

MORE PERSECUTION

Thirty years of bannings and other harassments have had no more than a marginal effect on the volume of criticism and opposition directed against the Nationalist Government's policies. Yet despite the dismal failure of these instruments to achieve what they are presumably supposed to achieve—silence and acquiescence from apartheid's opponents—the authorities go blindly on wielding them. In recent weeks the Government has, amongst other things, first detained and then banned the PEBCO leaders of the campaign for better working conditions in Port Elizabeth; it has taken away the passport of Bishop Desmond Tutu, Secretary of the South African Council of Churches; its agents have questioned leading members of the Soweto Teachers' Action Committee, with the implication that it intends to ban them; and in Cape Town Rev. David Russell has been sentenced to a year in gaol for breaking his ban in order to attend the synod of the Anglican Church, and his secretary, Mrs Dot Cleminshaw,

has been sent to gaol for a month for refusing to pay the fine imposed on her for possessing two banned books, one about Steve Biko, the other about the post-Soweto riots.

All this to what purpose? None at all. Workers' demands for a greater share of the national cake won't disappear because PEBCO leaders are banned; the international Christian community will pay more attention, not less, to the views of Bishop Tutu, now that his passport has been confiscated; black opposition to the present educational system won't go away because some of its most articulate critics are silenced; and sending David Russell to prison for breaking his ban to go to his Church's synod, and Dot Cleminshaw for being in possession of those books, will certainly and rightly boost their standing at home and abroad.

Banning is a vicious exercise in futility. It should never have started and it is high time it stopped. □

MARGARET BALLINGER

Margaret Ballinger died shortly after our last issue went to press and so our tribute to her comes very late.

During the whole of her active life she was in the forefront of those who fought for the defence and extension of black South Africans' rights. She was tireless in this fight, brave however great the odds against her—and they were almost always overwhelming—brilliant in marshalling and presenting her invariably unpopular case. She was a founder-member of the Liberal Party of South Africa but, individualist that she was, one felt that the constraints imposed on her by party policy were often hard for her to bear, and that having been alone, and her own master, for so long, she sometimes looked back longingly to those days when she owed allegiance to no one but herself.

And in any event she was a Liberal of the old school, her

roots set in the soil of the pre-war years. The steady radicalisation of its policies which characterised the Liberal Party's development between 1953 and 1968 often made her feel uncomfortable. Yet it was this situation which brought out to the very best one of her most impressive qualities, her loyalty. Whatever she may have felt about the direction the Party was taking she stuck loyally by it until the day the Improper Interference Act closed it down. And indeed, in those last grim years, when the Party leadership and organisation had been decimated by bannings she came back to throw her full weight behind it in its battle for survival.

Margaret Ballinger was a person of great courage, character and talent. It is white South Africa's tragedy that it would not listen to her. □

SUBSCRIPTIONS

The Editorial Board very much regrets that it has been forced to raise subscriptions from R2 to R3 per annum, as from the next subscription due. Subscriptions provide only part of our income and we depend for survival on the generosity of those many readers who give us more than the minimum we ask for. But even that is not now enough to cover our costs, even less so since the new postal rates have increased the postage on each issue by 150%.

If you cannot manage the R3 please let us know and we will continue to send you REALITY at the old rate—but if you can manage R3 (or more!) it will be a great help to us. □