

THE POISON OF PRACTICAL APARTHEID

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THE statement often made to-day that there is no real difference between the National and the United Parties reveals a complete indifference to—and lack of any understanding of—the effects of the measures the Government has introduced. I am not disputing the obvious: that the United Party has failed as an Opposition, that it has offered the country no clearly expressed alternative policy, that, in its despairing attempts to hold the votes of the conflicting elements of which it is composed, it has avoided frontal attacks on Government measures to the extent of seeming to agree with them.

Its leaders apparently still believe that the tactics of evasion and ambiguity will enable them to retain the votes of those who are United Party by habit and not by conviction, and to win the votes of those who do in fact support the Government's colour policy. Its leaders apparently still believe that they can discredit the Government by demonstrating that by "apartheid" the Government does not mean complete territorial separation and will do nothing to bring about what really amounts to partition. They steadfastly evade the simple truth that this is no threat but a promise. Apart from a few idealists in the Afrikaans churches and universities, the Nationalist voter is reassured by the knowledge that things will remain substantially as they are. Apartheid means "baasskap", overlordship, and it is a meaning which the Prime Minister, far from disguising, has been at pains to emphasise. And the United Party, with all its talk of "white leadership with justice", is clearly not prepared to challenge a view of the order of society which the overwhelming majority of Europeans in this country accept as the only possible one. The United Party, in other words, is continually fighting on the enemy's ground and not its own, and this is why important Parliamentary debates peter out and a no-confidence motion becomes the flat and lifeless thing it did last session.

But this does not mean that if there had been no National Party Government in power since 1948, but a United Party one instead, South Africa would be as it is today. If the National Party had been

defeated in 1948 and again in 1953, the Statute Book would present a significantly different appearance. I am convinced that there would, for example, have been no Group Areas Act, no Bantu Education Act, no Natives' Resettlement Act. The Natives Urban Areas Consolidation Act would undoubtedly have been amended—the habit of amending this Act is so ingrained that no Parliamentary Session would be complete without it—but I believe the direction of amending legislation would have been entirely different.

Two quotations from General Smuts demonstrate his changing approach to urban native policy. In 1937, addressing a conference of municipal representatives, he said: "There is no doubt the proper way to deal with this influx is to cut it off at its source and to say that our towns are full, the requirements met, we cannot accommodate more natives and we are not going to accept more except in limited numbers." Ten years later, in 1947 in Cape Town, he said, however: "The problem that arises is not to try to stem this tide. You won't stem it here in the Peninsula, and you won't stem it in Johannesburg. . . . The time is ripe when a new native policy has to provide . . . for this new development." In his 1948 election speeches, General Smuts made this changing attitude explicit when he stated that his Party would accept the broad outlines of the Fagan Commission Report: that it would, in other words, accept the view that urban Africans constitute a permanent and integral part of the urban population, that they are in the urban areas of right, and that his Party would jettison the old Stallard Commission dictum that "the native should only be allowed to enter urban areas, which are essentially the white man's creation, when he is willing to enter and minister to the needs of the white man, and should depart therefrom when he ceases so to minister".

That was the difference between the two Parties. It was not a difference at that stage in accomplished deeds, but in intention and in the two widely differing possibilities that lay open to South Africa in 1948. Because the then Government had only in 1948, belatedly enough, come to realise the need for changed and forward-looking policies, and because its omission to put any proposed changes into effect enabled the National Party, in taking over, to do no more, apparently, than build upon South Africa's "traditional policy of segregation", the enormity of the present Government's interference in the lives of the non-European peoples has been heavily disguised.

For this has been the key-note of the Government's administra-

tion: interference. There is no aspect of our national life upon which the Government has not laid its disruptive fingers. In its passion to preserve white racial superiority, it has passed a spate of legislation empowering it to enforce tidier separation and more division in an already much divided and greatly separated land.

The fact that some good has resulted from certain of these legislative measures must not be allowed to obscure their main and over-riding effect—greater division, and its inevitable accompaniment, the disruption of human lives. Nor must the fact that certain by-products of Government legislation have been beneficial, be allowed to prevent the realisation that these benefits could have been obtained by other, wholly beneficial, means.

The obvious example is the Western Areas Removal Scheme, carried out in terms of the Natives' Resettlement Act. The beneficial result is Meadowlands, Dr. Verwoerd's showplace, a fine new housing scheme, rapidly a-building, complete with a school to every 400 families. It did not require the interminable descriptions given in issue after issue of *Bantu*, the propaganda journal of the Department of Native Affairs, to convince either white or black that Meadowlands is a much-needed and greatly welcome addition to Johannesburg's native housing schemes. We all knew that Sophiatown was overcrowded before the Government told us so. We knew that it contained slums. We asked, time and again, that the pressure on the Western Areas be relieved, that provision be made for the Africans who had nowhere else to go, that slum clearance be instituted. All this could have been achieved without the passing of a single law.

But in that case, the Western Areas would have remained what they were, areas proclaimed as "predominantly occupied by natives", and Africans would have retained freehold rights in them. And so Dr. Verwoerd's purpose would have been defeated. For Dr. Verwoerd's primary purpose was not slum clearance, but the removal of what he regarded as a "black spot", that is, "an area in which natives own land in a European area". And all towns are, on the Minister's interpretation, "European areas". The end result is that tenants are gladly removing to Meadowlands, as they would have done without an Act. Some are even paying substantial key-money to hire a room in what they believe is the block next due for removal. But for Africans as a whole, the Western Areas Removal Scheme remains a synonym for injustice, its deprivations outweighing its benefits. It is leaving a precipitate of resentment, no less real for all its suppression, and a widespread feeling of

insecurity and threatened displacement wherever Africans own property outside of the reserves.

