

CONTACT

JUNE 1956

-2 JUL 1956

NATIONAL SOCIETY
COPYRIGHT SECTION

WHAT HAPPENED AT WORCESTER?

WHEN the result of the Worcester by-election was announced it showed, by some extraordinary coincidence, that the Nationalist majority had remained exactly the same as at the previous election. This confronted the political analysts with something of a problem. How were they to interpret this freak result? The problem was a testing one, but political commentators are never at a loss for long in finding a sympathetic interpretation of an election result, and soon the protagonists of both sides were hard at it, assuring their supporters that this result was the most gratifying they could have hoped for. Nationalists claimed that Worcester showed once more the undiminished support for their cause. The United Party claimed that, at last, the high-water mark of Nationalist appeal had been reached and that from now on the tide of political support could be expected to flow steadily back into its own ranks.

Observing the result from what might be termed a disinterested position and after reading some of the speeches and statements made from their platforms by both sides, it is possible to come to a conclusion completely different from either of these. It is possible to conclude that the unfortunate voters of Worcester, finding, as the election progressed, that the policies they were offered became less and less distinguishable, were, finally, completely overcome with confusion and, in desperation, decided to vote exactly as they had the time before!

Such a suggestion can be ridiculed as nonsense, but is the difference between Nationalist policy and that of the United Party not becoming more and more difficult to pinpoint the longer the U.P. remains in opposition? At Worcester Dr. Louis Steenkamp implied that the main difference between his Party's policy and that of the Nationalists was that the United Party did not place its faith in legislation but in "the inherent learning, culture and tradition of White South Africans". Questions of differences of principle did not apparently arise. The only serious dispute was over the best **means** of maintaining White South Africa's dominant position in the country. In Northern Natal, where the United Party has recently been accused of creating "blackspots", party officials have heatedly denied any responsibility. These denials have been accompanied by a total failure to oppose the removal of the "blackspots" or to put up any defence of the long-established rights to land and home which will be lost to the Africans concerned. Some time ago Mr. Strauss attacked the Government for employing increasing numbers of Non-Europeans in Government service. His cry has since been taken up by other members of his party, notably Mrs. Sannie van Niekerk, M.P. for Drakensberg, at her series of report-back meetings last year and, most recently, in "Die Pretorianer", official organ of the U.P. in Pretoria. This publication has been busy attacking the Government on the grounds that people of colour are better off under the Nationalists than they ever could have been under the U.P.

What sort of opposition is this? It is not opposition at all! It is not even appeasement! It is a deliberately unscrupulous attempt by the United Party to beat the Government at its own game and to do so by appealing to the worst instincts of the electorate. It is a policy which has no hope of success.

White South Africans of liberal inclinations often have to counter the argument that the surest way to achieve what they are after is through the United Party. Some of them are taken in and stay in the U.P. Here they have their answer. The U.P. does not get more liberal as time passes, it gets more Nationalist. In the unlikely event of the United Party defeating the Government at a General Election, and doing so on the basis of its present tendencies, would South Africa be any better off? We doubt it.

The Prime Minister and Union Day

SPEAKING from Capetown the Prime Minister, Mr. J. G. Strijdom, made an appeal for national unity in South Africa, and spoke of the great future "which we, with God's will and aid, shall achieve together". He also mentioned with approval the "pattern of life" which our leaders had in view at the time of Union, "a pattern based on the mutual recognition of each other's rights, and respect for each other's cultural heritage".

These are noble thoughts, and we as a Party have nothing but praise to offer for them. But we cannot accept them as being true to reality as we know it. It is allowable, of course, for a leader to outline noble ideals of which our present actions fall far short; but the ideals which Mr. Strijdom outlines seem to us to be actually incompatible with our present governmental policies.

What is meant by a "mutual recognition of each other's rights"? It is widely recognised that the members of the Indian business community face great losses under the Group Areas Act. These businesses they set up and maintained openly and lawfully. Are their rights to have done so now being recognised? And where is the mutual character of this recognition?

Mr. Theo Gerdener, who seems to be the spokesman for a new and vicious brand of Natal Nationalism, has said that perhaps 90 per cent of Indians must seek some other occupation, and he suggested that this might be some form of manual labour. Is this because they had more than their "rightful" share of business? Is it the intention to reorganise farming, in which Afrikaners have more than their "rightful" share? Or the motor industry, in which English-speaking people have more than their "rightful" share?

We hope that we, as Liberals, respect the cultural heritage of others. But it seems to us that it is the Government who will decide what that cultural heritage shall be, certainly in the case of African culture. In any event, whatever cultural heritage we may possess, there is a technological "culture" which is modern man's way of living on the earth. It does not belong to any race or nation, but to man; and the African people have as much right to it as anybody else. But it is in the highest degree improbable that they will ever be able to enjoy it in any of the Bantu "heartlands". And if it should happen that one of these "heartlands" should uncover rich resources, it is in the highest degree probable that "mutual recognition" will come into operation at once.

