

questions are begged – if we can now see the same film in different houses (a step forward) why not the same film in the same house? As Nero might have said, “How can I complete the harmony, this is only the beginning of the second movement”.

Then there are the recommendations which are predicated on the sound assumption that the “Coloured” people, as the victims of circumstances over centuries, are in need of not only the removal of some restrictions, but of positive help to enable them to compete in an open society, or to achieve such a measure of prosperity and communal welfare that they have no desire to compete or participate in the “White” dominated areas. The Coloured Development Corporation should be given greater scope to assist in the development of “Coloured” owned and managed business enterprise; people should be given greater assistance in dealing with credit and hire purchase arrangements; training centres for apprentices should be developed; the “tot” system should be abolished; far more resources should be devoted to education at all levels from nursery schools to the university, with higher education falling under the Department of National Education and more generous subsidy formulae than those used for the older universities being applied to the University of the Western Cape; District Six, Woodstock and Salt River should be proclaimed “Coloured” areas; additional resources should be devoted

to the promotion of family planning.

If the government responds positively to the recommendations that an end should be made of a mass of petty restrictions upon the freedom of “Coloured” people to live their lives according to their own choice, then the Commission will have been worthwhile and will have signified more than nothing – albeit stating no more than the self-evident. If the government responds generously to the recommendations that the “Coloured” people be given assistance to reach levels of housing, education and social welfare equivalent to the “Whites”, then again, the effort will have been worthwhile. But since the Commission failed to grasp the fundamental issue of classification in its recommendations if not in its deliberations, and failed to confront the government with the real political demands of the “Coloured” people, it has come nowhere near offering a solution to “the Coloured Problem”. Whether through wilful blindness or through the understandable belief that to ask for what might be granted is better than to ask for what is really needed, is neither here nor there – it has missed the point. The “Problem” remains, and will only be resolved when the term “Coloured” and its various synonyms is removed from the statute book. Once that step is taken, perspectives will be a little clearer on the problems of poverty, ignorance and anomie with which the Commission could do no more than fiddle.□

## SOME NOTES

# ON THE BRITISH CONNECTION

by Eric Harber (in Britain)

English speaking people living in South Africa are rather like those American citizens of, was it Arizona, who bought London Bridge thinking it was the original article and set it up in the desert with an artificial river and a fleet of red buses to carry the excited tourists to and fro. They were a little disappointed to find that it wasn't the original bridge and it didn't have castellated towers but they believed in it all the same. It was highly profitable and enjoyable for them to believe in it. They never told their visitors that it was only 150 years old and was in danger of falling down and needed to be rebuilt on sounder foundations. So it is for those who believe that Britain is a civilised society that its “most crucial social arrangements are based on the notion of fair play, mutual considerateness, and common sense”. This is a quotation from Colin Gardner's article on Britain that appeared in “Reality” recently. No doubt the purpose of this article was partly

to persuade the readers, if they were not persuaded already, that these principles and the institutions that practised them were a **very good idea**, but Professor Gardner, apart from the rhetorical proviso of “British society is far from perfect”, clearly believes what he says to be true and wishes everyone to believe this also. I would like to argue that his view of Britain is unreal and sentimental, especially when he says that the characteristic bents of public life in Britain are “intelligence, courtesy, outspokenness and relaxation”. This view is possible only to one who does not venture much beyond the congenial atmosphere of a university common room, when visiting Britain.

Democracy as it has been practised in the West has not moved very far away from the paradigm of a slave society. Slavery was abolished or officially abolished a mere 140 years ago, but the effective enslavement of the colonies by Britain and the other colonial countries lasted until they

were granted independence, and then carried on (metaphorically) by powerful commercial interests after that. The ethics of "democracy", was and still is the survival of the fittest. Those who have succeeded and who do succeed are only those who minimise their obligations and responsibilities towards their fellow men. In this way, and I feel rather apologetic that I should be introducing this vulgar consideration, over the last century or so vast resources of wealth have been built up. It matters little that latter-day socialists – or those that pass for socialists – should now have their eyes on these spoils and want them shared out more fairly. In the twentieth century democracy has caught on even among thieves when the spoils are big enough (witness the "great" train robbers). What would happen if they weren't? But thieves never share with those they have robbed.

