

CONTACT

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THE NEW RESERVES

LIKE MORE FAMOUS MEN before him Senator de Klerk has become involved in the intricate problems of establishing "reserves". But unlike Shepstone in Natal and the early administrators of the Ciskei and Transkei, whose reserves were blocks of land in which Africans were to feel some security from the depredations of White adventurers, Senator Jan de Klerk's "reserves" are to be areas of employment where Europeans are to feel secure from the challenges presented by a rising tide of non-White skill and industry. We are told that one of the reasons for the establishment of the older type of reserve was to preserve African tribal culture from the too-sudden onslaughts of a dynamic new way of life and to prevent Africans being completely driven from the land. We are told that one reason for the new "reserves" is to protect the White worker from the challenges which confront him from the integration of non-White—particularly African—skilled and semi-skilled workers into the South African industrial system. We are told that one reason for the earlier reserves was to protect Africans from a threat they could not meet. Senator de Klerk suggests to us that his reserves are designed to offer exactly the same protection from a similar threat to White workers.

The vicious stratification of employment according to race, for which the Industrial Conciliation Act provides, was exposed by opposition members of all persuasions when the Bill was before Parliament. The Bill had a singularly difficult and prolonged journey through the Assembly. In response to this opposition the Nationalists threw in an unimportant amendment here and there and altered the principles and main provisions of the Bill not a jot. They armed themselves well. Now, with a General Election in the offing, they have fired the first salvo. They propose job-reservation in the clothing industry.

Whether their barrage has gone off half-cock remains to be seen. What is quite certain is that they have managed to raise an uproar in a variety of circles whose interests often conflict. Both Trade Unions and employers have protested, and in some places done more than protest, against the Minister's directive. White trade unions have come out in support of non-White rights. Overseas labour may also be drawn into the whole sorry business, certainly not to the Government's advantage.

These have been some of the more obvious, immediate reactions to job-reservation. The long-term threat contained in the Act is almost impossible to gauge. Although the Minister seems to have retreated slightly in the face of a wave of protest we do not for one moment believe that he seriously admits any error. What the Prime Minister had to say recently at Queenstown confirms us in our view. The cabinet will back Mr. de Klerk whatever follies he indulges in. After all, they were warned of the possible consequences of the Act long before it became law. They know that the Act provides specifically for the restriction of non-White employment in industry. That is precisely what they wanted when they passed it. They will not change it. The Minister may make a token retreat and not enforce the present reservation at once. He may choose to leave the non-White workers of the clothing industry, with the threat of dismissal at any moment hanging over their heads. He will use his power when he calculates it will be most to his party's advantage.

We may look rather cynically upon the Minister of Labour and his intentions. What reason have we to look on him in any other way? His avowed intention is to protect the White worker. He will not act to protect him if it is liable to lose him votes, as it might well do today. He will take action when there is a threatened recession in the industry which might

cost White workers their jobs. If he can assure their jobs it may well be that he will ensure their votes at the same time.

In the meantime the effect of this policy on industry and the non-White worker can well be imagined. What security will there be for the industrialist? None at all. He may have to face job-reservation and its consequent dislocation of his business at any moment. Already overseas industries hesitate to establish factories in the Union. How much more hesitant will they be now? They will go elsewhere.

There will be no such easy way out for the non-White worker. Whatever his talent and his skill he can be faced with a blank wall of legislative prohibition at any point at which the minister chooses to put it and at any time. The past operation of the industrial colour bar in South Africa has been bad enough. We are now seeing how much worse it may soon become. Mr. de Klerk will enjoy the dubious right of being able to introduce determinations which will make it possible for him to send a man, who has spent a lifetime improving his status and competence in the job he has chosen, back to the job in which he started as a small boy.

Time has turned the old reserves into a liability, in a modern agricultural community geared to the demands of the times. Minister de Klerk is busy turning secondary industry, perhaps the country's most worthwhile achievement in the last twenty years, into a rickety structure which will be an object of ridicule to the rest of the industrial world. In doing so he will set back industrial development drastically, store up for the future a fund of ill-will and frustration terrifying to contemplate and, ironically enough, he may well throw out of their jobs the very people he is trying to protect. If there are no factories it won't only be non-Europeans who will be looking for jobs.

Last month we said "In a crazy world the Nationalist Party stands out as a ridiculous anachronism". How right we were!

The Johannesburg Municipal Elections

by Marion Friedmann

"A SAFE LIBERAL SEAT", remarked my spouse, "is a seat where a Liberal doesn't lose his deposit." And even such seats are not common, it seemed, after an election where the Liberal Party lost five out of seven deposits, although one was lost by a minute margin in a 67-plus % poll. Polls were prodigiously high all round.

What brought all these people to the polls? Is it possible to deduce what the voters were voting for—or against? In any situation abounding in variables like this one, one cannot draw conclusions: one can only speculate and give expression to one's own experience. For what they're worth, then, I'd like to make some observations. I must emphasize that I am expressing purely personal viewpoints.

In the first place I should like to say that the atmosphere in which the elections took place was that of a General Election. For this the Press, especially the morning Press, was responsible. The large polls and the high U.P. vote resulted, I think, from two motives among voters. The first was a desire to show the Nats. that Johannesburg is against them by registering a sort of vote of confidence in the largest Opposition group. The second motive was induced in the electorate directly by the Press which said in so many words: "If you vote for the Liberals now, you will encourage them to fight more seats in the General Election and thus hinder the U.P.'s efforts to get the Nats. out". My guess is that this was the "line" most effective against us. What I am of course saying is that the large vote for the U.P. was less a vote against us than it was a vote against the Nats. The overwhelming majority of voters were *not* expressing their views on the United Party's civic administration.

About 3,100 voters voted Liberal, 1,800-plus of them voting in three wards. Were they voting *for* the Liberal Party programme or were they just disgruntled citizens? My view, and