It is strange to hear Mr. Strijdom, who has just told Afrikaners to sell their farms only to Afrikaners, speaking of the great future "which we shall achieve together". It seems to us no part of Mr. Strijdom's purpose to allow anything important to be achieved by common effort and dedication. His Party is sectional in the highest degree, and its achievements, far from being the result of common effort, are the result of sectional effort of the most determined kind.

What does Mr. Strijdom mean by "achieve together"? He cannot possibly mean "common effort". He can only mean "common obedience" by all other groups in South Africa to the Nationalist will.

Ultimately Mr. Strijdom's entire address is illogical and self-contradictory. There is really **no** Union of South Africa for him at all. He sees South Africa as a battleground, not as a place for "achieving together". He is obsessed by the idea of conflict. His solution is "baaskap", not co-operation. It is impossible to speak on December 16 about the Afrikaner's history as one of unceasing vigilance and struggle, and on May 31 to talk of "peaceful development".

A Liberal, by virtue of his ideals and temperament, is not inclined to pitiless judgment. The leader of any Party can be pardoned if his noble utterances reflect rather the goal than the substance of his Party's achievements. But confronted by the peaceful and tolerant nature of the Prime Minister's speech, one is baffled to know how he can reconcile it with the actions of his Government. And if we who live here are baffled, how much more baffled must be the observers of the outside world?

For the kind of unity for which the Prime Minister appeals, no self-respecting non-Nationalist will raise a finger. We do not believe that kind of unity is God's will, nor that it will receive God's aid. And when he speaks of the "mutual recognition of each other's rights", he may be using words we know, but he is using language in a way that is abhorrent to us.

If there is one man who is unfitted to deal with the great ideals of the Union of South Africa, it is the Prime Minister. Union Day is a public holiday; in future let Mr. Strijdom observe it too.

PARLIAMENTARY NEWS

OPPPOSITION by Liberal Members to the doctrinaire legislation of the Government continues. There are, of course, no indications that the Government is prepared to take cognizance of sound criticism, though the Minister of Native Affairs, at the end of a laborious speech defending the Government's decision not to implement the concrete recommendations of the Tomlinson Report, remarked that he could "understand it if stones are thrown at us by anyone who tells us that . . . everyone should have absolute equality"—as opposed to those who did not stand for equality. A few days later he was to express the opinion, however, that the Natives' Representatives must one day be removed from Parliament. Apparently the right to criticise does not involve the right to continue to do so.

Separate Representation of Voters Amendment Bill, Committee Stage: The Opposition, excluding, of course, the Conservatives, continued to oppose this measure, though the United Party was embarrassed by reminders of its establishment of the Coloured Advisory Council of 1943, which had resulted in deep disunity among the Coloured people.

Mrs. Ballinger, arguing from the analogy of the Natives' Representative Council, expressed the view that the proposed Council for Coloured Affairs would not work; that the N.R.C. had not worked because its representations had been consistently ignored by the Smuts Government for nearly ten years; that the proposed Council for Coloured Affairs could be expected to follow the same course, to be accused of being non-co-operative when it showed an independent attitude, and to be abolished when it did so. No such Council, she argued, stood a chance of succeeding if it were based on the Hertzog principle, since that principle had the support of neither Coloured nor African people.

Native Administration Amendment Bill, second reading debate: Mr. Stanford in the course of his speech described the Natal Code, which it is now proposed to extend to the Cape, as a "horrible anachronism of a barbaric age", the application of which to the Cape had been rejected in 1927 when it was applied to the other Provinces. He pointed the contrast between the backwardness of African institutions in the Transvaal and Free State, where the Code had been applied, with the greater initiative of Africans in the Transkei, where it had not and was about to be. He observed that the Africans in the Cape had not been consulted (that goes without saying, it seems); and that the Bill would give the Minister of Native Affairs dictatorial powers over three-quarters of the South African population, unprecedented in their extent in this country, and "utterly foreign . . . from the Roman-Dutch law system in which we are trained and brought up . . ." "We do not understand this foreign ideology", he continued; ". . . to condemn a man without trial, and having condemned him, to give him no redress to law"—great jurists like Johannes Voet "would not believe it is possible".

Debate on the Tomlinson Report: While Government speakers wriggled their way out of their professed policy, the Official Opposition claimed the constructive features of the Tomlinson Report—the rapid industrialisation of the Reserves, and the introduction of individual tenure, in particular—as being consistent with their 1954 Congress resolutions.

Mrs. Ballinger put the case of the Liberal Party as follows: the Report had made it plain that apartheid could not be achieved without (a) an alteration of the basis of land tenure in the Reserves, and (b) a reduction of pressure on the land by diversification of the economy, through the creation of industries with the help of European and State assistance; that even when these were achieved there would still be six million Africans living in the European areas and "entirely dependent" on them for their livelihood (Verwoerd's claim that they would be migrant labourers in the European areas of their own free choice was nonsense: there would be no room for them in the Reserves if they wanted to live there). These people would in time demand rights, so that even in their own areas the Europeans would not be "secure". The Minister, meanwhile, by rejecting those parts of the Report which offered hope of improvement, was thus slowing up the tempo of change in the Reserves while hastening it in the towns, which involved the confiscation of rights without alternative compensation, and was in fact a policy calculated to encourage cheap labour, not apartheid.

