

ERNIE WENTZEL

So Ernie Wentzel has gone, and he has left a great hole behind him, not only in the hearts of his old friends in the Liberal Party, but also in the hearts of many people whose cause he defended, in the courts of law and many other places. He has also left a great hole in the hearts of many of his professional colleagues. His loss is of course most grievously felt by Jill, and by the children, Mark, Susan and Julian.

I am writing this short tribute mostly to express the great sense of loss felt by members of the old Liberal Party, and by all those who would describe themselves as liberals today. Ernie would not have objected to being called a democrat, or an out-and-out opponent of Apartheid and any other form of racialism. He would have jibbed at being called a socialist, because although he condemned the excesses of capitalism, he was totally opposed to any kind of centralised control of human society, whether it was political or social or economic. There was only one name that he would have accepted without reservation, and that was the name of liberal.

In a way I suppose this was not altogether fair, because he would have demanded the most comprehensive definitions of words like capitalism or socialism before he would have debated them. But not liberalism. Anyone in his or her right senses should know what it meant. He would have laughed to scorn those who thought liberalism meant some kind of namby-pambyism or naivety, or who thought that a liberal, if he were white, would say to the burglar, if he were black, "sit down, my good man, and have a cup of tea." Nothing annoyed him more than the cliché uttered by anti-liberal whites that blacks preferred Afrikaners to the English because Afrikaners were straight; they said they were going to flog you, and they did. But the English spoke nice words to you, and then flogged you just the same.

Liberalism for Ernie meant a total rejection of any kind of racial discrimination, an unquestioning devotion to the rule of law and therefore a total condemnation of detention without charge or access, a tolerance for otherness and therefore a tolerance of the opinions of others, with the exception of those he would have regarded as racialistic, totalitarian or extremely authoritarian.

HOSTILITY

Therefore one would expect that he would incur the hostility of all racialists, and also of course the hostility of all those who believed that Apartheid, or Separate Development, was the solution to the problems of South Africa. He saw clearly that Separate Development, however beautiful one could make it sound, could lead to nothing but injustice and deep resentment on the part of those who had to pay for it, who were almost without exception people who had no political power, which means people who were not white. He saw clearly that separate could not be equal, a truth that was affirmed by the Liberal Party when it came into being in 1953. This truth was affirmed — I would

guess totally and finally — in 1954 by the Supreme Court of the United States of America in its judgement in the historic case of *Brown v Board of Education, Topeka*. I do not doubt for a moment that those two affirmations — the one by the weak and the other by the mighty — which were so scorned by the Afrikaner National Party in its arrogant Verwoerdian days, are today, twenty years after Verwoerd's death, recognised, though only in part and very reluctantly, by the National Party.

I wrote above that it was natural that Ernie Wentzel should incur the hatred of the believers in Apartheid, some of whom asked the Government to make it treasonable to oppose it. The Government had sense enough not to enact such a law, but their chance to act "legally" against Wentzel came after Sharpeville in 1960, when a state of emergency was declared. He was among the large number of people detained, i.e. imprisoned, including some 20 members of the Liberal Party. I shall not say that his detention had no effect on him, but it certainly had no effect on his liberal beliefs. Of bitterness there was no sign in him whatsoever.

THE LEFT

He also incurred the enmity of some of what is called "the left". This was not only because of his rejection of any kind of centralised control of human life and society, but also because he could not believe that the end could ever justify the means. In the thirteen years of the Liberal Party we had members (but not many) who believed that if one's goal was a just society, one would be justified in using what could be called "illiberal" means. We had members (but not many, though one or two were prominent in the Party) who argued fiercely that a truly liberal state would have to force Afrikaners into schools where their language might not even be the medium of instruction. Ernie regarded this as liberalism gone astray.

Ernie also had admirers on "the left" though I never knew of any on "the right". Why should that be so? For at least two reasons I should think. One was that many on "the left" regarded him as a brave man, especially in his role as a lawyer. The second reason is that — so I suppose — liberalism lies between the radical left and the moderate centre. Therefore Ernie had friends of both the left and the centre.

