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EDITORIALS



1. KEEPING CONTROL

Since Parliament rose the Prime Minister has taken two steps aimed, it is said, at moving South Africa away from the rigidities of Verwoerdian apartheid towards something more "relaxed". He has made appointments to the Cabinet and he has made appointments to his President's Council. The most important appointments to the Cabinet were those of Dr. Gerrit Viljoen, former head of the Broederbond, as Minister of Education, and of General Magnus Malan, former head of the Defence Force, as Minister of Defence.

The point not to be forgotten about the Cabinet and the President's Council appointments is that that is exactly what they are ----- appointments. No doubt Dr. Viljoen and General Malan will be found safe Nationalist seats which will, in time, return them to Parliament, but even within the limits of South Africa's strictly circumscribed democratic processes, this is an intrusion on the free choice of the voters. Even the local Nationalists aren't going to be voting for the man of their choice. They will be voting for the man of the Prime Minister's choice. This may not be very significant in a non-functioning democracy like ours, but it is, nevertheless, one further instance of the authoritarian imposition of what those at the top think is good for them, on those at the bottom who have never had any say in the matter.

It may be that the Prime Minister needs the support of such people to push through the ranks of Afrikanerdom the reforms which he and they think are essential for South Africa today, but the reforms they will be pushing through will be the ones THEY think are needed, which will by no means necessarily be the reforms which most of South Africa wants. To get this last kind of reform you need a Cabinet not appointed to suit the Prime Minister's book but one elected to reflect the aspirations of everybody.

Does the President's Council suggest a step in this direction? Hardly! Its members don't represent anyone. A fair proportion of them are unknown outside their immediate domestic circle. Some people who have agreed to serve say they will resign if black Africans are not appointed to it soon. Other people say they won't serve on it until they are. What prospect is there of this happening when it is not the President's Council which decides on changes in its composition, but the Nationalist Party caucus? When every single Nationalist Party Congress this year, including the Cape Congress, which the Prime Minister is supposed to be able to persuade to do almost anything he would like it to do, has come out firmly against it? Or what if the miracle were to happen and some Africans were to be appointed? Maybe they wouldn't represent

anyone either? What then? Or if the homelands agreed to join and urban Africans didn't, except through the kind of people who cannot raise 10 per cent of the vote in an Urban Council election?

Perhaps for Nationalists to sit down in a statutory assembly and talk about constitutional matters with members of the Indian, Coloured, Chinese and non-Nationalist white communities is an important psychological advance for them and that, as all those people seem to think, it means that real change is coming. Or perhaps it just means that the Prime Minister has decided that there are some changes he can now safely make without threatening his Party's position, which in fact might strengthen that position, because other people will benefit from them too, and so be drawn more closely to him. Meanwhile, control will stay firmly in his hands, and the future prospects of most of us will be at the disposal of people over whom we have no control whatsoever.

Is this second assessment just the cynic's view? There are two things which suggest not.

The first is the Prime Minister's continuing insistence that everything he is doing and planning is within the framework of apartheid. This means there is no place for Africans in planning the future of anything but the homelands. As we said earlier there hasn't been a Nationalist

Congress this year at which this standpoint hasn't been re-emphasised.

The second is the Prime Minister's refusal to have anything to do with the Buthelezi Commission. Here at least was a chance to talk about ways other than the separate development way out of our morass.

Mr Botha almost certainly boycotted the Commission for that reason. He is not prepared to talk outside the limits of apartheid and he is not prepared to take part in any discussions which are not under his control and which might reach conclusions he doesn't like. Control, his control, is basic to any change he might talk about.

Consultation, which is what the President's Council is about, leaves control firmly in the hands of those who have power. Negotiation implies that the moment has come to share it. Unless the President's Council becomes something it was never intended to be - a representative negotiating body working out a future for us based on the consent and support of most of our people - it will have nothing of substance to contribute to that future.

A total black boycott of it from the start might have forced the Prime Minister to turn it into that much sooner than is now likely to be the case.□

2. PARAMOUNT CHIEF SABATHA

At the beginning of August the Transkei Government deposed Paramount Chief Sabatha Dalindyebo from his position as head of the Tembu nation.

In announcing this step the Prime Minister of the Transkei, Chief George Matanzima, said it had been taken because Paramount Chief Sabatha had never shown any respect for his brother, Chief Kaizer Matanzima, as Transkei's Head of State.

If this was indeed Chief Sabatha's position it was one he shared with most of the rest of the world.

At the beginning of September Chief Bambilanga Mtirara, a half-brother of Sabatha, was installed as his successor. According to press reports the succession issue was decided behind closed doors at a meeting of members of the Dalindyebo and Matanzima families from which Sabatha's supporters were excluded. The press was also excluded, but members of the security police were not.

After this meeting the secretary of the Dalindyebo Regional Authority made it very clear that Chief Bambilanga

had not been appointed to act as regent for Sabatha's 14 year old son. He was now the new head of the Tembu nation in his own right and not acting for anyone.

So ends another episode in the long-drawn-out feud between Paramount Chief Sabatha and the Matanzima brothers. This feud stems partly from the fact that Sabatha's senior position to the Matanzimas in the Tembu hierarchy has always been a matter of bitter resentment to them; and it stems partly from the fact that Sabatha's vision of South Africa is a far more comprehensive one than the narrow tribalism of the Matanzimas. Unlike them, he was never an apartheid man.

Perhaps with the appointment of Chief Bambilanga the Matanzimas think that their troubles with the Dalindyebo family are over. We doubt it. For quite apart from any tribal ructions which may follow Chief Sabatha's deposing, his broad vision of a non-racial South Africa with equal rights enjoyed by everyone is likely to survive long after the restricted parochialism of the Transkei's present rulers has been thankfully forgotten.□