Before it became obvious that Britain was slowly trundling "down hill" there was some thought among the more altruistic socialists that 1% of the GNP (or was it of the year's taxes?) should be given back to those from whom it was taken but that idea has been scuttled, and will soon be rusty and unsalvageable. (Moreover, even if that 1% were allocated as AID, tied to the benefit of the country that offered it, it **would be tied**.) In short, to give a simple and obvious example, the slaves who dig up gold on the reef for the benefit of British shareholders and to subsidise the standard of living of the working class in Britain do not have a voter in Britain or one solitary person to represent their interests there. Why should they? The idea is absurd! The highest principle of democracy is sovereignty, so how could Britain interfere in the internal affairs of South Africa? Thus democratic Britain is generally saved the trouble of putting a steel-toed boot into refractory workers, as she has always been in bygone days; in Portugal which used to be a British colony, economically speaking, or in Argentina. (I won't advert to the treatment of the Kikuyu in Kenya, when they were regarded as a nuisance, or the mine-workers in Rhodesia.)

Professor Gardner argued – or claims – for he doesn't offer any evidence for what he says – that there is plenty of public discussion in Britain about the "burning issues of the day". I would claim equally that there is little or no public discussions about the **burning** issues of the day. Public discussions are carefully damped down so that they become refined versions of the old Roman circuses. They pander very effectively to British prejudices; consider the drama of seeing an affluent and squeaky trade union leader reputedly left wing, but oozing hypocrisy, making a fool of himself by

losing his temper with some smoothly arrogant upper class proprietor or company director over wages and prices.

Public discussion is only about occurrences that are ancient history (when one considers the pace of modern life); there is always a carefully calculated time-lag to make public opinion ineffective. Two examples should suffice. Firstly it has long been known that in the words of a high court judge "Birmingham is synonymous with corruption". Men have been in and out of prison for the many frauds that occurred there. But only in February 1976 did BBC television decide that Birmingham's massive corruption was a respectable subject for investigation; that it had become a British institution; safe if just a little dangerous like a bomb from the second world war. And so too with Angola: for months and months, there was no information about major and minor power involvement, not a word. Not until it was no longer possible for public opinion to be anything other than harmless.

The subject that Britain should be debating is whether the whole terms of their acquisitive society should not be changed to make ultimate survival possible and happy while yet there is time. Instead one of the strongest lines in propaganda that comes across is that North Sea Oil is a wonderful thing and we should all believe in it and squander it. The television propaganda managers are carefully injecting it into our bloodstream. Perhaps one day it will come out of the water taps so that the point is driven home. Oil is energy and life. The last thing any authority wants at a time of economic uncertainty is that people should start to question the basis of their existence.

Finally, it should be said that it is thanks as much to the continuing British connection as anything else that South Africa is the way it is. British writers and influential and powerful men (like Trollope and Milner) were racists and helped to create the view that negroes were right at the bottom of the intelligence pyramid as established by various forms of social Darwinism. Baden-Powell administered the pass laws after British civil servants had given them powerful locking jaws. In the fifties, British police advised the South African police when active opposition was anticipated and were in a good position to do so with all their experience with the Irish. The Irish? I had forgotten about them. But then Britain has found the usual democratic solution to the Irish problem; detention without trial, disorientation, torture, midnight police raids, smashing up houses of untried suspects. Not very intelligent, courteous or relaxed, but necessary when your civilisation has created problems you cannot and don't want to solve.□

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## ANOTHER ARTICLE BANNED

Once again the material on which a Reality article was based has been banned and, in consequence, the article has had to be withdrawn.

In this case we had intended publishing a review of the recently published papers of an important Black conference held in 1974.

We protest against this intrusion on our right to decide for ourselves what we should read and publish. Not only do we regard it as objectionable, it is also highly dangerous. If our society is ever to make the radical changes necessary to establish peace, contentment and stability, it should be opening its eyes and ears to new Black thinking, not closing them.