

makes it impossible to act upon this suggestion. But we have no objection to any progressive group translating and reprinting, with due acknowledgment, material from this magazine.

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We wish to congratulate Mr. Duma Nokwe, a frequent and valued contributor to our journal, on his recent admission to the Transvaal Bar, the first African to be so admitted.

The Story of the Coloured Vote, and

THE MYTH OF "CAPE LIBERALISM"

By "AUSI"

UNLESS its proceedings are ruled invalid, the Joint Parliamentary Session has at last destroyed the voting rights held by a section of the Cape electorate for more than a century. It is no condonation of this destruction of rights to point out that by 1956 the Coloured vote had itself dwindled to little more than a token: the shadow rather than the substance of democracy. The weight and effectiveness of the Coloured vote had, over a period of many years, both before and after Union, been steadily whittled away. In a very real sense, the death-knell of the Non-European franchise had been tolled not in 1956, but in 1909 and 1910, when the Act of Union was adopted by the Cape Parliament and endorsed by the Westminster Parliament.

To understand the full significance of the process which culminated at this year's Joint Session, we should briefly retrace the story of the Cape franchise up to the betrayal of 1910, paying particular attention to the rather shady and sinister role played by so-called Cape Liberalism.

It took a long time for representative institutions and self-government to come to the Cape Colony. Britain had captured the Colony, with a population of about 75,000, in 1806: thirty years after the

American War of Independence. But it was not until 1854 that the Colonists were allowed to elect representatives under a constitution: and even then what they elected was not really a law-making assembly but little more than an advisory board. Essential power was held by the British-appointed Governor. This was called "Representative Government." The next step—"Responsible Government"—was not reached until 1872, when the Cape was governed by Parliament with a Prime Minister and a Cabinet, much as we know it today, modelled after the British House of Commons.

This delay was not through want of trying by the Colonists. In 1827, 1832 and 1834 they submitted petitions asking for the right of self-government, but each time they were rebuffed by Britain, on the ground that the time was "not yet ripe." In 1836, however, an ordinance provided for the election of Municipal Boards—the forerunner of the present City and Town Councils. There was no colour bar in these regulations. As a matter of fact, a Coloured man was elected as Wardmaster in a Cape Town Ward.

One of the reasons advanced in Britain for the continual delay in granting self-government was the fear that the dominant White section would oppress the Non-Whites in the Colony. Even at that time scandalous stories of South African treatment of Non-Whites had outraged British public opinion. In 1841 the Colonists submitted a further Petition to Westminster, asking for self-government. Refusing it, on the usual grounds that the time was not ripe, the Colonial Secretary added that "representative institutions might be perverted into a means of gratifying the antipathies of a dominant caste or of promoting their own interests or progress at the expense of other and less powerful classes."

The Colonists vigorously rebutted these implications. They had developed increasingly sharp differences with the British Government and the stifling, autocratic administration of the British Governors sent to the Cape. In 1820 there had been a big influx of British settlers to the Eastern Cape, mostly people of working-class origin, impatient of despotic rule, and the emancipation of the slaves in 1836 had evoked a rebelliousness of which the angry departure of the trekkers was only one symptom. The Colonists virtuously declared that they had no intention of oppressing anyone; they were quite prepared, said their spokesmen, to accept a Constitution that would not discriminate on grounds of race or colour. Ultimately the British had to make concessions under pressure. It is very doubtful whether their long delays were really motivated by concern for the Non-Whites of the Cape as much as their desire to retain their control over the Colony for selfish imperialist reasons. But the readiness of the Cape Colonists to accept a non-discriminatory franchise removed the moral justification upon which the British had so long relied in withholding them a Constitution.

The Constitution of 1854 provided for a representative council to be elected by every man who was a British subject over the age of 21—provided that he owned a house or land worth at least £25, or earned a salary of at least £50 per year. These figures for the "income-bar" may not seem very high—but it should be remembered that money was

worth a great deal more in those days. There was no colour-bar in the voters' roll, but not many Non-Europeans were wealthy enough to earn the vote. From the beginning, the Whites were sure of a safe majority.