Under the administration of the Bantu Education Act, too, there are certain benefits. Educationists seem to be agreed that the new syllabuses are an improvement. Africans here were pressing, as are Africans throughout the Continent, for greater secularisation of the educational system. They wanted a larger share in the administration of their schools. These facilities the Bantu Education Act is giving them. But in a country like the Gold Coast, these requirements are likewise being met—and more, for there is a greater urgency there to raise the educational standard, in order to provide the manpower for a self-governing state. In the Gold Coast, no new schools may be set up by the missions, but all existing mission educational institutions continue to receive the fullest measure of support and subsidy. No one disputes that there are many defects in native education in this country. But it did not require a Bantu Education Act to remedy them. If native education had been transferred to the Union Department of Education, if it had been laid down that all new schools should be Government schools, if provision had been made for a new system of inter-racial school boards and committees, which would have made it possible to use the experience and knowledge of Europeans, if . . . An Act of this nature would have been enthusiastically accepted by the whole country, white and black.

This, however, would not have provided for totally separate educational systems. And that is precisely what Dr. Verwoerd wants: an education, says Dr. Verwoerd, that “should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society”. Hence the Bantu Education Act, with its insistence on separation, has come to stand, in African eyes, for inferior education. And there is a great hatred of the Act, although it has been “accepted” in the sense that there is no alternative and many Africans—some for personal advantage and others because they feel it is their duty to make what contribution they can under existing circumstances—co-operate in its administration. That the Government’s primary objective is to build the walls of racial separation even higher is shown, if further proof be needed, by its refusal to allow Europeans to serve on Bantu school boards and committees and to continue school-feeding in African schools, where school boards, faced with the cruel choice between extra teachers or school-feeding, decided against school meals.

Above all, this objective is shown up in the persistent and dogged

campaign to close the doors of the Witwatersrand and Cape Town Universities to non-European students. Other Government measures are causing more widespread disruption and suffering, but nothing, I believe, will do more harm to South Africa's future than the imposition of university apartheid. It will mean the cultural isolation of non-white students, cutting them off from the normal and fruitful contacts of university life in its fullness, denying them access to that environment in which Western tradition finds its richest expression. There is no necessity to do this evil thing. There are four different types of university in this country—enough to accommodate every kind of personal bias. Why then cannot the Government let things be? The *laissez-faire* of the past becomes a rose-coloured recollection by comparison with the obsessional interference of the present.

There was also no necessity for the Group Areas Act. What was needed, particularly in a city like Johannesburg, was that townships should be made available for the Indian community, which has been compressed within its present hopelessly inadequate areas for years, unable to find any release from conditions of intolerable congestion: and that areas should be opened up for the coloured community, which is literally being evicted onto pavements as factories take over the areas where it has customarily lived. In this way a system of voluntary zoning could have come into being. But this is not what the Government seeks. It has made the tidy division of its towns into group areas for each racial group and subgroup its goal. This will be tidying up on a grand scale. And in the process, the fingers of authority stretch out to convulse an area like the Cape Peninsula, where Coloured and White have lived for generations in peaceful juxtaposition.

How the Act will finally be applied is, as I now write, not yet clear. In towns like Lydenburg and Ermelo and Pretoria, in the towns of Natal, dispute has been fierce: the proposals municipal councils have made to the Land Tenure Advisory Board—proposals to make the whole Indian community live and trade in the veld miles from the town—have been shocking in their callousness. The Board has, to its credit, not been prepared to entertain proposals of this nature. But the principles which will guide the Minister in making his momentous decisions have not been made public. Are Indians to be permitted to retain their trading rights in towns? For it is clear, both from the proposals of local authorities and from the statements of National Party spokesmen, that Indians will be the victims-in-chief of the Group Areas Act.

I doubt if it is possible for any who are not directly affected—and the directly affected are at present the large majority of Indians and Coloureds, a handful of Europeans and some Africans—to visualise what it must mean to live for years under the shadow of the Group Areas Act, not to know if the home one lives in will be allowed to remain one's own, if one will be deprived of the trading rights and the livelihood on which one's whole family depends. This is what practical apartheid, the form of apartheid which the Government has been relentlessly promoting since it came into power, means. It means interference, actual or threatened: a Population Registration Act to check on forebears and friends and features and possibly to classify as "native" a whole family that has lived as coloured; an Industrial Conciliation Amendment Act with powers to force a man out of the trade union to which he belongs and to push him out of the work he has been accustomed to doing.

Separation is not an abstract thing. It is practical and immediate and expresses itself in a series of actions which affect the quality of men's lives and poison it. It is destroying such personal relationships, limited and tentative though these be, as exist between white and non-white, and is quite deliberately seeking to prevent further personal relationships from being established. The process of separating, of putting up racial barriers, which is basic to the concept of practical apartheid, is not dramatic. If only it were! For then it might break through unconcern and unknowingness and compel realisation of the resentment this slow, insidious process is building up, and of the incalculable, even if at present only partially visible, harm it is doing.

LABOUR AND LABOUR LAWS IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Two labour codes operate in South Africa. They are part of the general policy of racial discrimination. The two codes were not specially conceived as a specific plan. They emerged over the years as the cumulative result of various labour laws and conventional practices which gave effect to colour bars. During the past eight