

# WHY IT WON'T WORK

by Edgar Brookes

(This article by Dr Edgar H. Brookes was received for publication by the Natal Witness just before his death and is reprinted with the Editor's permission.)

The new Constitution may perhaps be faulted because it is too complicated or too top-heavy. But after all the details do not matter very much. Whether the Coloured House of Representatives should have five Ministers allocated to it, or six, or whether the Indian Chamber of Deputies should include two Deputy Ministers or three, are matters of minor importance. The big thing is that in the whole scheme there is no place for Africans.

It may be answered that the Africans would have their own legislatures in the "homelands" but until the "homelands" are very much bigger and have much more defined and clear boundaries, this is not a very adequate answer. Moreover, it would appear that the Indian and Coloured houses have powers co-extensive with the House of Assembly, but this is not the case with any of the "homelands" except Transkei.

The quaint provision for separate Coloured and Indian chambers is presumably due to the impossibility of creating Coloured and Indian "homelands" with definite boundaries. But there are literally millions of Africans living outside the "homelands" and not one of the "homelands" would be viable if these exiles were compelled to return to them. It is really a case of the "lie in the soul" to exclude the Africans from the national legislature on the basis of the existence of very inadequate and ill-defined homelands.

So much for the justice of the scheme. But what of its effect on our reputation in the wider world? Can anyone in his right mind imagine that the United Nations or the independent Black States or even our kinsfolk in the Western powers will be satisfied with a scheme such as this? It will be rejected as window-dressing, and not very clever or good window-dressing.

If we are going to base our relations with the Africans on the "homelands" we shall need to have a federal system with the homelands represented in the Federal Parliament. As things stand, under this scheme Coloureds and Indians will have some voice in our external relationships, on questions of customs duties and currency, on matters of

peace or war. But on none of these will the homelands have power. Otherwise one might have the Republic and four "homelands" declaring war and the remaining "homeland" proclaiming neutrality.

I come to another question. Will these additional Houses of Parliament work? I think it probable that reputable Coloured and Indian leaders will refuse to be candidates for their new Houses of Parliament. The two houses will be filled with nonentities and salary-seekers.

A clear precedent can be found. After the War of 1899-1902 Lord Milner wanted people like Botha and De la Rey to come on to his Transvaal Legislative Council. They refused to participate in a government in which they would be a perpetual minority and preferred to wait until self-government was granted.

In the present case they will prefer to wait until they are put on a common roll. One would not wish to take the responsibility of advising them. They must make their own decisions. But it is our duty to consider what these decisions are likely to be. And no one would wish the whole scheme to be a farce dissolving into mocking laughter.

It is not at all clear from the Government's statements how the relationship between the three houses and the three cabinets will work in practice. But it would appear that in the last resort it is the will of the European House and the European Cabinet that will prevail.

The fact is that we are all white, black or brown, to be sacrificed to the principle of apartheid. And apartheid is finding less and less support. Are we to be "butchered to make a theorist's holiday"?

Twist and turn and dodge as we may, some day (and the sooner the better) we shall have to face the real issue, whether we are prepared to share political power with our fellow-South Africans. It is hard to bring ourselves to say "Yes", but we should be mature enough to face the issue. The present proposals are a most elaborate effort to shuffle it off for a few more years. □