among certain sections of its opponents. The word "treason" terrifies them, but "treason" at this point is not the operative word. What we need to remember is that here are 140 persons who are presumed innocent until they are found guilty; who should be defended by the best talent available so that justice may be done; whose dependants need assistance and care.

No person who is devoted to Liberal principles would desire anything less than that these values should be upheld. To neglect to uphold them out of self-interest or fear, is to strengthen still further the hold of a vicious morality on our country. There are times when one must be ready to stand up and be seen; such are the times we are living in now.

He, who will not strike a blow for the rights of others, no matter who they are, will soon lose his own. And what is more, he will lose the very taste for being free.