This does not in the least alter the fact that he rejected totally the totalitarianism of the radical left, and poured ridicule on their belief that any kind of centralised power could bring Utopia. In fact he did not believe in Utopia at all.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Having been devoutly religious in his youth, having left the church for many years, during the last two years he returned to his religious beliefs and, when he thought that his life might be drawing to an end, to the practice of

communion. This must not be attributed to any kind of superstition, but to a recognition that there are things in heaven and earth that cannot be fully comprehended in terms of logic or science or morality, and to a desire on his part to acknowledge a Supreme Power and to humble himself before it. The apostle James wrote of this power that there is in it no variableness, neither shadow of turning. In many ways these words could be used of Ernie himself.

I end with some words of my own. I shall greatly miss Ernie Wentzel's gifts of wise and clear and undogmatic

judgement. If I wanted to obtain a sound judgement on P.W. Botha, Buthelezi and Inkatha, Cosatu, the UDF, the release of Mandela, judgements which I knew would be free from all spite or prejudice, I would always have gone to him if that had been possible. I have had to write the three most difficult chapters in the second volume of my autobiography, on Adrian Leftwich and the ARM, on John Harris and the bomb, and on Mandela and Rivonia. I am grateful that he had the opportunity to read these chapters before he died, and to give me his judgement and comments upon them, which were of great help to me.

May his soul rest in peace. □

By Ben Parker and Keyan Tomaselli

THE IMAGE OF AN 'OPEN' UNIVERSITY

University public relations officers are facing immense pressures as the economy worsens and as the press, businessmen and visiting 'experts' in economics, marketing and production complain about the unnecessary 'luxury' of university education. The short-term needs of the economy require technical expertise, they argue, and that is what universities should be concerned with.

This paper addresses the question of the image of the university in the present recessionary and politically volatile climate.

We'd like to begin this paper by reference to Kerr's Second Law, which we believe approaches the kernel of any university public relations problem. Kerr's Second Law reads:

In his dealings on the campus, a faculty member is an ultra-conservative, leaning slightly to the right of Herbert Hoover; (in South Africa, that would read Louis le Grange); in his dealings off campus with the general public his position is as a raging liberal far to the left of Karl Marx (1).

A schizophrenic existence, is the life of the average academic.

According to the Public Relations Institute of South Africa, "Public relations is the deliberate, planned and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its public" (2). This, it would seem, embodies a dual objective:

1. To evaluate what the public wants and to correlate one's policies and actions accordingly; and then
2. To keep the public informed, in order to win understanding, acceptance and cooperation.

We consider this to be an impossibility when the organisation in question is a university. Universities are not factories producing uniform products. The complement of PR is advertising. Where advertising persuades people to need things they don't want and to buy these with money they haven't got, PR would seem to be aimed at

maintaining an on-going relationship between the purchaser and the producer. Advertising, being media oriented, is the more remote form of persuasion. In contrast, PR is activity-oriented, and works through 'below the line' promotions through personal interactions, talks, conferences and displays. Where advertisers are shielded from face-to-face interaction with their target audiences, public relations officers are in direct contact and often bear the brunt of personally-expressed criticism against the products or institutions they represent.

CONTRADICTORY

Universities are contradictory institutions which relate to society in contradictory and confusing ways. Universities — English language universities, that is — are loosely administered, each department a virtual independent entity in terms of theoretical position, action, course orientation and so on. Even within departments, extreme differences of academic and political opinion occur, and are largely tolerated. There is no interference from anybody — except on occasion from faculty boards — in the way lecturers conduct themselves in terms of their disciplines.

On the one side are grouped the so-called 'liberal arts' courses which fall under the social science and arts faculties. Students to the left of Herbert Hoover tend to populate these faculties. To these we might add, depending on the university, faculties of law and medicine. Students and lecturers in these faculties are identifiable by their long hair, faded jeans and membership of the UDF and End Conscription Campaign. These individuals want to change the world.

To the right of Herbert Hoover are generally the engineering, science and commerce students and some staff. With some exceptions, these individuals are identifiable by their short hair, the wearing of ties, membership of the Students Moderate Alliance and an obvious disdain for arts students. These individuals will only change the world if their incomes are threatened.