

3 TWO BLACK FRIDAYS, OR ONE?

Parliament opened in Cape Town on January 23rd, a Friday, as is traditional.

One would have to look hard, back over the past seventy years, to find a session of Parliament which, for most South Africans, didn't turn out to hold in store for them worse things than those that had gone before.

The session that started this January promised to be no different. It was preceded by the banning of the country's two principal black newspapers, this coming in the midst of a sustained new attack on the press in general.

It followed soon after the announcement of a plan to introduce a new national identification system based on fingerprinting the whole population — to which the proper national response in a free country would surely be, "Go to hell!"

It was remarkable only for the government's restatement

of its support for the same old principles which have served us so badly in the past. Even the Prime Minister's emphatic rejection of the idea of ever having African representation on his President's Council was not new.

Can we expect anything better from the first session of the newly-elected Parliament which will start its life on some Friday after the end of April? If we can't, then any hope that the P.W. Botha ministry might somehow be able to start leading South Africa out of the dead-ends of the past will finally have to be abandoned. For if this is not an election to give him a mandate to do that, then it is quite pointless. After April, South Africa will not be able to afford any longer to be led by a Mr Botha who treads the same paralysed course he followed in 1980.

January 23rd looked set to be another Black Friday, ushering in another session of uncompromising government and dashed hopes. We dare not have two of those in one year. □

SOME QUESTIONS

By Vortex

An SADF spokesman recently referred to military service as "stepping out into adult life" and assured parents of trainees that their sons would return "as men".

This would seem to imply that manhood can only be achieved by learning to use a gun. But this view raises certain questions:

- (i) What is one to make of those white South Africans — ardent Nationalists — who refused the excellent opportunities for "adulthood" provided by the Second World War?
- (ii) How can one describe the pity that "patriotic" white South Africans must feel for those nations — Germany, France, Britain, New Zealand, for example — who have produced so very few men of late? (Perhaps this is a point that Dr Craven wishes to reinforce with his passion for sudden rugby tours?)
- (iii) What is one to say of black South Africans? They can hardly be expected to fight for their oppressors, so presumably if they wish to be men they are bound — indeed urged by the SADF — to slip over the border and join the liberation armies . . . □

WHAT IS CIVILIZATION?

By Vortex

A thoughtful person in Europe or North America might well say: "Civilization is a state of society in which the government has learned to adopt humane attitudes. Quite a good test is the question of punishment: by the late twentieth century truly civilized governments tend to have abolished the death penalty."

Most white South Africans would say: "Civilization is the traditional way of doing things in this country. It is what we are fighting to defend against the barbaric terrorists — people like Nujoma, Mugabe, etc. ."

The South African legal system hangs far more people per year than that of any other "Western" country. In his Christmas message Mr Mugabe of Zimbabwe predicted that there would be no hangings in his country while he is Prime Minister.

What is civilization? □