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EDITORIAL

THE WHITE POLITICAL SCENE

Interesting things have been happening across the whole White South African political scene. There are signs of movement almost everywhere.

On the extreme right Dr. Albert Hertzog's Herstigte Nasionale Party, the people who left the Nationalist Party because it was getting too liberal, increased its share of the vote in two recent Transvaal byelections. It did so by taking votes from the two parties nearest to it on the political spectrum, the Nationalists and the UP (which of these is to the right of which is not always easy to decide). In the Middelburg constituency, for example, the Herstigte vote increased from 873 in 1970, to 1 674 in 1974, to 2 353 in 1975, while the Nationalist vote dropped from 6 047 to 5 238 to 4 774, and the UP's from 2 974 to 2 066 to 1 662. The loss in Nationalist votes to the Herstigtes is almost certainly due to minor apartheid relaxations, like those in sport and in theatres and hotels, and to the erosion of the industrial colour bar. These 'betrayals' of Nationalist principles at home, added to the 'betrayal' of the White Rhodesians, through Nationalist pressure to settle with the ANC, gave the

Herstigtes just the kind of emotional election appeal that the Nationalists themselves have used for so long and so successfully in constituencies like Middelburg. It would have been surprising if it hadn't paid dividends. So far there have been few panic reactions amongst Nationalists to this slight swing against them amongst the faithful.

The UP losses are yet another sign of the decline of the party which once occupied the middle ground in White politics. Having discarded its reformist Harry Schwarz wing, which was trying to wake it up to the urgent need to adapt itself to the realities of South Africa in 1975, the party now seems to be firmly under the control of its conservatives, people more reactionary than many Nationalists. For many years the United Party could claim that, whatever else its faults, at least it stood For the Rule of Law and fair trial in open court. Then it agreed to serve on the Schlebusch/Le Grange Commission. For three-and-a-half years now its representatives have served as Members of a commission of politicians which sits in secret, denies effective legal representation to the people brought before it,

refuses them the right to cross-examine their accusers and, often, the right even to know who those accusers are. When the interim report of the Commission on NUSAS, which was endorsed by its UP members, was used to ban student leaders, the UP wrung its hands in apparent horror, protesting that it had no idea that its recommendations would be used in this way. How else might they have been used? And even if the UP Commission members were so naive in February 1973 what can they say in mitigation now when the Commission's report on the Christian Institute has been used to declare it an 'affected organisation' and so cut it off from the overseas church funds which were the main source of its income? Taking part in secret, non-judicial trials from which flow devastating punishments of individuals and organisations is a poor way of defending the Rule of Law.

Having abandoned over the years most of the worthwhile things it once stood for, it is not surprising that the UP, with its present largely conservative parliamentary membership, should be casting glances to the right, as it searches for a role for itself. Any inclination it had to move to the Left must have disappeared when the reformists were expelled, and the Middelburg election result shows that it isn't getting anywhere by staying where it is. Reports that the UP caucus has discussed coalition with the Nationalists have been brushed off, though not denied, by Party leaders; but they have not repudiated the now famous article written for the Nationalist paper, *Die Burger*, by their Schlebusch/Le Grange Commission member, Oxford graduate Bill Sutton. Since its involvement in the Commission more than one member of the UP has propounded the case for a joint Government/Opposition approach to the question of security, the argument being that the times are too serious and the question too important for it to be dealt with in any way other than through a 'national' consensus. The article in *Die Burger* ranged more widely than that. Mr. Sutton argued that the West had lost faith in itself and its role in the world; it had given way to permissiveness and a lack of personal discipline; it had failed to counter the Communist offensive in the Third World because it had not asserted the superiority of its own methods of social organisation and had failed to show, as it could confidently have done, that these would not only produce greater development than Communist methods but that they would preserve individual freedom at the same time. All this he saw as an abdication of responsibility and a failure of faith in the destiny of the Christian West, a weakness to which the Afrikaner people had not succumbed. He congratulated the Nationalist Party on its stand against permissiveness (a stand, he claimed, which was supported by the silent majority in the West), and went on to say that the Afrikaners could lead a revival of Western self-confidence by fearlessly putting the arguments for the Western way of ordering society to the Third World people of Africa. However, he said, the Afrikaner people could not do this alone. The weakness of the Nationalist Party was its attempt to enclose the Afrikaner people in a protective laager, its reluctance to let them come out of the laager and fight advancing Communism with those others who believed that the Christian West could still win the battle for the hearts of the people of the Third World. If Afrikaner Nationalists would have the courage to come out of their laager of exclusiveness they would find many English-speaking people waiting to join them in this battle.

