

To return, however, to Mr. Volker's suggestion that land-owners who could prove that they could farm productively should be left to do so, while tenants and those who could not should be moved, we have a better suggestion than that. If apartheid ideology is to be turned upside-down to the extent that black people are to be allowed to continue to own and live on land in "white" South Africa, why not take it a bit further? It is the restrictions on the free purchase of land by black people legislated by successive white governments which have turned many **blackspots** which were originally intended for farming into places which are now largely residential. Many of the tenants living on them would have bought land elsewhere had it been possible. A considerable number have lived where they do now for years. The **blackspot** in which they live is

as much home to them as it is to the person who owns it. Why not let these rural residential areas remain rural residential areas? Let them be controlled by their own communities, subject to health and other laws of general application. Let them have access to the finance which could reverse whatever soil and community degeneration they may be suffering from. That, surely, would be a much cheaper and more productive way "to improve the general standard of life of the communities concerned" than Dr. Koornhof's secret mass removals? And instead of creating still more of the bitterness, destabilisation and demoralisation which have been part and parcel of every removal so far undertaken, South Africa would, in these areas at least, be making a long-term investment in stability which would benefit all of us. □

2. THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL REPORT.

If you have been a committed Nationalist all your working life, first as a party official and then as an M.P., in an organisation dedicated to Afrikaner baasskap in one form or another over everyone else in the country, black or brown, white English-speaking Catholic, Jew or Protestant, it takes considerable courage to start telling your supporters, all of them brought up with the same commitment, that those days are over, the time has come to start sharing that power with others.

In terms of his background and training Mr. Botha has certainly shown such courage in his apparent acceptance of the President's Council proposals for the extension of political rights on a consociational basis to the Coloured and Indian people. It could not have been easy for him to take what must seem a hazardous step on a new course in the face of the tenacious clinging to past myths by a large part (it may still turn out to be the larger part) of Afrikanerdom.

But while we admire Mr. Botha's courage and wish him luck in any confrontation he may have with the men of the dark ages, Treurnicht, Connie Mulder, and others even worse, that admiration doesn't extend to the recommendations of the President's Council. Those recommendations we must take as they have been presented to us and not as what their more optimistic critics are hoping they may turn into.

We find the idea of an executive president answerable to virtually nobody quite terrifying. This is not just because, if Mr. Botha's calculations prove wrong, we could end up soon with a Treurnicht, a Mulder, or perhaps even a Vorster, as president — or at some future date, under a new regime, with some other monster of a different hue. It is because even the most benign-appearing figure on the day of his election — and let us say at once that there don't seem to be any such in the running — could well become a monster before his seven years were up; especially when, as the

present proposals seem to suggest, he will be controlled neither by the voters nor the courts.

While the executive presidency proposals are terrifying the exclusion of blacks from the membership and consociational recommendations of the Council are fatal shortcomings which only some future miracle can make good. What black man could ever support the proposals of any constitutional body on which he had no representation? What black man could regard the recommendations of such a body, when they make provision for a kind of power-sharing between all the groups which were represented, and specifically exclude him from it, as anything but a ganging-up on him? And who else who isn't black could see them in any other way?

It is not enough, as some people seem to think, to have one or two sentences in the Report phrased so ambiguously that a friendly interpretation could mean that one day there might be a place for blacks somewhere in the dispensation proposed. The fact is that, as it stands, the President's Council Report still subscribes to the Nationalist Party dream that the place for black South Africans to exercise their political rights is in the homelands. And everything any Government spokesman, including the Prime Minister, has said since the Report appeared, confirms that they all still subscribe to that dream too.

As Reality has said often enough before, until that dream is abandoned and black leaders are drawn in at the very earliest stages to work out our common future with everyone else, all recommendations for that future will be built on sand.

The President's Council proposals as such offer no hope for the future. The hope they do offer is that they mark the beginning of a process from which it will be impossible to turn back and which will lead eventually to something like a new National Convention. It is of course this prospect which terrifies the Treurnichts. □