

2. SOME LIGHT

This past year has seen some really important judgements in the South African courts. Led by the Natal Supreme Court they have struck some powerful blows for the citizen against the state.

The Natal Court's judgement which led to the release of the UDF leaders in Natal from detention a year ago, and its later ruling that they should be allowed bail, has been followed by perhaps the most important judgement given since the inception of the present security system. That judgement is discussed in detail in an article in this issue.

Its importance is not simply limited to the legal issues involved and to the fact that it led to the release from detention of Paddy Kearney. To the layman it seems almost to have put new heart into the judiciary. It has been followed by the release, under threat of similar approaches to the courts, of other detainees, but as important, by a series of court rulings, not limited to Natal, restraining the security police from using improper interrogation methods against a whole series of detainees. A little ray of light

and hope has been introduced into those dark corridors where the security police have often seemed free to do as they pleased.

The Supreme Court is a powerful body of eminent men backed by an office and tradition of independence which makes it possible for them to give judgements the state won't like and still enjoy the support of their colleagues. Dr. Wendy Orr was in no such position. She was a 24-year-old District Surgeon amongst whose duties was the medical care of detainees in two Port Elizabeth prisons. Her immediate superior was one of the Biko doctors. There was no precedent, so far as we know, for any District Surgeon challenging the security police. From this unpromising background she became the main applicant in a successful application to the Supreme Court preventing the security police from assaulting detainees in the two prisons for which she was responsible. Her judgement was that this was what the Hippocratic Oath required of her. Her reward from her colleagues for this lonely act of heroism seems to have been their silent hostility. But to many others her action has come as a challenge and an inspiration. □

3. UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE IN AN UNDIVIDED SOUTH AFRICA

This is what the State President told the Cape Congress of the Nationalist Party was now official policy. We hope that it is. Because if that objective is really

accepted there is plenty of room for negotiation over the details of the framework within which it might operate, and at the end of it all could lie peace. □

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