

HALF A STEP FORWARD AND TWO BACK

Mr Jimmy Kruger made two important statements during the debate on his Justice Vote in the recent Parliamentary session.

In the first he told us that he had decided to appoint two officials who would be empowered to call at any time on people detained without trial under the security laws, and to see them alone. This would provide protection for them against maltreatment.

As Mrs Helen Suzman said when the Minister made his announcement to Parliament, the appointments came "about 35 deaths too late". It is also a great pity that the two people appointed are both retired government servants. How much better if they had been retired judges. How much better, too, if more than two appointments had been made. It seems quite impossible to expect one person to protect every detainee in the entire area of the Cape and Natal, and another to look after everyone in the Transvaal and the Free State. And who is going to tell them who has been detained, and where, so that they can get to them in a hurry? The Security Police? Not much hope of that!

Having said all this we nevertheless welcome these appointments as at least a step in the right direction. They may place some restraint on some Security Police interrogation teams.

There is nothing to be welcomed in Mr Kruger's other statement. He told Parliament that certain practices were being used in security court cases which were undermining South Africa's legal system and that he would investigate

3

CROSSROADS

In spite of appeals and protests and the shocked international and local reactions to its callous destruction of the Modderdam and Unibell squatter camps, the Government will raze Cross-roads, the last of the big squatter settlements, before the end of the year. A compact and settled community will be scattered to the winds. The Minister in charge of this particular area of Government activity has said that if the people do not move of their own free will the Government will use every method available to move them itself.

For thirty years now every appeal to the compassionate side of the Government's nature not to move black people from homes where they are reasonably content, to somewhere where they don't want to go, has failed. The truth of the matter is that there is no compassionate side to the Government's nature when it comes to moving black people around.

But, quite apart from its known indifference to the general suffering its policies inflict on black people, a particular viciousness in their application seems to be reserved for the African people of the Western Cape. Not only are their squatter camps ruthlessly destroyed but they are the

what could be done to counter them during the parliamentary recess. He objected to the fact that certain lawyers seemed to specialise in security cases, accused them of adopting delaying tactics during such cases and was offended by the fact that large amounts of money seemed to be available for the defence in political trials. Mr Kruger accused these lawyers of using our "democratic" legal system to undermine it and he appealed to the controlling bodies of the legal profession "to think of ways of preventing individuals of the legal profession from contributing to the undermining of the legal system we know and in which we believe."

We are glad to say that the controlling bodies of the legal profession have rejected Mr Kruger's assertion out of hand. They have pointed out that the Courts have perfectly adequate powers to deal with suspected instances of lawyers using "delaying tactics", and that it is only to be expected that lawyers who have had previous experience in security cases should tend to be the ones that clients go to to represent them if they find themselves involved in such cases. In any event why is specialising in security cases undermining our legal system when specialising in tax, or insurance, or divorce cases is apparently not?

No lawyers' leader has, unfortunately, pointed out the irony of the fact that this accusation of *undermining our legal system* should come from Mr Kruger, for it is he and his predecessors in the portfolio of Justice who have done just that. Who else destroyed what was once its fundamental principle, the rule of habeas corpus? □

only group of people who will be specifically excluded from the new proposals to provide greater security and longer leasehold for urban Africans. Why? The Government will say that the Western Cape is an area in which Coloured interest must prevail and where Coloured people must be protected from African competition. That will be the official justification, but is there another unofficial one? Are the Government planners looking ahead to the day of the final collapse of apartheid? Do they see themselves and their supporters one day being driven slowly back by the forces of change into a shrunken white-dominated redoubt based on the Western Cape? Are all these energetic attempts to make life unlivable for the African people of the Western Cape part of a plan to drive them out of there altogether, so that there will be no potential black fifth-column there when the final defence of the redoubt commences?

Despite all the celebratory speeches with which they marked the thirtieth anniversary of their coming to power, deep down inside them is this where the Nationalist planners really think their policies might lead? □