In 1854 there were few Africans living in the Cape Colony, and at first all the Non-White voters were Coloured men. But in his speech from the throne to the first Parliament of the Cape Colony in 1855, the Governor, Sir George Grey announced the new policy of extending the frontiers of the Colony by annexing the independent African areas on its borders—the Ciskei and Transkei. This expansionist policy not only resulted in adding large additional territories to the Colony, but it also added, between 1865 and 1894, one million African people to the Cape population.

In 1872 with the granting of Responsible Government, far more powers had come to the Cape Parliament. They used these powers, among other things, to pass harsh anti-African legislation. For example, the Masters and Servants Act of 1856, as amended in 1875, made it a criminal offence for an African to be absent from work, late, or even careless. Pass laws, location regulations and other unlovely laws of South Africa began to develop in the "liberal" Cape a hundred years ago. The fears expressed by the Colonial Secretary in 1841 seemed to be justified.

UNITY FOR REACTION

But with the incorporation of the Transkei and Ciskei a new factor appeared to threaten the Baasskap State that was developing in the Cape—the growth of the African vote. In 1882 the African vote was only 14 per cent of the total electorate. In 1886 it was 47 per cent. Although new to the Parliamentary system, this electorate was beginning to become organised and articulate. Panic seized the Parliamentary Parties or groups of the Colony, and they decided to sink their differences in a common effort to disfranchise the Africans.

There were three such Parties or groups:— the Afrikaner Bond, of the Western Cape, led by "Onze Jan" Hofmeyr, and dominated by the big wine-farmers; the jingoistic Party of Sir Gordon Sprigg, representing the predominantly English-speaking merchants and farmers of the Port Elizabeth, East London and Grahamstown districts; and the group of independent Liberals, such as Sir James Rose-Innes, Mr. J. X. Merri-man, and Mr. J. H. Sauer, who often owed their Parliamentary seats largely to the African vote.

The first measure to reduce the African vote was the Parliamentary Registration Bill—called "Sprigg's Purge," which was supported by the Bond. It provided that a share of communal or tribal occupation of land and buildings should not entitle a man to vote. Thus 30,000 Africans—from 90 to 95 per cent of the African electorate—were removed from the voters' roll.

But even this drastic purge did not satisfy the masters of South Africa's new mining industry, its farms and commercial enterprises, greedy for a flow of cheap forced labour, and determined to break the

political power of the Africans. In July 1890, the Sprigg Ministry fell, and Cecil Rhodes, backed by the Afrikaner Bond, and by the Liberals, Rose-Innes, Sauer and Merriman, came into office as Prime Minister. Rhodes had promised to raise the qualifications of African voters. He had undertaken to make the future safe for "White South Africa"—and, one would add, for the mining investors. William Plomer mentions in his book on Rhodes how that "Empire-builder" changed his slogan on the eve of the general election. Previously he had proclaimed "Equal rights for all White men South of the Zambesi." But now, mindful of the many African and Coloured voters, he changed the slogan to one of "Equal rights for all civilised men south of the Zambesi."

In 1892, Rhodes, supported by the aforesaid Liberals, introduced the Native Franchise Act of 1892, which raised the qualification for future voters to £72, and provided that every applicant for registration as a voter should sign his name and write his address and occupation in the presence of the registering officer. Despite an outcry from Non-White voters and an appeal to the Imperial Parliament in London, the Act was passed. Its immediate effect was that in 1893 the Non-European voters decreased by 3,348 and the European voters increased by 4,536.

The Liberals satisfied their consciences by pointing out that no-one had formally been excluded from the franchise by reason of race or colour, and it was true that the restricting laws were based not on a colour bar but on an income and literacy bar. But as the poorest and least educated were, as now, the Non-Whites, the effect of raising the qualifications was to disqualify many of them. And that was the intention, too. Sir James Rose-Innes, the liberal leader, who voted for this law, said that "it contained no mention of colour, but that they who supported trusted that it would neutralise the Native votes."