This may not be direct coalition talk but it is certainly kite-flying. No doubt there are many UP members, worn out by

27 years of losing support and abandoning principles, who would like to be on the winning side for a change. The question is whether the Nationalists would want them. Not only would they dilute the Afrikaner image of the party, they might also dilute the verligte image it seems to be trying to cultivate.

One comes now to the Progressive Reform Party, launched at the end of July by the merging of the 17-year-old Progressive Party, and the Reform Party, consisting of people who left the United Party when Mr. Harry Schwarz was expelled earlier this year. The merger makes sense. White South Africa certainly couldn't afford two parties whose views were so close to one another's. Time is too short for that. As for what we know of the new party's policies, there seems to be some sense in them. The clear commitment to a Bill of Rights, the Rule of Law and an independent judiciary is admirable. The aim of free, compulsory education for everyone and the removal of all discriminatory laws must be supported by all reasonable people. On the question of political organisation and the proposed franchise requirements for voter qualification, however, Reality has reservations. It seems that the organisation of the new state is to be federal and that voting qualifications will vary from state to state within the federation, that these qualifications will be non-racial but that they will be based on educational qualifications for half the roll, while proportional representation will operate on the other half of the roll. We have no objections in principle to a federation but we do have objections to yet another complicated voting system. It may be a difficult step for a new party seeking the support of White voters to take, but for our part we would have liked to see it come out boldly for universal suffrage in each constituent state of the federation.

One of the most important statements made at the launching of the Progressive Reform Party was the one in which Mr. Colin Eglon, its leader, committed the party to the calling of a fully representative National Convention, as soon as it was in a position to do so. This would involve all the people of South Africa in working out the institutions for a new society. Reality has often contended that this will be the first essential step towards solving the enormous problems of creating an acceptable society here. Whatever goes before that is only preparation. The new party has an important role to play in preparing people for that occasion, however distant it may now appear to be. And in preparing them for it there will be no point in pretending to White South Africans that they will be living in anything but a society with a majority of Black voters. We hope that these new franchise proposals will not be used to disguise that fact. White voters have to be prepared for radical, not cosmetic, change, if they are to be able to accept it reasonably gracefully when it comes.

