

CONTACT

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THE NEW YEAR

AFTER the Christmas holidays comes the New Year. And after a few weeks, during which most of us have done our best to give as little thought as possible to politics, we are suddenly confronted with the Parliamentary Session and must brace ourselves to contend with another year of Nationalist rule.

What sort of year is 1955 likely to be for Liberals? On the face of it, not too good! We go into our seventh year of Nationalist government knowing, from past experience, that each of these seven years has always been worse than its predecessor and that we can expect 1955 to be worse than 1954. With each passing year so grow the Nationalist Party's capacity for ruthlessness and its thirst for dictatorial power. Amongst other things 1954 saw some of the implications of the Bantu Education Act revealed; it saw the Government handling its opponents more and more harshly, distributing bans left and right; in its dying days 1954 gave us Mr. Strydom.

Mr. Strydom came to power just in time for Christmas. At that time Prime Ministers customarily don sheep's clothing and appear in the garb of the benign and gracious "father of all their people." They send kindly and encouraging messages to "the Bantu people" or "the English-speaking people" or to any one else who may be suspicious of them and their intentions. Mr. Strydom has acted no differently from any of his predecessors and the season of his appointment has conveniently enabled him to postpone making statements of his intentions for 1955. It has allowed him to confine himself largely to platitudinous Christmas and New Year messages. Some people have grasped delightedly at the tone of moderation in these messages and interpreted it as a sign of moderation in Mr. Strydom. But let us, at least, not deceive ourselves. Almost every one is "moderate" at Christmas time and there is absolutely no reason to suppose that Johannes Strydom will be any more moderate in January 1955 than he was in January 1954. With him in the saddle and Dr. Verwoerd energetically applying whip and spur the Parliament of 1955 will slither wildly down the slippery apartheid slope. We can expect to see the Nationalists brushing aside opposition, silencing opponents, enforcing compulsory removals, over-riding Bishops and generally having a "high old time". In some quarters their activities will meet with loud acclaim; in others they will induce an unwilling compliance with their policies; in yet others they will simply crystallize and consolidate opposition to those policies. It is in this last camp that the Liberal Party will be found.

At present there is no immediate prospect of a General Election being held during the year. This should leave the Party free to expand its membership in all quarters and to extend its influence amongst all races. It can do this in many ways—some of them the conventional methods of holding meetings, issuing statements and canvassing. Perhaps the most effective means of promoting our ends, however, will be through the use of less conventional and orthodox weapons. And there are plenty of them to hand. All over the country people are being banned—let us make a noise about it. All over the country people are faced with enforced removal and loss of homes and livelihood—let us see that the general picture of hardship and the more intimate stories of personal suffering are published as far and as wide as possible. All over the country there is injustice—let us expose it. All over the country there are increasing suspicion and hatred and ignorance between people of different races—let us destroy these evils by showing, beyond all doubt, how men and women of all races can work together and be friends together if they will only put their minds to it.

We have entered the New Year knowing that the Government is ruthless and that the implementation of apartheid measures gains pace. Our task is clear. If we don't like apartheid then we must oppose it everywhere. During the next twelve months we shall have plenty

of opportunity to do so and to increase our stature by doing so. In the past we have been, perhaps, too prone to oppose apartheid at the ideological level while allowing the local practical implications to go unchallenged. In 1955 should we not be determined to fight it wherever we find it—no matter how obscure the place and how small the dose—and to make ourselves of the greatest possible nuisance value to those who believe in government by domination ?

With Strydom and Verwoerd in control 1955 promises to be a tough year. It could also be an exciting one and the makings of the Liberal Party. Let us resolve to fight like hellcats—and enjoy it.

AN ECONOMIC POLICY

By ALAN PATON

WITH two members in the Upper House, and two in the Lower, the Liberal Party enters a new and important phase of its existence. One of its problems hitherto has been to do something more practical, though not necessarily more valuable, than utter noble sentiments and affirm noble principles. One of the best places to do this is Parliament, and to be cut off from Parliament is to have an unreal air given to the whole performance.

Now suddenly the Ballingers are to be strengthened by the addition of Leslie Rubin and Walter Stanford. For this alone we are jubilant, that our Leader Margaret Ballinger is to have this extra support and strength. Practical policy-making is now obviously going to be more important than it was.

This is a welcome stage of growth. It has always been one of our problems to answer convincingly the question as to how the Party proposed to carry out some of its reforms. The zealot was almost compelled to answer, "immediately on coming into power". Gradualism was suspect. This undoubtedly prevented many South Africans from joining us.

But now we shall have a team of people, and a good team too, who will be able to shift the glare of the spotlights from the speculative future to the practical present. No one should underestimate the importance of this change. A Liberal on a platform is virtually compelled to state his ultimate claim ; a Liberal in Parliament can fight for any progressive step whatsoever.

Mutual trust is essential in this relationship. Our Parliamentary members will be bound by the principles and objects of the Party. Our Party members will be bound by the interpretation placed on these by the Parliamentary members. On very important issues, our Parliamentary members will seek and abide by the decision of the National Congress.

Now is the time for us to give some attention to economic policy. So far we have appealed largely to idealists. Have our policies no appeal to the ordinary white voter ? Of course they have, but we have not yet given them sufficient attention. Our Parliamentary team should do this ; it should give practical content to these noble dreams.

It is clear that the industrial development of South Africa is going to raise the standard of living for the whole nation. Instead of white people having to have less so that black people can have more (which is a sure sign of a static economy), there is going to be more for all. This more is going to be created by liberating African skill and energy. The African doesn't need charity, he needs opportunity. Some say he has no skill. He has plenty of skill, but he doesn't bring it out for a pound a week.

With greater exploitation of our own raw material, African wages will rise. The African will spend more on food, clothing and amusements. Factories and farms and enterprises concerned with these products will boom. Their own employees will spend more, creating still more enterprises. This prosperity will benefit us all. *But prosperity will be brought to an end if the colour-bar persists.* This prosperity is being created not only by imported capital, not only by use of new raw material, but also by a *new use of human material.* Stop that use and the whole cycle comes to an end.