THE COMING OF UNION

The triumph of the mining and financial interests that Cecil Rhodes had accomplished in the Cape through a peaceful victory at the polls, could only be attained in the North through the force and violence involved in the Boer War. Once that victory, too, was assured there seemed to be little point in the exorbitantly wasteful and inefficient administration of four colonies each on its own. A unified administration for South Africa was needed: a single Parliament. But who was to vote for that Parliament? In the Transvaal and the O.F.S. no Non-White person would be considered for the franchise. The Royal Charter for Natal, granted in 1856, had, it is true, not excluded Non-Whites from the vote, but it had made the procedure for registration so complicated and difficult that only 3 Africans, according to Professor E. H. Brookes, ever qualified for the vote there, and in 1910 there was a total of only 186 Non-European voters.

As for the Cape, the leaders of all Parties were, as Merriman wrote to Smuts in 1908, "pledged as far as the most solemn assurances can go to maintain the rights conferred by our franchise." They solemnly promised to fight for a non-racial franchise in the proposed Union, and not to accept discrimination in the Constitution. J. W. Sauer wrote: "There

must be political equality." Edgar Walton said in 1907, "To deny to any large portion of our fellow-subjects the rights of mankind would be to imperil the very foundations of civilisation." Mr. Merriman said as late as 1908, the year before the national convention: "It is impossible to govern large masses of men unless we give them the same political rights. . ."

But though the Cape liberal leaders had thus given all these solemn pledges and undertakings that they would never consent to a Union in which the Cape policy was not fully endorsed, they all surrendered miserably and voted for the Draft Act of Union, in which the Non-Europeans of the North were condemned to a permanent state of votelessness, and the Non-White vote of the Cape diluted and drowned in an all-White Union Parliament.

When the Draft Act was published, the betrayal of the Cape delegates was immediately attacked by the Non-Europeans. The Cape liberals, however, defended the Cape delegates to the National Convention. Sir Henry de Villiers said "the position of Natives and Coloured peoples in other parts of South Africa will be greatly improved." Dr. Jameson completely changed his tune, declaring: "We who believe in (a policy of) equal rights feel it should not be forced upon the people of other colonies." Sauer, Merriman, Jameson and De Villiers voted with the majority in the Cape Parliament for endorsement of the Act of Union. They claimed that the entrenchment of the Cape Coloured vote in the Constitution by the clause requiring a two-thirds majority for its abolition represented a great victory. It was impossible, they said, that a two-thirds majority could ever be obtained for the abolition of this vote.

BLOT ON THE CONSTITUTION

Among the few to stand out against the betrayal was W. P. Schreiner, a former Cape Premier, and brother of the famous Olive Schreiner. He had never claimed to be a liberal, indeed he had begun his political career rather as a conservative. But he was a deeply honest and sincere man, and as he grew older adopted an increasingly progressive attitude towards the aspirations of the Non-European peoples. He condemned the franchise clauses of the Draft Act as "a blot upon the Constitution." In prophetic words he declared that the two-thirds majority clause was a trap, and that "if only a few Cape members betrayed their trust, Native and Coloured Parliamentary rights would vanish."

Schreiner fought the Act to the end. He associated himself with the widespread protest movement of the Non-White people against the proposed Constitution. He went to England with a deputation of Non-Europeans to put the people's case against the South Africa Act before the British people and Parliament, and to call for the rejection of the Act by the imperial Parliament.

Also in England was an official delegation from the four Colonies supporting the Bill, which included the self-proclaimed "Liberals," Sauer and Merriman. Writing of the difficulties of the Non-European delegation afterwards, Schreiner wrote:

“The big rock to the reversal of the Act by the British Parliament was its acceptance by the Cape Parliament and by the friends of the Natives, Merriman and Sauer, who say the amendment (to provide a non-racial franchise) would rock Union and do the Natives a great deal of harm.”