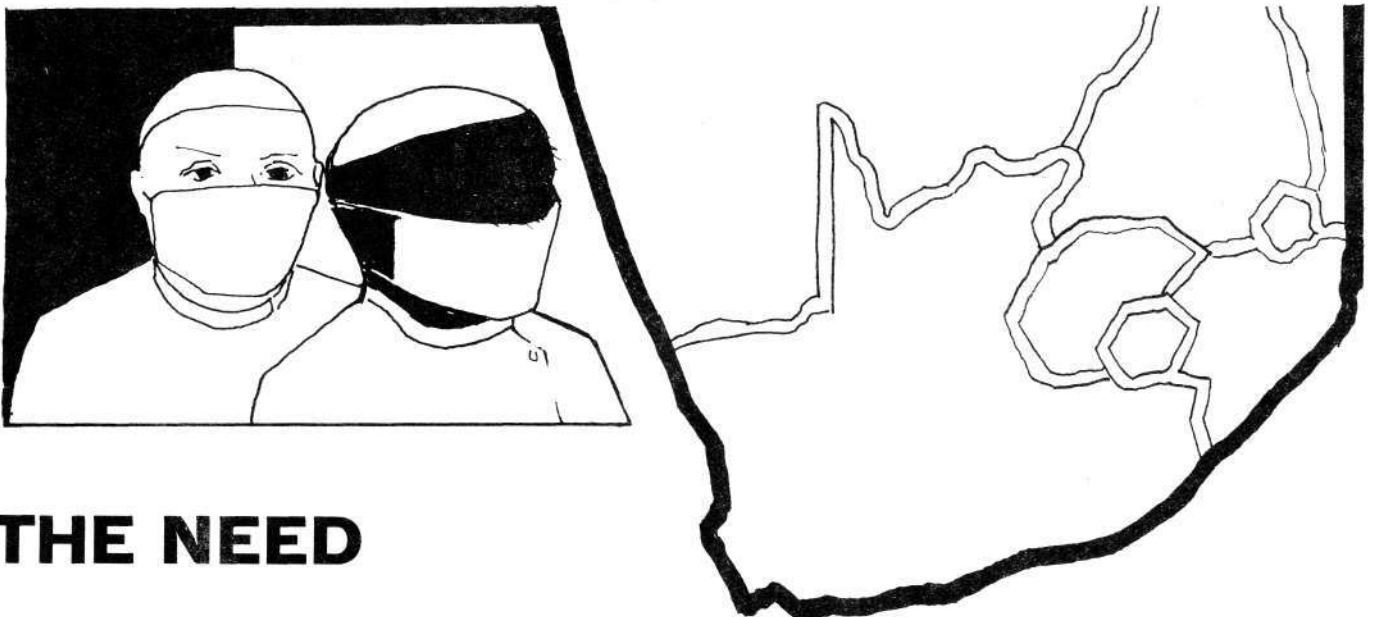
The new ferment in White politics is good. We hope Mr. Vorster will not be deterred by the rumbling on his right from his rather fumbling attempts to come to terms with the times. There is no time for retreat now. If relatively peaceful change is to come to South Africa the dismantling of apartheid must be greatly accelerated, not slowed down. Mr. Vorster must get on with this job, even if it costs him parliamentary seats and raises before him the spectre too awful to any Nationalist of a substantial split in Afrikanerdom. The only way he can ensure for his people a reasonable life in Africa is by showing that what Mr. Pik Botha told the UN is true—race discrimination (and that means apartheid) as the basis for South African society is on the way out. Mr. Vorster enjoys sufficient

support among Afrikaners to be able to follow this line and still win elections.

As for the UP, it is high time for it to disappear, its conservative wing either joining the Nationalists or, for preference, vanishing altogether. Japie Basson, Nic Olivier, Eric Winchester and Co. should join the Progressive Reform Party. At least then most of the people in White party politics who are committed to the removal of race discrimination in South Africa would be working together and not be at one another's throats. And, as we have already said, most important of all is that the new party should not succumb to the temptation to play down the more radical parts of its policy for fear of frightening voters away. White South Africans must be made ready for fundamental change. If the Progressive Reform Party gets on with the job of preparing them for that it will be doing something worthwhile even if it never becomes either official Opposition or

Government. It will at least have made more possible the calling of the non-racial National Convention to which its statement of policy commits it.

As for Reality, we too will continue to argue the case for the kind of society we want to see—one in which every adult will enjoy the vote, every person will enjoy equal opportunity in every field, basic civil liberties will be protected, and deliberate steps will be taken to eliminate the inequities in wealth, education and social services which have scarred our national life for so long. Unlike Mr Bill Sutton we do not think that the way to convince Africa of the merits of the ways of the West is through taking a leaf out of the Nationalist book. We think this could be done much better by removing all bars between any man and his full participation in a democratic society, of which he would then be able to feel that he was a real and respected part. □



THE NEED FOR DOCTORS IN SOUTH AFRICA

by Peter Cooper; South African Medical Scholarships Trust, Cape Town, 1974.

Reviewed by Marie Dyer

The South African Medical Scholarships Trust is an independent body, under the chairmanship of Dr Marius Barnard, founded in 1972 to take over the medical scholarships programme which had been initiated by NUSAS in 1965. The Trust provides scholarships in the form of interest-free loans, repayable after graduation, to medical students who need money to complete their training. (In 1974, 51 students were assisted with a total amount granted of R10 150).

The writer of this booklet was in 1974 a final-year medical student at the University of Cape Town and a member of the Board of Trustees. His study goes much beyond the immediate need for adequate financing of medical students. It demonstrates the critical shortage of doctors and other medically trained professional workers (like dentists, pharmacists and nurses) in large areas of South Africa, and suggests the need for some alterations in the whole structure of medical education in the country.