

these will be built a political bridge which will lead peacefully from the present white-supremacist rule to a fully representative, non-racial government?

AFRICAN NATIONALISM DEBATE

REPLY BY PETER ROYLE TO DR. BROOKES' LETTERS IN "LIBERAL OPINION", MAY, 1965, AND AUGUST, 1965

In a healthy democracy there must be vigorous debate. In the course of the following article I shall therefore put my case as sharply as I can. But I wish it to be understood that I intend no rancour, and that my respect for Dr. Brookes withstands the disagreement I shall express with his views.

Dr. Brookes seems to think that my article on nationalism might be a plea for support for the African counterpart of Afrikaner nationalism. How he can believe this, in the light of what I wrote, I find it difficult to understand; and the criticism implied in his request that I define my terms I cannot accept. By "African nationalists" I meant those who are commonly known, both by themselves and by others, as African nationalists. It is as if I were to say: "Christianity is responsible for the Inquisition", and someone were to retort: "But that was not Christianity: Christianity is a religion of brotherhood and love. You must define your terms."

Furthermore, to state that my use of the term "African nationalism" is incorrect is beside the point. It is no doubt incorrect (it is certainly undiplomatic) to use the term "Western bloc" to cover nations such as Japan and Malaysia, but the point is that it is done. And nobody, to my knowledge, allows himself to be confused by it, or sees in it any proof of confusion on the part of those who use the term in this way. In any case, it was partly to **clear up** the confusion caused by the use of the term "nationalist" to describe African freedom movements that I wrote the article to which Dr. Brookes takes exception.

LEAST BAD POLICY

However, this discussion is not a mere war of words. Dr. Brookes seems to believe that if African nationalists are likely to do things which are strictly incompatible with the principles of the Liberal Party, then they should not be supported by Liberals. Now, I do not deny that they **are** likely to do such things. It is quite conceivable, for example, that in this country as in Tanzania, the group that attains power may want to set up a one-party State. But before throwing up our hands in horror, let us concede that in certain circumstances this may be the least bad policy that could be pursued, and that absolute liberalism is often simply impracticable. If, for example, there were strong grounds for believing that one-man-one-vote would lead to the election of a Hitler, it would be stupid and immoral to object to the establishment of a benevolent dictatorship, even though such a régime could not be said to fulfil all the requirements of liberalism. But because liberalism may be impracticable, even immoral, this does not mean that liberals should cease to be liberals, or that they should cease to take part in any form of political activity: it means simply that it is their duty to collaborate with the party that is the least likely to abuse its power when in office and that offers the best prospect of the ultimate triumph of liberalism. The question we must ask, therefore, is not: Does African nationalism conflict at any point with liberalism? It is: Granted that it will conflict with liberalism, should we not nevertheless collaborate with it on the grounds that failure to do so will lead to the perpetuation of something worse and the certain rejection of all liberal ideals on the part of African nationalists?

ABSTRACT MORALISM

Dr. Brookes's approach to this question seems to me to be one of abstract moralism. It is not enough to preach virtue in the hope that one day it will triumph. History is made by men, and to be politically effective one must make an effort to understand them, especially when one disagrees with them.

His attitude to the party's franchise policy is odd. "If [African domination] is what we are asked to approve, what answer have we to the critics of 'one man, one vote' who argue that our policy means the domination of

white by black instead of the reverse?" Surely the only relevant question would be: Is African domination (which term Dr. Brookes is using in its bad sense) likely to result from a policy of one-man-one-vote? In other words, **are** African nationalists Black racialists? If he thinks they are, then it is surely, according to his own way of thinking, irresponsible of him to advocate universal suffrage—unless he thinks a government so elected would **not** be headed by African nationalists; and this, which is almost inconceivable, he clearly does **not** think—or if he does, his question is meaningless.

OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION

Personally, I have no qualms about this policy. The overriding consideration on the African continent is that the humanity that the African has been denied should be restored (on this depends also our own humanity); and, as anyone who attended the Natal Convention so admirably conceived by Dr. Brookes will realize, his disfranchisement has become for him the symbol of his dehumanization. But to advocate one-man-one-vote on this ground would be sentimental if African nationalists were fundamentally racialistic. However, I do not believe they are. They will almost certainly, none the less, find it difficult not to give the Whites a taste of their own medicine if even White liberals wash their hands of them. The best way to end up in the tiger's belly is not to attempt to ride it, but to try and tame it with high-sounding words.

