

CONTACT

MARCH 1955

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.

We are fully acquainted with the way that this dilemma has paralysed the United Party as an opposition. But it is less generally realised that it is also paralysing the Nationalists as a government, for they are no more prepared to face the consequences of apartheid than the United Party is prepared to face the consequences of integration, and the government's implementation of apartheid is as half-hearted as the United Party's opposition to it. That is why, after seven years of Nationalist rule, there are no Group Areas, no Population Register, no industries in the reserves, and far more Africans than ever before are employed in skilled and semi-skilled jobs in what Dr. Verwoerd pleases to call "white areas."

The choice before white South Africans is simple. They can either have prosperity or temporary white supremacy. They cannot, in the long run, have both, though they can very easily have neither. The two big political parties are promising both prosperity and supremacy, but between them they are making the impossibility of this promise clearer and clearer. The time is coming when the country will have to face the choice squarely, and we cannot doubt that many will choose the sane alternative of prosperity and equality. That is why the Liberal Party has a future among European South Africans as well as among Non-European South Africans.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,

The December issue of CONTACT contained a most erudite exposition of what 'Liberal' should mean as applied to a political party in South Africa. To a simple fellow like me however, the word conveys something like this . . .

I like the word 'liberal', whether it qualifies a politician or a helping of pudding. There is something generous about it, something elastic and intangibly accommodating. I don't, as a member of the Liberal Party of South Africa, feel that I've joined a body of power-seeking freaks with a constitution of brittle clauses and a creed of exclusive definitude. Rather do I think of us South African Liberals, with no respect to our alleged antecedents in Britain or elsewhere, as a growing group of people who are trying to assemble kindly and tolerant thought from all sources and peoples in this country. I would jibe, for example, at the commonly held belief that our inspiration is the extension of the franchise to all adult South Africans — if only because such an 'inspiration' is too constricting, too finite, to allow of or invite discussion.

We S.A. Liberals are, as I see it, inspired to the extent that we recognise the common humanity of all peoples : we are without the peculiar, biologically unsound but conveniently cultured notion that white people are congenitally privileged and superior to people of other pigmentation : conversely, we don't regard white people as knaves, not even—and this is important as part of what 'liberal' means to me — that section of white people which is yet having difficulty in exorcising its insular prejudices.

Those of us South Africans — and we may be drawn mainly from the simple and personally unambitious peoples of all races — who can pool our ideas and discuss them together, should and will find that our common goal is the extension of freedom, happiness, mental and bodily welfare and security to all South African men, women and children. We shall search together for the routes to that goal, and the goal itself will ensure that we are liberal.

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Further letters, defining "Liberal" as it may apply to our Party, are invited.

—Editor

PARTY NEWS

TRANSVAAL

The past month has not been a spectacular one in the Transvaal. The total reorganisation of branches in the Johannesburg area has been carried out. This, and preparations for the provincial Congress, which takes place on April 16th and 17th, has precluded much other activity. A concerted drive has been begun to collect subscriptions, donations and stop orders. It is going well. One public meeting was held — in Johannesburg on the 23rd to commemorate the Olive Schreiner Centenary.

NATAL

Both the Edendale and Pietermaritzburg Branches have held their Annual General Meetings during the last month. At Edendale the meeting was followed by a very pleasant social event which was attended by Mr. Paton and other visitors. In Maritzburg the meeting was preceded by a Public Meeting, at which Mr. Paton spoke on "The Negro in America Today." More than 100 people were present and a number of new members were enrolled. Both Branches have shown steady progress over the last year and the secretary of the Pietermaritzburg branch was able to report an increase of a little less than 100 per cent. in membership. At Edendale the membership had increased by about 50 per cent.

In Durban, on March 11th, the Liberal Forum debated against the Durban Parliamentary Debating Society at the International Club. The Durban Parliamentary team moved "that equal opportunities for all races, without segregation, will end White influence in the leadership of South Africa." They were opposed by a Liberal team consisting of Ronald Morris, Alan Paton, Pat Poovalingam and Richard Robinow and the motion was lost by 347 points to 312.

NATIONAL AND CAPE

News from Cape Town has been unfortunately delayed.

LIBERAL BALANCE SHEET

DEBIT

1. A memorandum accepting the Government's apartheid policy and suggesting ways of introducing the policy into mixed unions has been submitted to the Select Committee on the Industrial Conciliation Bill by the Executive Committee of the S.A. Federation of Trade Unions.
2. A Bill forbidding Negroes and Europeans to dance or take part together in Athletics has been introduced into the Georgia House of Representatives.
3. In West Bromwich, 5,000 busworkers staged a one-day protest strike against the employment of an Indian as a trainee-conductor.
4. A Motion introduced by Dr. G. W. Gale, at the S.A. Nursing Council Conference at Capetown, "that this Council is opposed to the diminution, on the ground solely of race, of any rights and privileges pertaining to persons registered with this Council by virtue of such registration" was defeated after the Chairman had exercised her casting vote.

CREDIT

1. Mr. Douglas Brown, Daily Telegraph correspondent in South Africa told the summer school of the University of Cape Town "South Africa is the only independent member of the Commonwealth not accepting the principle of Universal franchise. Indeed, it is almost the only country in the world, not excluding behind the Iron Curtain, which does not pay lip-service to this principle."
2. Mr. Leo Lovell, Labour M.P. for Benoni said in Cape Town "Never before has the country had a Government which elevated its policy into a religion . . . Just as a man's personal rights are restricted in that he may not blaspheme, so it is necessary for the Government to attack the rights of freedom and speech and assembly to prevent criticism of its policy."
3. Six nurses from Barbados, to whom nurses in a Swansea Mental Hospital objected, were offered employment in Birmingham. The Chairman of the Birmingham Hospitals said "There must be no colour bar in Britain, least of all in nursing."