The steady decline in the weight and effectiveness of the Non-European vote of the Cape since the time of Union is a fairly well-known story. The 1936 legislation robbed the Cape Africans of their right to vote on the common roll, giving them instead a communal franchise for three M.P.s, and providing for Africans in all Provinces the right to elect (indirectly) four Senators and a Native Representative Council with advisory powers only. The last body has already been abolished: the ruling Nationalist Party has already proclaimed its intention to abolish the representatives too.

The European women were enfranchised in 1930, but not the Coloured women. At one stroke this halved the proportional value of the Coloured vote.

Franchise qualifications for White men were abolished in 1931. But property and educational qualifications remained for Coloured men.

By 1953, the relative value of the Coloured franchise may be seen from the following table:—

VOTERS IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1953

	White	Coloured	Total
Cape	555,063	47,849	602,912
Transvaal	720,394	—	720,394
Natal	164,862	1,337	166,199
O.F.S.	137,880	—	137,880
S.W.A.	26,196	—	26,196
Union	1,604,395	49,186	1,653,581

It is this negligible minority of less than 50,000 voters, under 4 per cent of the total electorate that the Nationalist Party has gone to such enormous lengths to destroy, including the merging of the Nationalist and Afrikaner Parties, the High Court of Parliament, and the radical reformation of the Senate to secure the necessary two-thirds majority. It is not that they fear that these few voters can affect an election; there is something more in it than that. Their hatred of the Coloured vote, their obsessional determination to eradicate it, has something pathological about it; something psychotic. It is a symbol of broken promises, of wrecked faiths of the past. It is also a symbol of something else: of the free and democratic Constitution of the liberated South Africa of the future: the Constitution whose cornerstones will rest on the Freedom Charter.

In destroying the Coloured vote, the Nationalists are at the same time destroying the remnants of the Great Illusion that underlay the betrayal of 1910: **the illusion of the Liberals that unfree and unequal institutions can gradually evolve into free and equal institutions. They cannot: they can only become more unfree and unequal.** The dishonest

compromise of 1910 has led straight to Strijdom's baasskap and the fascist republic. It is plain for all to see that there can be no further compromise; a new beginning must be made on the basis of honesty and principle. The Congress movement has accepted that challenge: it has advanced the inspiring alternative of the Freedom Charter—a blueprint for a full democracy. What of our liberals of 1956? Which side are they on?

NKRUMAH AND THE GOLD COAST

By IDRIS COX

DURING recent years more has been written about the Gold Coast than any other British Colony in Africa. Last February marked the fifth anniversary of Dr. Nkrumah's striking victory in the elections of February, 1951, when the Convention People's Party won 34 out of the 38 contested seats. Nkrumah was in prison at the time, and was released as 'an act of grace' by the British Governor to enable him to take up his position as Chief Minister. In these five years, Nkrumah has maintained his leadership of the C.P.P. and is now first Prime Minister of the Gold Coast. Whatever may be the final estimation of his political record there can be no doubt that his career has been a colourful one, as may be seen from a recent biography* written by a Gold Coast journalist.

Kwame Nkrumah was by no means the first nationalist leader in the Gold Coast. Dr. Azikiwe (now Premier in Eastern Nigeria) and Wallace Johnson (Sierra Leone) had formed the West African Youth League and were stirring the Gold Coast people into action long before Nkrumah became interested in politics. Then in 1947, Dr. Danquah launched the United Gold Coast Convention, of which Nkrumah became the General Secretary in 1948. It was not long before differences on policy arose in the leadership, and a year later Nkrumah formed the Convention People's Party.

During this period he was under heavy fire from the Colonial Office. The Watson Commission (appointed to investigate shots fired at a procession of ex-servicemen in 1948) declared that Nkrumah

* **Kwame Nkrumah**, by Bankole Timothy (George Allen & Unwin)