Dr. Brookes says I give the impression that the old philosophies of liberalism are outdated. They **are**. And in saying this, I am not seeking to be fashionable: it is simply that ideals are conceived by men, and men are changed by the history they create. The pursuit of truth does not consist in scanning the heavens for absolutes. I believe, however, that old-fashioned liberalism (dare I say: and therefore Dr. Brookes?) will always fulfil an invaluable

function; but that henceforth, in an age which has understood that man's basic needs can be met only through collective action, this function will be primarily critical.

PRACTICABILITY

All this has been fairly theoretical. But the disagreement between Dr. Brookes and myself has not been about the **practicability** of collaboration with African nationalism, but its moral desirability. The question now arises, however: **Can** the Liberal party do what I ask of it? And if so, how?

First of all, on the question of violence, raised by Dr. Brookes, I wish to say unequivocally that I do not advocate it. However, even though I do not believe that the alternative to violence is impotence or the disbandment of the party (which would be a mistake because it might lead to further demoralization of the non-European population, and also to increased police interference with the Progressives), I must confess that in practice I cannot see many things the party could do that it is not already doing. I should, nevertheless, like to make the following suggestions:

1. Given the impossibility, in view of government legislation and the incarceration of African leaders, of making common cause with nationalist organizations within South Africa, the party should establish fraternal relations with nationalist parties in other parts of Africa: Zambia, Rhodesia, and the protectorates readily spring to mind. And where such relations already exist, let us hear more of them. What has happened, for example, to the connection with President Nyerere and his party? (The party should not establish such relations with parties whose behaviour consistently violates the principles of liberalism, e.g., the Convention People's Party of Ghana.)

2. The party should make more public statements on international issues. Given its inability to contest sensibly even a single seat in the general election, should it not be devoting more attention to its educative task? It is clear that events in the world at large, and especially, of course, in other parts of Africa, are making a great impact on the minds of White South Africans. Should not the Liberal party be continually commenting, praising, excusing, and condemning, so that the public has a clearer image of what it stands for? Can we honestly say we are doing enough to make people face the realities of their age? And doesn't the drift away from liberalism in this country show that even liberals are liable to desert the fold out of a sense of disillusionment brought about by an initial political naïveté that we have failed to dispel, and that we have sometimes been guilty of encouraging? This is not the same as collaborating with African nationalism, but it might at least create a climate in which African nationalism, and consequently the Liberal party, would be less feared.

3. The party should as soon as possible (and I realize that for some time it will be out of the question) elect an African leader. I am not suggesting that at present Africans are being discriminated against: I am simply suggesting that where there are no really good grounds against it (such as incompetence or illiberalism), they should be brought in greater numbers into the policy-making bodies of the party; and that eventually we should aim at having an African national leader. No doubt this suggestion will elicit protests of "inverted racialism" or "discrimination in reverse". And clearly, under normal conditions, one should simply elect the best man for the job, irrespective of race. But in the present circumstances the best man for this particular job **will be an African**. For such a choice would have three extremely beneficial effects. First, it would result in increased African membership. Second, it would bring publicity

for a moderate, liberal African, whose declarations might help to allay White fears, and would, in any case, make it more difficult for White to portray all Africans as racialists (and their difficulty would increase in proportion to the increase in party membership). And, third, it would put Liberals in a stronger position vis-à-vis other left-wing groups when the day of reckoning comes.

"THE NEW TOWNSMEN"

A PAMPHLET ALL SHOULD READ

"Two-thirds of the people of South Africa—the Republic's 12,000,000 African citizens—have no secure right to live and work in the industrialised and developed parts of their own country.

"Any security of residence or employment they may enjoy outside the Reserves is dependent on administrative discretion.

"This, in the starkest and clearest possible terms, is the central fact about South Africa's legislation controlling the lives and movements of Africans."

Thus begins **The New Townsman**, a pamphlet setting out the legal position of Africans in the White areas today, written by Dr. O. D. Wollheim, M.P.C., and published by the Civil Rights League (P.O. Box 3807, Cape Town). The booklet is cheap (it costs ten cents), and it is brief (the front cover tells us that the reading time is twenty minutes). It is something that all South Africans should read. All reasonably alert people are aware that in the last two or three years the laws