

THE BANTUSTAN FANTASIA

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DR. VERWOERD is faced with two pressures which bear formidably on his policy formulation. Firstly, since his Party has been the governing one for eleven years, there is a need to justify the continued suppression of the non-White majority. Secondly, the pressure of events in Africa requires that he has a front on which to fight world opinion. Both pressures lead him to make a show of sincerity and achievement in the direction of apartheid.

The struggle for the control of Parliament now well and truly won, the new struggle is for a more difficult and explosive type of control, namely that over the sullenly suffering mass of the population. For this, many unprecedented powers and a great number of new legislative devices have been adopted; in addition, however, a more definite front is required on which world opinion can be fought, local opposition dealt with, and through which an image of integrity and Christian-like purpose can be presented to the *volk*.

This need for practical contributions to the "goal of separate development" is nowhere more clearly evidenced than in the Government's attempts to present itself as economically developing—and granting political independence to—the Reserves (certain scattered and often individually small areas, in total about seventeen million morgen, set aside under the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts for exclusive African occupation).

Various pieces of legislation were rushed through last year which are plainly intended to show that the Reserves are to be made into viable political and economic entities. There are now to be eight "Bantu national units" and four or five "Bantu colleges" in terms of the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act and the University Education Extension Act. In addition, there is the Bantu Investment Corporation Act, which is supposedly designed to promote industrial and financial undertakings in the Reserves. It is as much an exercise in 'newspeak' to call this an investment institution however, as it is to call the new "units" self-governing, or the new "colleges" universities.

Describing the objects of this new Investment Corporation in Parliament, Mr. de Wet Nel stated that they had been worded "so widely that the Corporation can serve all the interests of

the Bantu in those (i.e. the Reserve) areas". The Government was starting the Corporation with an initial capital of £500,000. Although this was admitted to be a small beginning, the Government would be quite prepared to vote new funds if this was deemed necessary. However, the Minister of Bantu Administration and Development added, he was "most confident that once funds and the potentialities of the Bantu himself have been mobilized, we may perhaps for a long time find it unnecessary for the Government to find further sums."

The channels into which this investment is to flow are deceptively termed "industrial, financial, and other undertakings". The enquiring mind will ask whether any industrial or financial undertakings exist now, or are likely to exist in these areas in the foreseeable future. It is very likely that the only "undertakings" worth speaking of are those which are in the distributive trade, and an expansion of African participation in this direction can probably only be experienced at the expense of existing European concerns. This change-over can hardly be said to be "economic development" as we understand it to-day.

The value attachable to the Act may be well judged by considering the extent of the capital sources which will be available to the Corporation. These are:- 1. the Government; 2. (foreign or local) extra-Reserve inhabitants; and 3. Reserve inhabitants.

The Government's meagre £500,000 (which is about one-eighth of the amount that the proposed change-over to a decimal system will cost), is in any event not a new or original allotment, for the money is simply to be transferred from that amount which has *already been voted* for the purchase of new Reserve land under the 1936 Land and Trust Act, now due to be scrapped.

As far as local or foreign extra-Reserve investors are concerned, we must take note of Clause 13, which *inter alia* provides that "no dividend shall be paid to the shareholder". With the profit motive absent, it is extravagantly absurd to expect that any monies will be forthcoming. Besides this, one must take into account the semi-dictatorial nature of the Corporation; since, although a so-called Board of Directors will run the institution, such is the extent of Ministerial control that these will be, in the words of an Opposition M.P., "a board of office boys".

Investors will not be lending money to a group of financial

experts with the chance of earning dividends; they will be lending it to the Minister for the purpose of pursuing his own misguided aims.

As for the third group of potential investors, the Reserve Africans, a quick glance at any of the large number of authoritative investigations into the conditions of these people and their areas will show plainly that the amount of saving which can be expected from them is negligible.

Mr. de Wet Nel should have known better, having himself been a member of the Tomlinson Commission which issued in 1955¹ the Government-sponsored and then Government-snubbed "blueprint" for the socio-economic development of the Reserves.

Amongst the estimates in this Report was one which held that the average income per family unit of a little more than 6 persons is £42 os. od. per annum, when calculated by "conventional" national income methods. This figure is later "adjusted" somewhat unsatisfactorily. In any event, compared with the *per capita* income of £99 4s. od. for the Union as a whole in 1950/51, the adjusted £12 9s. od. *per capita* income of the Reserves stands in sharp contrast; and Mr. de Wet Nel's expectations of investment from such a source are grotesque in the extreme.

The newly proposed "Bantustans" are designed to conjure up in the mind's eye multi-coloured pictures of the Bantu national homes, where the African will enjoy self-government in an idyllic setting of racial pride and progress. Seen against the grey reality of the true position in these areas, the picture becomes considerably less vivacious. Indeed, it gives the final lie to the possibility of such "separate development in separate areas".

The Reserves are imprisoned in a vicious circle. Low productivity is due to over-population, over-stocking, inefficient farming, and the prevalence of poverty and ignorance. Poverty and ignorance are themselves powerful hindrances to progress. Poverty, besides negating investment possibilities, gives rise to ill-health and inertia, which in turn lower productivity and so intensify want.

