

THE FIGHT IS ON

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I have come fairly recently from what used to be called the East End of London. Although it housed some of the finest people in the world—the Cockney Londoners—it used not to be a very salubrious place in which to live. There was serious overcrowding; much of the property was badly in disrepair; there was little in the way of green grass; and the drains and the sanitation left much to be desired.

Then came Hitler. His bombing of London laid waste much of the capital, especially on the East side, and a great part of the slum area was demolished. Now, twelve years after the end of the war, the East End of London has been almost entirely rebuilt. First, the war damage was made good; and then, the little slum property that was left too was pulled down, and decent flats and houses put up in its place.

So London's 'East End' has ceased to exist: that is to say, the use of the term as signifying squalor and ugliness. You can be as proud of your flat in Bethnal Green as in Belgravia, and your villa in Mile End is a match for any residence in Mayfair.

It has been a wonderful transformation and it was forced upon London by the Nazi "blitz". Does that mean that today we thank God for Hitler because he was instrumental in getting rid of London's slums? Certainly not—go and ask the widow whose husband was killed in an air raid or the orphaned child whose parents were buried under the ruins of a blasted house.

The end of London's East End was undoubtedly a good thing. But neither in London nor anywhere else can ends ever justify means.

Cape Town is right to want to see the end of Windermere. Nothing could exaggerate the desolation of that appalling mass of wretched pondokkies erected cheek by jowl all over a lifeless waste of land.

How right and proper, we say therefore, that good and well-intentioned men should take it in hand to demolish these miserable shacks and should work to clean up this breeding-ground of poverty and discontent.

In its stead, in due time, respectable sanitary dwellings will replace the rotting hovels; the drainage will be adequate; every house will have a tap; and overcrowding will be a thing of the past.

Is this not cause for congratulation? For there is no war in South Africa and there is thus no reason for man and wife to be separated or for a child to be bereft of its parents.

So you might think. Nevertheless, this is precisely what is happening. In its perfectly proper zeal to clean up Windermere the City Council feels itself compelled by the regulations laid down in Section 10 of the Native Urban Areas Act as Amended to screen all who live in Windermere. As a result a few families, very few, will

be offered alternative accommodation in the neighbourhood. These are the fortunate ones. But, in general, men with permission to work here will be offered accommodation in Langa's "bachelor" barracks, and their women-folk, whose passes have run out or who have come here illegally (*sic*) to be with their husbands, will be told to make their way back to the Reserves whence they came.

There is no alternative to this. And it is not surprising that for hundreds of people this makes life in a Windermere pondokkie far more desirable than any move. While they stay, they stay together; when they are moved, man and wife know that they will be separated.

A cruel riddle might be asked: "When is a slum not a slum?" And the answer is: "When it is a *home*". For a man and his wife would far sooner live together in such a hopeless, down at heel district as Windermere than live apart in hygienic, well-built quarters.

And who will blame them?

What is the City Council to do? Its best and bravest course would be to leave Windermere as it is until accommodation is made available to which the inhabitants would be encouraged to go without official screening.

But, say its spokesmen, this means the Government will step in and start to do the screening itself, and the Government will do it much more ruthlessly and inhumanely than our officers.

This may be true. But the City Council has itself unfortunately awakened the Government to the state of affairs in Windermere by preliminary clearing action before its alternative accommodation was ready. To save its soul, it should at least refuse to do anything more about it at this juncture and should resist inhumanity with all the resources at its command.

Because NOW THE FIGHT IS ON. Christian people everywhere are bound by virtue of their faith to fight the evils of a migrant labour force. We can no longer tolerate a state of affairs where family units are deliberately broken up by Government decree. The family is the basic Christian unit—in truth not Christian only, it is the *natural* biological unit—and any body that of set purpose wrecks the family is fighting against God.

Christians (and with them will be all men of goodwill) have to withstand the enemies of God's Law by every legitimate means. The sanctity of the family is as fundamental to Christian obedience as resistance to the blasphemous 'Church Clause'.

Like Luther, "here we stand; we can do no other".

As a result of certain investigations in which I took part at Windermere, leaders of some of the English-speaking Churches met with City and Government officials in Windermere itself.

We were told that the City Council officers could not but obey the law. This meant in most instances offering men accommodation in Langa's "bachelor" barracks and ordering the women and children back to the Reserves.

The Government representative agreed that this must unhappily lead to the destruction of family life. Whereupon I asked him what

would happen if, rather than consent to this separation, the man travelled back to the Reserve with his wife and children: would there be work awaiting him there?

I had to press the question home, but the decent and honest Government servant had to admit that the chances of the man finding work in a place where the family could live together were exceedingly remote. Almost certainly he would have to leave his family behind; and he would have to go away from home to earn a living for himself and his dependents as a migrant labourer. Thus there is hope for him neither in the Cape nor elsewhere. His family is condemned and home life anywhere an impossibility.

In other words, the encouragement of migratory labour, with the infamous pass laws for women as well as for men, means that it is almost impossible for the African to live in a stable family unit either in the Cape or in his home Reserve.

Any Government that deliberately promulgates such a policy and seeks to implement it is fighting against God and His laws. The whole system of migratory labour has corrupted the Union and should be rooted out. It has degraded the African, but not nearly so much as it has degraded the European who condones and encourages it.

I am prepared to believe that there is a good deal to be said for a just and equitable distribution of land between the races on a basis of common discussion and mutual agreement. *Apartheid* on such terms may even be justifiable and sound. I am not so wedded to a materialistic Western civilization as to believe that it is the saving Messiah for all men everywhere. Many may one day thank God that they were never contaminated by it.

But an equitable division of territory has nothing in common with a devilish policy that breaks up homes, that refuses to recognize the family as a unit, and that works to create a cheap migratory labour force with no rights of its own.

Such a policy is damnable. Christians must resist it by reason of their Christian faith. I speak for them. Furthermore, I speak for many thousands of people who, if not Christians, have been brought up in the humanities and who will stand shoulder to shoulder with us. To demand a man's labour without allowing him to have his family with him is immoral and indecent. It is our avowed purpose to slay this ungainly Goliath of migratory labour that has encumbered our fair land far too long.