

"The House notes Your Excellency's observations on the need for the development of a spirit of co-operation between capital and labour. The relation of capital and labour must not be based as hitherto on the whims of the capitalist but on the recognised rights of the workers to organise and bargain through the trade unions of their choice and to take an active part in the running of the industries in which they are engaged."

Such then is the tragic story of British Guiana; the flouting of the wishes of the people, the deposition of an elected Prime Minister, the attempts to subdue the progress of a people by armed might, the lies and baseless accusations, the silencing of truth to the outside world.

They are familiar, all. They were heard oft before and they point towards one sure direction, one sure end — a prelude to massacre.

Let honest people everywhere raise their protests as never before!

Let them call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops!

Withdraw the dictatorial powers from Savage and hand the country back to its elected rulers! Act now and prevent the massacre!

Don't let the words of Dr. Eric Williams be repeated again:—

Strange that an article like sugar, so sweet and necessary to human existence should have occasioned such crimes and bloodshed."

THE "CONSTITUTIONAL" FALLACY

By RUTH FIRST

PROFESSOR PRICE of the Liberal Party has done his party little good in his reply in the September issue of *Liberation* to Mr. Mandela's criticism of Liberal policy. It is not to be wondered at that some Liberals have hastened to assert that Mr. Price was not speaking officially for his party.

Perhaps his patronising, supercilious and condescending tone should be ignored — as his derisive allusions to Mr. Mandela as the Tramp walking down the road to the Big Rock Candy Mountains Utopia achieved after "one real good mass struggle." It's a nice little jingle but nothing damages Mr. Price's case more heavily than his treatment of the Non-European political struggles of today and the Defiance Campaign, and nothing shows more revealingly his abysmal ignorance of the aims and methods of the Non-European national movement.

Mr. Price lets his indignation at criticism of Liberal Party policy rather blur his logic and perception. In his article he answers

what he terms "flat accusations" that the "Liberals are only a species of subtle Nationalist" (Mr. Price's description, not that of Mr. Mandela, incidentally) by a "straight-forward denial." But Mr. Mandela's article if looked at calmly, made no such blunt accusations. The article advanced the argument that asking people to limit themselves to constitutional means of struggle "could only have a basis in reality for those people who enjoy democratic and constitutional rights." It meant in effect asking Non-Europeans to submit to laws enacted by an undemocratic, minority Parliament, among these laws the Public Safety, Criminal Law Amendment and Group Areas Acts. Mr. Price answers that the Liberal Party objects to these laws and has said publicly. He quotes from his party's economic and labour policy.

But this is no answer to the argument.

The Liberal Party may today provide some kind of satisfaction to European voters who have become too disillusioned with United Party betrayals of principle to tolerate remaining in that party and who hear from the Liberal Party happy-sounding phrases about upholding the essential dignity of every human being irrespective of race and colour. In a South African political set-up where since Union and before every European political party has claimed to stand for democracy and yet has striven to preserve a closed monopoly of democratic rights for Europeans only, the advent of the Liberal Party pledged to the winning of a true, universal democracy and determined to accept as allies all South Africans, European and Non-European, who share these aims, could have been a cheering sign of a break with the old colour-bar approach. An uncompromising, non-racialist policy for such a party was the first requisite. Equally necessary was the recognition that democracy in South Africa is in danger just because it has been denied the majority and that it can be saved only by the joint political action of both European and Non-European forces, using what parliamentary pressures remain to the democrat and mobilising the extra-parliamentary support of the people as well.

From the earliest days the Liberals, with their talk of using only constitutional means, sought political respectability and announced their intention of divorcing themselves from the mass movements of the Non-European people.

By doing so they closed their eyes even to the fact that the constitutional rights of the privileged White citizen are fast diminishing. Democratic rights are being undermined by the Nationalist Government acting quite constitutionally and within the framework of laws they inherited from previous governments or within the terms of those new laws they have placed on the statute book by their majority vote in Parliament. Apart from attempts, now abandoned in favour of more astute tactics, to take the Cape Coloured off the common voter's roll in defiance of

the two-third majority vote required by the entrenched clauses in the Constitution, the Nationalists have acted "democratically" and "constitutionally." They were returned at the polls by a minority of the European population too, but even the electoral system which made that possible cannot be challenged on constitutional grounds. A minority of representatives in Parliament today stand opposed to the creation of a Christian-National totalitarian state. So, according to the gentlemanly rules of political cricket, we must stand aside for the juggernaut of Nationalist legislation to ground our liberties against the Nationalists into. That would indeed be turning the political struggle against the Nationalists into a sport.

But to revert to the argument of Mr. Mandela which Mr. Price describes as a fine frenzy. Presuming even that Europeans who have the vote have the means to assert their political claims constitutionally, what of the Non-Europeans? They are unrepresented in the governing bodies of the country, except for a farcical system by which a handful of Europeans can register their protest at laws which bear heavily upon them. Because the constitution permits this undemocratic system, must Non-Europeans acquiesce in the operation of these laws? There comes a time when the burden of discriminatory laws becomes intolerable and among the Non-European people that time has been reached. To tell such a disfranchised people to campaign for redress only by constitutional means, when they have no such means, is to tell them to submit. This is Mr. Mandela's argument but it seems to escape Mr. Price.