Over-population, coupled with the tribal tradition that every married man is entitled to land and grazing, has led to the situa-

¹See "Africa South", Vol. 1. No. 2 — 'The Significance of the Tomlinson Report' by Professor D. Hobart Houghton.

tion where family holdings are so small that no improvement in agricultural practice is possible, and the custom of "lobola"² tends to bring about an excess of inferior and unproductive cattle. The small-holdings and overgrazed veld yield inadequate subsistence, so that each family seeks to augment its income by sending members of the family to work in urban areas. According to the Tomlinson Report, the remittances of migrants account for about half the family income. The result is that the average African male divides his working life between spells of work in the industrial centres and spells at home in the Reserves; and agricultural productivity declines still further because it is the most active adult workers who go away.

The Tomlinson Report estimated that practically every able-bodied African at some time in his working life leaves the Reserves, and that at any given time 40 per cent. of the male population between 15 and 64 years of age is absent in employment outside these areas. Labour migrants are probably economically active outside the Reserves for over 60 per cent. of their working lives. At a generous estimate, migrant workers may spend a third of their time in the Reserves working on the land or maintaining their homes.

An awareness of these facts places in its correct perspective the Government's talk of the potential of these areas as permanent "homes" for the greater part of the present and the future expected African population.

The areas are denuded, over-populated, and at the same time deprived of an able-bodied labour force. Moreover, it is very likely that the continuance of the system of migratory labour will emphasize this position. If it were Government policy that urban Africans could *settle* their families with them, and have permanent residence with the right to own land in urban areas, the Reserve position might be alleviated. A more stable and so productive labour force might then have a chance of establishing itself in the Reserves.

As it is, the Government's policy of not wanting Africans to possess tenure rights in the so-called "White" urban areas leads it to pursue the policy of migratory labour at all costs, so that a permanent, able-bodied working population in the "Bantustans" becomes impossible of establishment.

It may well be that current debate on the development of

²The buying of brides, usually with cattle.

"backward" areas has tended to exaggerate the importance of the capital factor. This may have been done for no better reason than that since the "developed" countries have large capital resources, the "under-developed" countries are presumed to require large capital resources if they are to enjoy progress on any significant scale. The argument ignores the point, however, as Professor Jack has put it, "that capital by itself, unsupported by the requisite technical knowledge and skill to use the capital, will be little effective".

For an evaluation, therefore, of the Government's attempts and proposals to develop the Reserve areas, one must not only look at the pitiful sums allotted to the Bantu Administration Department, or to the "butter-on-your-conscience" amount which goes to the establishment of the Bantu Investment Corporation from the Native Trust. One must look more closely at the people in these areas, their present position, and the Government's proposals for bringing them into a money economy of free enterprise and modern industrial organization.

The Government has burdened itself in its stated policy with the contradictory aims of maintaining on the one hand a "traditional" or "tribal" culture, and, on the other, with the encouragement of modernisation in the economic sphere. Nowhere in the Parliamentary debates, now so degraded by the arrogance of Government speakers, can one find a statement which comes to grips with the problem of what type of African culture is envisaged as consistent with Christianity and the techniques of industrial production and an exchange economy. The acceptance of individualistic methods of production is implicit in their assumptions concerning industrial development, yet nowhere is it stated whether these can be incorporated into anything which can be called "Bantu culture", or that preservation of the 'ethnic soul' which is the pulse of apartheid.

At the outset, therefore, the Government is confronted with an impossibility, namely the reconciliation of incompatibles, and this accounts for the lack of sociological sense in its policies, the numerous inconsistencies with which these policies are riddled, and the startling contradictions into which they are betrayed. When one sums up the factors mentioned as Government policy, such as industrialisation to save the soil, building townships, culling cattle, and technical education, it becomes impossible to see how Africans will be expected to develop "along their own lines".

It is impossible for change to a modern Western economy to occur in the context of the primitive African agricultural, social and political system. For industrial development, not only is participation in a world market required—the social and political framework which goes with the modern economy has also to be established. The development of a modern economy, the raising of income levels, requires a change in social structure, and in the individual outlook of the people concerned. And, indeed, despite Government mutilations, the African people have at all times shown that this is a change which they most earnestly desire.

One is led to the conclusion that all thoughts of separate development should have ceased abruptly with the discovery of gold and diamonds in South Africa. Before then, as Professor Hoernlé himself has said, territorial segregation might have been regarded as an equitable solution, for it would have been within the realms of possibility. Before 1860, our population was but a tiny fraction of what it is to-day, and we may note with Professor Frankel that the great population increase in the last 100 years has been made possible only because, with much imported capital, “labour could be applied to an ever-increasing extent to the exploitation of natural resources in those particular places where, on the whole, they yielded the greatest economic returns”. The main consequence of the transformation which has occurred since the discovery of gold and diamonds is that isolated African and European economies which supported small, scattered populations, have been replaced by the relatively large population of to-day, which is dependent for its standard of living on the highly integrated operations of a modern industrial community. Whereas 100 years ago, the European and African economy could exist alongside one another, to-day these peoples are indispensable to one another in the country which they irrevocably share.

The Government’s pronouncements may be providing it with a *Weltanschauung* for purposes of display, but the delusion which it is presenting is resulting in incalculable misery for the people whose present economic plight depends on Dr. Verwoerd’s pleasure. Whilst they are now suffering what is avoidable economic misery, the country’s future is being even further jeopardised by this policy, whose only real investment is in the development of rightful bitterness and resentment on the part of the African people.