

2. CAMPUS NEWS

Campus News is a publication which has appeared once. We hope it won't again. That one issue was distributed by persons as yet unidentified at the beginning of the academic year on and around the premises of a number of South African universities, and through the post to a selected mailing list. It was a highly inflammatory and treasonable document, the substance of whose message was "students, get ready to join the armed liberation struggle". It purported to come from the National Union of South African Students.

For 35 years NUSAS has been one of the Nationalist Government's staunchest opponents. Indeed, one of the Nationalist Party's most spectacular failures has been in its educational policy. This was designed to produce compliant students, black and white, and failed to produce either. That failure has made NUSAS a prime target for the attentions of the security police for years and a favourite whipping-

boy for Prime Ministers and Cabinet Ministers, especially Ministers of Justice.

What then has been the Government's reaction to **Campus News**, which seemed to offer a heaven-sent opportunity to deal with this troublesome irritant once and for all? The answer is, precisely nothing. The smear was so outlandish that not even the Government could bring itself to take advantage of it.

NUSAS has laid a charge against "persons unknown" over the attempt the pamphlet makes to discredit it. We wait with considerable scepticism to see how much further than that the case ever gets. Smear literature in a variety of forms produced by "persons unknown", but with obvious access to sources of information available only to the Government, has been directed against opponents of the Nationalists ever since 1948. When last was one of them found by the police? □

3. PRESS FREEDOM

Like most authoritarian regimes the South African Government's support for the concept of the freedom of the press is strictly conditional. As long as journalists and newspapers keep reporting the kind of things it likes to see, they have no problems, but as soon as they start reporting things it does not like, it is liable to silence them, or to threaten to silence them, or to try to frighten them into silence. There have been several recent examples of this.

In the parliamentary debate on the Salem oil swindle the Government, for the first time, threatened the traditional right of the press to report everything said in Parliament. Its argument was that, because South Africa had to buy its oil on the black market, any publication of information indicating where that oil was coming from was a threat to the national interest, a breach of national security, part of the "total onslaught". As far as we understood the debate on the Salem affair, it was not designed by the Opposition to be any of these things but simply to show that the Government had been made a fool of by a bunch of international oil crooks, who had sold it the same oil as they had already sold to somebody else, and that this had cost the taxpayers a great deal of money. But perhaps, when you have been in power for 35 years, even to be shown to have been made a fool of begins to feel like a threat to national security.

Secondly, there was the banning of the issue of March 14th and the attack on the March 21st issue of **Newsweek**, whose cover story was on apartheid. Mr. Pik Botha, Minister of Foreign Affairs, described the second article as "an example of what the West means by freedom of speech — the right to lie, deceive and distort". Ironically its author, Holger Jensen, had been described in similar terms, hardly a week previously, by the Zimbabwean Government, for his reports

on events in Matabeleland. For those reports he received extensive coverage on SATV.

Certainly there were some inaccuracies in Mr. Jensen's apartheid article, but we doubt if many black South Africans would have regarded the general picture it presented as a distortion of the kind of lives they have to live. Why could not the Minister reply to the inaccuracies in **Newsweek** itself?

Finally, there is the case of Allister Sparks, the security police raid on his house, and the confiscation of many of his personal records. It is rumoured that this assault on Mr. Sparks was triggered off by reports he has been sending to the overseas press in which he has quoted a banned person, Mrs. Winnie Mandela. Since when has this been an offence? Banned people have been quoted outside South Africa ever since the law was passed to gag them inside the country. Why this sudden concern now?

We think there are probably two answers to that question. The first is that Mr. Sparks's reports to the outside world give an authentic picture of parts of South African life that the South African Government would rather the outside world didn't know about. The second is that the South African Government would like the outside world to forget that the Mandela family exists. This, Nelson Mandela in Pollsmoor Prison, and Winnie Mandela, in Brandfort, assisted by friends like Allister Sparks, won't let the outside world do. The raid on his home is probably only the first step in a campaign designed to frighten Mr. Sparks into silence.

Restrictions on press freedom in South Africa have been steadily extended since 1948. It seems that more may be on their way. □