

matters in agriculture, industry and commerce, and in local authorities. In a speech in Parliament, the Minister said that the only political appointment is the Chairman. He did not mention that he has power of veto over the appointment of any other member.

It will be obvious that the Board is in effect an alliance between agriculture, industry and commerce and the local authorities. Nowhere are the people who are directly affected by the Board represented. Decisions are made by outsiders, and it is obvious, human nature being what it is, that they will approach matters from their own standpoint, even if only subconsciously. No person who has never been at the receiving end of apartheid can ever hope to understand what it is like. It is therefore difficult to understand how the Board can hope effectively to determine the real needs of the people over whom it has so much power.

What are these powers? Essentially the Board takes over all matters pertaining to Africans previously carried out by the various local authorities. These include carrying out the provisions of the Bantu (Urban Areas—Consolidation Act No. 25 of 1945, the Bantu Services Levy Act No. 64 of 1952, the Urban Bantu Councils Act No. 79 of 1961, the Bantu Labour Act No. 67 of 1964, the Bantu Beer Act No. 63 of 1962, and insofar as it affects Africans, the Housing Act No. 4 of 1966 and the Liquor Act No. 30 of 1928. Any powers granted to local authorities under any Provincial Ordinance affecting Africans are transferred to the Board. All labour matters fall under the Board. As mentioned above, the Board is an autonomous body. It pays for itself, from the following sources:

- (i) Labour Bureau and Registration fees;
- (ii) Transport Levies;
- (iii) Services Levies;
- (iv) Licensing of premises;
- (v) Fines, etc.;
- (vi) Rents, lodgers' fees, electricity charges, site rentals and trading rents;
- (vii) School Levies;
- (viii) Sale of Bantu Beer. (The Board also sells what has significantly been referred to as European liquor, although it receives only 20% of the profit; the rest goes to the State)

On the subject of Bantu Beer, well over 2 million litres are packaged per month. This is probably the most diabolical fund raising scheme ever devised. It is more so because the normal recreational facilities available in any urban area are almost totally lacking, leaving most people with little alternative but to drink. No commentary is necessary to

describe the effects of the excessive use of alcohol on any community. In terms of the relevant legislation the profits from the sale of Beer is to be used on items such as Community Halls, Trading centres, Soccer fields, subsidising rentals and welfare. First you break down the community and with the money you make you build it up again!

The Board has powers to appoint its own inspectors who may at all reasonable times:

- (i) enter any premises;
- (ii) question any person found on the premises;
- (iii) inspect the title deeds, books or other records of any person which relate in any way to the ownership or occupation of, or residence on, land or premises in the Board's area, and make extracts therefrom;
- (iv) call upon any person to furnish any information at his disposal relating to the ownership or occupation of, or residence on, such land or premises.

Any person who interferes, resists or obstructs any inspector in the execution of his duties shall be guilty of an offence and subject to a fine not exceeding R200,00 or imprisonment for a period not exceeding 6 months or both.

In the Pietermaritzburg area, Imbali, Ashdown and Sobantu are controlled by the Board, as are the lives of every African doing anything, anywhere in the City. The Board tells him where he may work, where he may sleep and what he may do when he has time on his hands. And yet, he has no say whatsoever in these rules and decisions, except, in some cases, on a consultative basis.

Any person who doubts that Edendale and Pietermaritzburg are interdependent in all respects lives under an illusion. And yet, insofar as the vast majority of the citizens of these areas is concerned, they have no say in their government. A vast bureaucracy, which is essentially remote from the people, is created with wide and absolute powers. What needs to be investigated is how this system works, and what its effects are.

Detentè begins at home. If real detentè is to be achieved, it means nothing more nor less than to give all people who are citizens of South Africa a say in their government, whether at municipal, provincial or government level. The right goes far beyond consultation. For as was said at the beginning, where people have rights, and there are many rights inherent in the mere fact of being citizens, these rights can only be protected if power is distributed evenly. □

MURIEL AT METROPOLITAN

by M. Tlali — Ravan Press: R2,95

Reviewed by Marie Dyer

Muriel at Metropolitan is a short autobiographical novel about the experiences of an African woman working as a clerk in a shop—a seedy, second-rate but profitable establishment selling radios and furniture, mostly on hire-purchase and largely to Africans.

