

# TWO VIEWS ON CAPRICORN

## (I)

### TOWARDS A COMMON CITIZENSHIP

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IN East and Central Africa to-day there exists a real challenge to the Commonwealth. Can we build states based on a multi-racial society in which country comes before race and in which racialism is outlawed? It has been the expressed intention of Her Majesty's Government for many years that all dependent territories in the Commonwealth should be brought forward to self-government as soon as possible. Nor has the British Government paid mere lip-service to this ideal; the new state of Ghana is just the most recent example of the sincerity of its intentions. So far, however, the problem has not been complicated by race; the new states in the Commonwealth are virtually uni-racial. In East and Central Africa, however, this fresh problem has come to the fore, and when self-government is considered, it is first necessary to define the "self." In this lies the crux of the whole situation.

The Capricorn Africa Society, recognizing that the issue of race and nationalism is a crucial one in modern Africa, set itself the task in 1949 of producing a political philosophy and a programme that would transcend the racial problem and instil in its place the concept of a common citizenship. There were two main balancing premises to this idea: (1) that discrimination based on race or colour should be outlawed, and (2) that the standards of civilization should be maintained. Starting from these two fundamental principles, the Capricorn Africa Society began work on a document which is now known as the Capricorn Contract. Thirty-five Citizenship Committees sat for a period of two years discussing the situation in Africa and drew up their findings in the light of the principles outlined above. These Committees met on a non-racial basis, and an immense amount of research was done. The Capricorn Africa Society has always believed that the answer to Africa's problems must come from within Africa itself and so it set out to practise what it preached. The final document was ratified at Salima in Nyasaland in June,

1956, by delegates from the Citizenship Committees and Territorial Executives in the Rhodesias, Nyasaland, Kenya and Tanganyika.

The Contract begins with the laying down of the fundamental truths which the Society believes should be written into the Constitution of these territories on their attaining self-government. In the light of these truths the Society states its views on the most difficult problems in Africa: Land, Education, Labour Relations, Immigration and the Franchise.

Perhaps the most contentious proposal is that for a qualified franchise. I should like to make it clear here that the Capricorn franchise programme was never devised in order to maintain White domination, as many critics have suggested. For instance, if the Capricorn proposals were adopted in Nyasaland, it has been calculated that an immediate African majority in the electorate would result, as there would be five African votes to every European one. The Society, however, is not at all worried about this, because it feels that security for minority groups would be covered by the common citizenship proposal to be written into the constitution.

Space prevents examination of all the facts of the franchise plan, but the Kenya delegate, Mr. Boaz Omori, summarized the general conclusion at the Convention when he stressed that universal suffrage cannot provide an answer so long as many sections of the African populations continue living in a primitive tribal state. I was interested to see that Mr. James Johnson, the British Labour M.P., emphasized this in the debate on racial policy in the House of Commons: "I believe in the qualitative franchise on a common roll to begin with, whilst my ultimate aim is a single member geographical constituency with a universal franchise for all adults in the future. At the moment, that is not possible." We will be examining the franchise again at the Society's next Convention in Nairobi. But I have no doubt that this view will be endorsed again as the only means of ensuring responsible government until education becomes very much more general.

In the preparation of the Capricorn Contract a spirit of common purpose was generated between those of different race and background who took part, and it was found that working together towards a common goal helped to eliminate racial prejudice and induced a greater understanding of mutual problems. The Society believes that the working out of its

philosophy and objects is not enough. It believes that the Capricorn idea has to be lived in every walk of life, regardless of the sacrifices involved. Certainly, doing this often means social ostracism and even the loss of one's job.

In the long run, integration will triumph over segregation. It may take time, but it is inevitable and necessary if the human race is not to commit suicide. With the enormous increase in communications, the process is being speeded up, and more and more people are beginning to realize that the human race must stand together as one. Capricorn is in the vanguard of this movement towards a saner attitude to race.

Since the time of its Convention, the Society has worked to make known its beliefs as widely as possible. It has also endeavoured to persuade politicians to fight for the Contract in the political field, and it is now certain that political parties will be formed in the various territories to translate the thinking of the Society into the language of the electorate and to work for new constitutions based on this non-racial approach.

What are the alternatives to Capricorn Africa? There is White domination, as practised in South Africa, or Black racialism, developing fast throughout Africa. The Society believes that neither of these forces can solve the problems of Africa and that both will lead to increasing racial strife, political instability, and economic ruin. The African dilemma to-day is that the African needs the European, but refuses to accept him on the present basis. A new and contemporary basis has been found in the Capricorn Society, where Black and White may together find security in being citizens of Africa.

In Kenya many independent candidates representing all races fought the recent elections on the basis of the Capricorn Contract. This is the first time that a common policy has been fought for by members of all racial groups. Mr. Mangat, Q.C., has taken an uncompromising stand for Capricorn in the Kenya Legislative Council, and it is hoped that his courageous stand will encourage others to do likewise.

Let us consider for a moment the economics of the situation. Outside capital is urgently required if Africa is to develop quickly enough to pay for the services she requires, such as education, housing, and modern medicine. Without political stability, the reward of economic expansion will just not be forthcoming. Last year a mere £1,000,000 flowed into South Africa and £26,000,000 into the Federation. It will become

increasingly difficult to persuade investors to put capital into countries where the racial policies are thought to be leading to disaster.

The Commonwealth is being challenged on its racial policies. The vast majority of Her Majesty's subjects are other than White, and a new dynamic is needed to inspire us all and draw us together, to make us feel that we all belong and that the ladder of opportunity is increasingly within the reach of us all. Unless this challenge is met, how can our Commonwealth succeed? I believe that the Capricorn Africa Society is helping to show the way.

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## (II)

# THE ENTRENCHMENT OF PRIVILEGE

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THE purpose of the Capricorn Movement, as stated in the Capricorn Handbook for Speakers, is to work "for the creation of a common citizenship in which members of all races would take a full part, in which only civilized and cultural values would be protected, and in which racial discrimination would be outlawed." The Capricorn Handbook states further that "In British Capricorn Africa . . . it is the Christian ethic which is mainly under test." Certainly, eminent churchmen in other parts of the world have seen fit to lend their support to the Capricorn Society as being somehow Christian in its policies.

It is not easy in a short article to do full justice to all the propositions of the Capricorn Society, but it will not be difficult to measure whether they are indeed Christian. And surely the examination will be worth-while, because if the churchmen who give their support so willingly should be mistaken, they may be doing a great disservice to their Church and to the great and rapidly growing Christian community of Africa, members of which are everywhere rising to leadership. One may justifiably question the wisdom of any Society's trying to use the prestige of the Christian Church to build up a political movement in a part of Africa which is not only multi-racial,