

# LIBERAL OPINION



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**EDITOR:**

Room 1, 268 Longmarket Street,  
Pietermaritzburg.

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## Non-Racialism at Work

THE 1961 National Congress of the Liberal Party in Durban was concerned primarily with redrafting Party policy to introduce a more radical note, and more of the "welfare state", into it. This year's Congress was not so much concerned to introduce new matter into the Party's programme as to restate its fundamental beliefs.

Since July 1961 there have been repeated calls from the Nationalist leadership for "white unity". This has been especially marked at the recent series of Nationalist Party congresses. It is an effective cry and many white non-Nationalists are seduced by it into believing that apartheid is their only hope. Many others conclude that opposition to Verwoerd is hopeless. Better to go along with Big Brother than to get in his way. In this context a Liberal Party Congress has a very special importance. It is a visible example of nonracialism at work and, as such, a challenge to all racialism and a sign of hope.

In apartheid South Africa it is some achievement to get together, from all corners of the country, 150 delegates prepared to stand up and be publicly counted as completely rejecting everything for which the present regime stands. This year this happened under the shadow of the two-month-old Vorster Act.

One of the main purposes of the Vorster Act

was to cow apartheid's opponents into silence. To this naïve hope of Mr. Vorster the public meeting with which the Congress opened—both audience and speakers—gave a straight answer.

Jean van Riet, isolated and undaunted Liberal from the depths of the Free State, spoke in simple terms of the suffering inflicted on African children in his home area by the Bantu Education Act. Then there was Selby Msimang, 75-year-old foundation member of the now-banned African National Congress, and later of the Liberal Party. Undeterred by 50 years of opposition to every Government South Africa has ever had, he committed himself once more to strive for a new South Africa in which all her people will live together as members of a single community. Finally, Alan Paton, undismayed by the recent attentions of the Special Police, emphatically reaffirmed his complete rejection of white supremacy and stated once more the Liberal creed—complete rejection of race as a yardstick of anything; belief in individual liberties guaranteed to all persons; committal to a democratic form of government; support for the rule of law.

### **Congress held in sad setting**

In case any of the delegates might forget, the closed sessions of the Congress were held in a setting designed to remind them of what the practical effects of apartheid can be. They took place at Christ the King Priory, Sophiatown, Johannesburg, the old headquarters of Father Trevor Huddleston. In the Huddleston era "Christ the King" was the centre of a teeming community.

Now it stands alone, in a vast and uninhabited expanse from which the African people of Sophiatown, whose presence there was an affront to apartheid, have been cleared. Around the Priory the foundations of demolished homes push up through the earth, mounds of rubble lie here and there, potholed strips of tar show where the roads once ran. It is a dismal scene of senseless waste. Against this sad background the Priory struggles to survive.

Here the delegates to the Liberal Party Congress met, on September 1st and 2nd, in the old school buildings. The simultaneous translation

system, which the Natal Congress of the Party pioneered in South Africa, handled speeches in English, Zulu, Sesotho and Afrikaans and was responsible for the work of Congress being disposed of much more smoothly and quickly than in the past. From the discussions certain tasks emerge for the next year.

Firstly, Liberals must go on stating their principles clearly and often, Vorster Act or no Vorster Act. They will do this at public and private meetings and, when it is thought suitable, in elections.

Secondly, the training of members in the basic principles of democracy and political organisation must be maintained and, resources permitting, extended. The Nationalists are steadily circumscribing the political rights of those who have them and are making sure that those who have not, don't get them. If there is to be any democratic experience and tradition left when the Nationalists go, it will have to be built by their opponents. Liberals, with access to every part of the community, have a special function in this field.

We must continue to resist the implementation of apartheid at all levels. This means exposing and opposing the Transkei "independence" proposals, the "black spot" removals and the plan to eject all Africans from the Western part of the Cape Province. At the local level it means job

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*A survey undertaken by the Natal Liberal Party Youth Group into the unemployment of the Coloured community in Pietermaritzburg shows that of the persons interviewed 71% were unemployed. Of these, only 48% qualified for benefits, while 27% had been unemployed for longer than one year.*

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reservation, group areas removals and the transfer of control of education from the Provinces to the central Government.

We must publicise the economic effects of race discrimination. Surveys into rents in the African townships of Johannesburg by the Party were largely instrumental in having the whole system of rent prosecutions changed last year. A survey

into unemployment in Pietermaritzburg revealed the terrible waste of talent which the building recession has inflicted on the Coloured community.

We must get people to stand up for their rights, both black and white people. Black South Africans have been subjected to a system of white supremacy for so long that many of them accept humiliations without question. White South Africans have in many cases been drained of the will to oppose anything the Government does.

Finally, we must build a growing and organised following committed to the non-violent defeat of apartheid. We must develop techniques of resistance which can be used under the increasing difficulties with which we expect to be met in the future. Non-violence must be regarded not simply as a negative rejection of violence but as the only positive way to put an end to apartheid, while laying foundations for a nonracial future.

**T**HE following Liberal Party office-bearers were elected

- (a) at the National Congress:  
National President: **Alan Paton.**  
National Vice - Presidents: **Jordan Ngubane, Jack Unterhalter, and Jean van Riet.**
- (b) at the National Committee meeting following the Congress:  
National Chairman: **Peter Brown.**  
National Deputy-Chairmen: **David Craighead and Randolph Vigne.**  
National Treasurer: **Elliot Mngadi.**

## The Lost Generation

By Professor Leo Kuper

(Former Chairman of Natal Coastal Region  
of the Liberal Party)

**A**FRICAN education in South Africa has now collapsed. Few African students qualify from the schools for admission to the African tribal universities, and the tribal universities

themselves are a travesty of academic training.

All this was predicted by the critics of the Government's Bantu Education policy. The consequences were so obvious that it is difficult to believe they were not intended. Still, motives are difficult to analyse. In some circles an equality of education between whites and Africans was deeply repugnant, indeed almost sacrilegious.

In other circles, there was no doubt a sincere belief that Africans could be educated within the framework of apartheid policy. Or the policy itself was rationalised in many ways—that it is frustrating to educate Africans for positions which are not available; that in the present stage of African education, literacy for the masses is more important than the quality of higher education. In any event, whatever the motives, the system of apartheid education was an essential element in the blueprint for white domination.

The necessity arises from the disproportion in number between the Afrikaners and the Africans. If Africans could be fragmented into tribal groups, then the Afrikaners would be the largest group and invulnerable, holding as they do the command positions in state bureaucracy and army.

Tribal fragmentation is attempted under the system of Bantu Authorities. This involves the revival, at the level of propaganda, of the powers of the chief. The local authority is built round the chief, and local authorities are linked into regional and territorial authorities. An elaborate comic opera is staged in this process.

Beneath the superficial comedy lies the deep tragedy of Bantu Authorities. The powers of the chiefs are illusory. They are assimilated to the lower levels of the civil service, a sort of *lumpen* bureaucracy. If they oppose the Government, they face exile and destitution. If they act as agents for the Government in implementing the hated policies of apartheid, then they arouse the anger of their fellow tribesmen.

Much of the fragmentation into tribal groups rests ultimately on force, and some of the repression applied in such rural areas as Zeerust, Sekhukuniland and Pondoland dwarfs, in its horror, the more dramatic violence of Sharpeville. This is one aspect of the implementation of policy.