It is possible to put another construction on Mr. Price's approach and that is to see it not as an advice to the Non-European people to submit to unjust laws, but to leave it to Europeans who have the vote to campaign constitutionally to win Non-European emancipation. Of all current Liberal illusions this is perhaps the deepest of all.

All who have read any history must surely recognise that Parliament or the existing constitutional authority is never the only, or the most important, fountainhead of political change, and that those who have political power in their hands are the watchdogs of the old order and not the group that advocates social change. Under the Nationalist policy of white-anting democracy South Africa's Parliament has not only become incapable of defending democracy, but South Africa's White electorate has been won over to the belief that they have an interest in entrenching the present system of inequality and race discrimination. All credit to the members of the Liberal Party who try to convince them this is not so. But the Liberals must not delude themselves that faced with a serious challenge to their political majority the Nationalists will not subvert the Constitution to remain in power. They are capable of disfranchising Opposition voters who exhibit un-South African views, and using the battery of dictatorial measures that they have equipped themselves with to ensure their ascendancy.

Above all, the Liberals must not delude themselves that the Non-Europeans can patiently await the results of painstaking and long-term Liberal education and reform of White public opinion. Oppression has become too painful for such never-ending patience. In any case to treat the Non-Europeans just as onlookers at the sidelines of a White political game while a small sympathetic group tries to encourage greater tolerance and understanding of their plight is to give them a completely passive role and is presumptuous, condescending and impudent.

Mr. Price might reply that he doesn't counsel against African political action, altogether, but only that there must be the certainty that a campaign "can be carried out peaceably." What species of political insurance agent is this Liberal who asks such a guarantee? Presumably he would have counselled against the Cromwell Uprising, the War of Independence in the North American Colonies, the Paris Commune, the 1926 General Strike in Britain, the resistance of the peoples of Europe to the invasion of their countries by Nazi armies — all because there was no guarantee that they could achieve their aims "peaceably."

This approach must delight the Minister of Justice. It accepts his version that any violence which has accompanied African political struggles has been caused by bloodthirsty agitators and not by his trigger-happy young policemen acting under shoot-first and talk-afterwards orders. On May 1 1951 and June 26 1952 Africans abstained peacefully from work in protest against laws they objected to. They were acting within the constitution. Police firing was ordered and innocent people shot down in their locations and townships. Mr. Price puts the blame for the deaths of these people not on the Nationalist Government but the leaders of the Non-European people.

Every demonstration of the Non-European people that has ended in some bloodshed has been as a result of vicious state action. In the 1946 African miners' strike is the guilt for the deaths of defenceless African miners that of their union asking for a living wage, or that of the mineowners and the state who connived at bloody suppression of his strike?

The present system in South Africa means useless tragedy for hundreds of thousands, never mind hundreds of Africans. Mr. Price countenances the continuance of this system because he wants to save some "bewildered worker from being cudgelled in a city square." And he has the temerity to suggest that it is African leaders and not the brutalities of the Nationalist Government and its police force who are erecting the "tombstones" of those killed in political struggle.

One can only conclude that he shares the terror of the Nationalists at Non-European political movements and feels they must at all costs be stayed off.

He advises against "storming of bastilles" (presumably a petition to the King of France would have been more constitutional?); against "barricade mounting" and "waving of tattered banners." He wants no "tombstones as milestones," but ceaseless constitutional action, argument and much organisation. He doesn't see that the largest tombstone of all is, under the Nationalists, being erected over the Constitution.

I doubt if anyone in the Non-European political movement believes that its aims will be achieved by "one real good mass struggle." The Non-European political movements do not scorn argument and organisation. They are daily engaged in these tasks. But there comes a time in the growth of every political movement when consistent organisation produces militant peoples' actions in defence of rights under attacks or for improvements in conditions. There is the time when patient representations to authority go unheard and argument has clearly failed. If workers are by law denied the right to strike that is presumably when Mr Price would counsel retreat rather than a strike. Or he would demand a guarantee that no striker be victimised and no picket clubbed by a policeman. And if an employer does sack a worker or Mr. Swart does order teargas or the use of a sten gun, this would be the fault of the trade union.

Mr. Price's acquaintance with political campaigns seems acutely academic and remote. Political campaigns are not carefully rehearsed theatrical performances in which the stage manager orders no "concentration of demonstrations in the Eastern Province," "no side-tracking by incidents or provocations." Provocateurs and the government don't take their cues from the producer. But Liberals of his ilk need no great insight into methods of political organisation and struggle, since they believe they will bring the Nationalist regime crashing to the ground not by people's fights and mass struggles, but at the sound of Liberal polemic and the weight of their argument; or by the threat of the Liberals to take the Nationalist Government before a Court packed with Nationalist judges if they try to infringe the constitution.

TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC UNITY

By **NELSON MANDELA**

THE struggle for democracy in South Africa is growing stronger every day. The political organisations of the oppressed people are forging stronger ties between themselves and the masses. A high degree of political understanding has been achieved. The people have become more conscious of their strength and they cry defiance to the racial policies of the Government. In the past, we talked