Natives (Prohibition of Interdicts) Bill, second reading: The iniquity of this Bill was clearly demonstrated by Mr. Stanford. In denying the right of Africans to procure an interdict against removal on the ground of "irreparable prejudice" to their interests, the Bill in fact removed the only ground upon which an interdict could be claimed, he observed. Interdicts are only granted in cases where damages do not meet the case, so that the plea, that adequate safeguards exist in the provision for payment of damages in clause 4 of the Bill, cannot be sustained.

PARTY NEWS

CAPE and NATIONAL

The National Executive Committee will meet in Johannesburg on June 24th. Members from all four Provinces will attend.

In Cape Town a protest meeting against proposals to remove Coloured women from the Municipal Voters' Roll was planned but was cancelled when the objectionable clauses in the Provincial Ordinance were withdrawn by the Administrator. Instead a meeting of members was held and, in addition, it is planned to hold a lunch-hour meeting under the title "You Are Right, Father Huddleston" soon after publication of the counter-blast to "Naught For Your Comfort".

The Eastern Cape Region has been active this month, highlight of its programme being a meeting of representatives of Eastern Cape branches, held in Grahamstown and attended by over 30 people. Discussion ranged over a number of subjects including the question of contesting elections, contributing more towards Party funds, making regular contributions towards *Contact* and so on. The Regional Associations agreed that the National Congress be held in East London later in the year, provided the East London branch could cater for it.

An important resolution taken at this meeting resulted in a telegram being sent to the Minister of Native Affairs protesting against the dismissal of African teachers "with no appeal to the Courts and under instructions from the Minister which forced the hand of the School Boards". In a piously worded reply the Minister's Private Secretary says that "no Bantu teachers were dismissed simply on ground of matter of opinion" and ends his letter with the sentence "True liberalism should be unprejudiced and investigate all aspects before taking sides". While we appreciate the lesson on what constitutes "true liberalism", coming as it does from such an eminent authority on the subject, it can do no harm to point out that the reply fails to deal with the question of dismissal without appeal to the Courts and completely avoids one of the cardinal issues raised—that the Minister had exerted pressure on School Boards to secure the dismissal of the teachers concerned.

TRANSVAAL

The energies of the Transvaal Division are being concentrated on fighting the Municipal by-election in the Berea Ward of Johannesburg. Miss Ruth Hayman is standing as an independent candidate with the support of the Liberal Party, the Congress of Democrats and a number of prominent ex-U.P. supporters. She is a member of the Liberal Party. The main issue in the election, apart from questions of general principle, is the decision of the United Party-controlled City Council to co-operate with Dr. Verwoerd in the implementation of the "Locations in the Sky" Act.

As soon as the election is over the next in the series of meetings in African residential areas will take place in Sophiatown. In addition it is planned to arrange a tour of inspection of African housing conditions, with particular reference to the Western Areas Removal Scheme, for members and interested people. This will take place immediately after the election and, if it is a success, will be followed up by other similar tours.

Fund-raising efforts have met with considerable success lately and the good financial position of the Division has enabled it to embark on the publication of a new pamphlet.

NATAL and O.F.S.

Highlight of the month in Natal was an Inter-racial Variety Show entitled "Good Neighbours" put on in the Wesley Hall, Durban, by the Coastal Region. Crystal Rogers and her helpers are to be congratulated on the success of the evening and particularly for the extremely efficient manner in which the performance was run. Members of all groups took part before a thoroughly representative audience and the hall was packed. Besides providing everyone with a very pleasant evening the show also made a small profit.

Small house-meetings have been held at Winterton, Ladysmith, Balgovan and Kokstad during the last month. Although mainly confined to members a number of non-members attended each of these meetings, with some profit to the Party in terms of new members recruited. In the Pietermaritzburg Region plans to hold a protest meeting against the removal of Sobantu Village have been postponed pending the receipt by the City Council of a reply to a letter sent by them to Dr. Verwoerd asking him to visit the City.

Arising out of the recent Group Areas Conference organised by the N.I.C. in Durban a Provincial Vigilance Committee has been appointed. The Liberal Party is represented by Alan Paton, who is vice-chairman, and Ken Hill.

The O.F.S. Committee of the Party met on May 31st and will send a delegation to the S.A.B.R.A. Conference which will take place in Bloemfontein shortly.

YOU SCANDALISED OUR NAME

*You fed on our moshbolletjies
You ate our fish and game
You drank our tea, our beer, our wine,
Then scandalised our name.*

*You took our nationality
You breathed our southern air
You travelled through our Great Karroo
At half the usual fare.*

*For you our jacarandas bloomed
And spread the streets with blue
For you our graceful springboks sprang
Our ringhals rang for you.*

*You sat beneath our doringboom
You shared its shelter too
With all its many branches and
A special branch for you.*

*Come back again, best-selling monk,
We've another cell for you,
With Government hospitality,
And naught for your comfort too.*