

CONTACT

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SEPARATE, BUT EQUAL?

TOWARDS the end of last year Dr. N. Diederichs, Nationalist M.P. for Randfontein, toured the United States. Before returning home he made a statement in Los Angeles, in which he said "What the Nationalist Party is working for is appreciated in the attitude of many enlightened Southerners in the United States. We seek separate but equal ranks of citizenship for Coloureds and Whites . . . the Nationalist Party has plans for a separate but equal school system." Dr. Diederichs' implication was that, like the "enlightened Southerners" his Party sought separation, but equality, in all phases of life. The people of Los Angeles, probably unaware that Dr. Diederichs' Party, a short twelve months before, had passed a Separate Amenities Act legalising separate facilities which were **not** equal, had to accept his words at their face value. However, that is beside the point. What is important is that the slogan "Separate, but Equal" is not only one to which some American Southerners and South African Nationalists subscribe, it is one which is steadily seducing White South Africans and even some Africans into a gradually declining opposition to the Government. White South Africans pretend to believe that if, ultimately, there is separation then there will be equality. This pretence allows them to curtain off their minds from the glare of existing injustices and to accept present wrongs in the expectation of future rights. So also are some Africans coming to believe that all they are asked to suffer today will, in the end, mean that they will be free to develop their full personalities in some separate society of their own. Before these trends of thought develop further it would be as well to examine how much "equality" separate arrangements have brought to South Africans so far.

As Dr. Diederichs made special mention of it let us start with education. In 1951, 97.6 per cent. of European children of school-going age were in school: in 1954, 41 per cent. of African children were. In 1951, about £44 per annum was spent on each European pupil: in 1954 about £9 per annum was spent on each African pupil. Yet in 1954, the year in which completely separate "Bantu" education for Africans was introduced, the Nationalist Government "pegged" expenditure from general revenue on African education and made it clear that any future increase would have to be met from the pockets of African taxpayers. Education for Africans may now be "separate," it is clearly not equal. It is equally clear that although under Dr. Verwoerd's enthusiastic guidance education for Africans may become steadily more "separate" and distinct from that provided for other groups, the financial restrictions placed upon it will ensure that it becomes steadily less "equal."

But education is only one field in which separation has been accompanied, not by equality, but by inequality. Provincial authorities do not only provide hospitals offering separate facilities for different people; they very often provide completely separate hospitals in completely separate areas. But no matter how far these hospitals may be separated from hospitals for other groups, no matter that the area may be an African area and the hospital one for Africans, in no case will the pay be the same for African nurses as it is for European nurses, nor the ratio of beds per head of population be the same for Africans as it is for Europeans. And so it goes on. Municipalities collect rates from Non-Europeans but neglect the roads past their doors; nowhere are recreational facilities for Non-Europeans equal to those enjoyed by Europeans, yet they are invariably separate from them. Non-Europeans are provided with separate transport services which involve early rising, hours of queueing and late returns home—inconveniences not generally found on the separate European services.

South Africans who feel that their salvation lies in "separate, but equal" facilities should remember these things. In particular they should remember the Western Areas, which, twenty or thirty years ago, were "separate areas." As time went by these areas became as near equal to a European suburb, in terms of standard of facilities and freedom to own land, as any predominantly African suburb in the country. But, in the end, these places were encroached upon by Europeans, they came to be called "Blackspots" and they were removed.

For those who still doubt, an interesting item of news came out of the American South not long ago. Governor James Byrnes, of South Carolina, announced that, under the State's 3½ year old school improvement plan, allocations for school buildings averaged 314 dollars for each Negro pupil compared with 147 dollars for each White pupil. As South Carolina believes in "separate, but equal" facilities it can be safely assumed that it is not the intention to provide schools for Negroes more than twice as expensive as those for Whites. The only conclusion to which one can come is that, almost 60 years after the doctrine of "separate, but equal" obtained legal sanction in the United States, South Carolina still lags so far behind the ideal that it must spend this disproportionate amount on its Negro pupils in an attempt to make up the leeway. It is, perhaps, significant that this is being done at a time when the general trend in the U.S.A. is towards de-segregation of schools and when some Southern states are doing their best to convince their critics that their schools are equal, though segregated.

Let those who are threatened with the seductions of this insidious slogan face the fact that where there is separation there has never yet been equality. In its now celebrated judgement of May, 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court stated "that in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." So also are separate arrangements in other spheres. In South Africa the emphasis has been on "separation" for far too long. It is high time we started putting it on "equality."

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

IN Parliament recently the United Party launched a concerted and well-planned attack on apartheid from an economic point of view. They showed with great clarity that any attempt to prevent the continued integration of Europeans and Non-Europeans in a single economic system would be fatal to South Africa economically, and that any large scale implementations of economic apartheid would mean the ruin of all sections alike.

The Nationalists had no answer to this attack. Yet they succeeded in silencing the United Party by means of a counter attack. They proceeded to prove, without much difficulty, that the inevitable outcome of the United Party's policy of economic integration would be the rise of the Non-European people of South Africa into a position of equality with the Europeans. The only way, they said, of avoiding this was the fully-fledged economic apartheid preached and to some extent practised by Dr. Verwoerd. And the United Party could no more answer this one than the Nationalists could answer their attack; so they diverted the debate into other lines.

This debate illustrated perfectly the painful dilemma in which both the major parties in Parliament find themselves to-day. Each has a line of attack on the other which the other cannot answer, but can only hope to evade by increasing the vehemence of its own attack. The United Party says that economic integration is the only way of building prosperity, and that economic apartheid will mean ruin. The Nationalist Party retaliates by saying that economic integration will inevitably lead to complete equality, and that economic apartheid is the only alternative. They cannot answer one another for the simple reason that there is no answer. Both are absolutely right.