The texture and quality of the life she leads there are vividly conveyed. Her observations are minute and dispassionate, and, as many critics have remarked, this viewpoint is a new one in South African literature. Muriel is intelligent and well-educated, she is exploited by her

employer and she has to work with disagreeable, stupid, but much better paid and more highly privileged white colleagues. Her reactions to their mindless, obtuse and totally insensitive prejudices contain surprises—even revelations—for most white South African readers. Her tone is very often humorous: sometimes wry, but sometimes extraordinarily tolerant; but the sense of an uncompromising personal pride is convincingly conveyed.

The personal humiliations are only some of the several painful aspects of her position. She is anxious to find satisfaction and fulfilment in her job; but the 'shark' H-P firm she works for virtually exists by exploiting her own people. She finds herself having to ask customers for their passes; or writing threatening letters to people whom she knows are simply too poor to pay.

Her own conflicts, her sense of helpless frustration, are expressed as it were episodically, pervading the daily inconclusiveness, irritations, temptations and fatigues of the

job, with only occasional emotional outbursts (like a passionate lament for the destruction of Sophiatown). The pattern of inconclusiveness—the climaxes evaded, the explosions unexpectedly erupting, the feared threats and hoped-for promises coming to nothing—add to the convincing texture and feeling of daily life: unpatterned, full of mild surprises, usually not leading anywhere but continually having to be lived through.

However, as a result of this same formlessness, the genuine climax of action and attitude at the end of the book, though not unexpected, does not appear inevitable; and so some of its moving and significant potential is lost.

The main value of the book, in fact, seems to lie in those aspects of it which are least like a novel and most like a diary or detailed autobiography: the accurate insights into, and dispassionate though vivid and humorous communication of complex everyday experiences.□

ACHIEF IS A CHIEF BY THE PEOPLE

Review by Alan Paton

This book is the life of Mr Stimela Jason Jingoos of Lesotho. It is also an account of the Society into which he was born and is still living in, at the age of 80. It treats in particular of the institution of chieftainship, and tells how first the British Government, and then the independent Lesotho Government, have changed and are changing the institution Mr Jingoos is a Christian, but believes firmly in the immortality of the ancestors, who can do both harm and good, and must be interceded with. It gives also a description of the countryside, with names both of people and places, of rivers and hills and mountains.

These accounts are recorded and the book compiled by John and Cassandra Perry of Rhodes University, Grahamstown. They do not wish to be called editors. Their unobtrusive contribution is outstanding, and has helped to make a fascinating book.

Mr Jingoos himself is a superb story-teller, indeed a teller of many stories, of tribal fights, of celebrated cases in the tribal courts, of herd-boy rivalries. He brings his characters to life, even though a white mind might not always understand them fully. His whole life was not spent in Lesotho. In 1917, he joined the army and went to France. The loyalty of the

Basotho to the British Royal House can only be regarded with wonder. He spent a great slice of his life, from 1927 to 1937, in the service of Clements Kadalie and the I.C.U., the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union of South Africa. At times the work required considerable courage. It meant the challenging of white authority, the employers, the police, and the courts. In 1937 he returned to Lesotho, and now his life became linked with a Chieftainship, the Makhabane line of Mats'ekheng.

Mr Jingoos was the contemporary and close friend of Chief Boshokane, Chief Mitchell's first son. They grew up together, and Mr Jingoos was to see the dark side of chieftainship, and the intrigue and violence that are bound up with the whole matter of succession. Chief Mitchell's second son was Nkuebe. Chieftainess Ma Loela, the grandmother of these two boys, was determined that Nkuebe should succeed his father, because Boshokane's mother was a commoner. Boshokane and Nkuebe were sent to live with their grandmother, but she treated the elder boy so scurvily that he left her, and returned to his paternal home. In due course his father, Chief Mitchell, named Boshokane as his successor, and in due course Boshokane succeeded his father. He called Mr Jingoos to be his clerk and adviser, and put him in charge of his son and heir, the boy Makhabane.