

LIBERAL OPINION

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LIBERALS REJECT VIOLENCE

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Public address by the National President,
Mr. Alan Paton, at Liberal Party National
Conference, Johannesburg, October 9 and 10,
1964

EDITOR:

Room 1, 268 Longmarket Street, Pieter-
maritzburg.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet, as you all know, at a critical time in the life of the Liberal Party and Liberalism. And we meet at a critical time in the history of White South Africa, and these two crises cannot be separated.

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Liberalism is in crisis, but it is only in crisis because white South Africa is in crisis. This is a tremendous subject, but it is the subject I have chosen to deal with tonight. I have not come all the way to Johannesburg to avoid the most crucial issues. I have not come all this way to pretend that the bannings of Peter Brown and others are the only cruel blows that have fallen on us. I am going to discuss these other matters in so far as it is proper to do so. I have always recognised in the past that a member of a Party, even if it is a Party that champions liberty and individualism, is not free to do or say anything in a purely individual capacity. Still less is a President. But a President also has other duties. He is not merely a mouthpiece of his Party, he is also out there in front, whether he likes it or not, whether he merits it or not. So on this

occasion I am going to speak openly and freely. Some of you may not like everything I am going to say. But whatever I say is said as a Party President whose first responsibility is to his Party.

VIOLENCE

Any person who while a member of the Party plans to use violence against things or persons is not only guilty of an offence against the law, he is also guilty of grave disloyalty to the Party . . . Above all, any person who calls himself a Liberal and who plans violence against persons is not really a Liberal at all. He may burn against injustices to others, and burn to set them right. He may be a zealot. He may be dedicated to his cause. But he is not a Liberal. And what is more, if he persists in his plans, he is likely to do grave damage to the whole cause of Liberalism; how great such damage might be is at the moment impossible to predict . . .

If I stopped there, if I said no more, I should be failing in my duty as a Liberal and a President of a Liberal Party. It may comfort shallow and fearful people if they place the whole blame for violence on those who commit it. It is comforting to believe that apartheid would have been a glorious success if only people had not opposed it. And it is doubly comforting when those people are believed to be wicked persons, whereas oneself is almost without sin. One is able to see oneself as the great defender of good against evil. And this is the comfort that many a White South African lays to his soul. Yet it is utterly false. It bears no relation to the facts at all. The primary cause of sabotage is not the saboteur. The primary cause of sabotage in South Africa is the policy of apartheid, whether it is called by its old name of baasskap, or its new name of separate development. When persons who would normally have led law-abiding lives are tempted to resort to violence, especially when they themselves are temperamentally unsuited to use violence, and when they risk the destruction of their careers, the end or the virtual end of their lives as husbands and wives and parents, then one realises the depth and strength of the compulsions that are at work. A good government does not force its citizens to such extremes.

I do not presume to speak about the inner stresses and strains that go on in the minds of saboteurs. But I can speak with authority about the external causes. What self-respecting Afrikaner Nationalist would have con-

sented to a Job Reservation law that debarred Afrikaners from certain occupations? What self-respecting Transvaal or Free State Afrikaner would have consented to a law which controlled his movements into Natal and the Cape Province? What would Afrikaner Nationalists have done if the Nationalist Party had been banned? What would they have done if they had suffered the detentions, the banishments, the bannings, which they have inflicted on others? There have been many trials in this country of people who have carried on the work of banned organisations, but the Afrikaner Nationalist would have done the same. There is no essential difference between a Sobukwe and a Malan, except that one succeeded and one did not. While I condemn the use of violence in this country, I understand why some people are under a compulsion to commit it. And I ask myself, what would I have done if I had been 30 years younger. Would I have been a Leibbrandt or a van Blerk? I do not know. And because I do not know, I can but guess at what lies behind the terrible decision to risk the destruction of one's life, one's career, one's home, one's happiness and the happiness of one's wife and children. And I can but say, thank God it didn't happen to me.

CAUSE FOR PRIDE

There is one thing of which the Liberal Party can be proud, that in these recent years of bannings and intimidations, and in these recent anxious months of detentions and arrests and charges, there have been no defections. I recall with pride tonight the actions of the Liberals who showed such concern for those who were in desperate need, not forgetting the wives and children of those who were detained and arrested. I shan't go into detail about this, but you will know what I am talking about. And I am proud of those African members who are here tonight, in spite of all the bannings.

There is another point I want to make quite clear tonight. Sabotage may still be used to discredit Liberalism. Yet the fear and hatred of Liberalism must be distinguished from the fear of sabotage. Peter Brown was not banned because he encouraged and countenanced sabotage. He was banned because he believed in and propagated an idea which is dangerous to baasskap, the idea that South Africa has only one destiny, the idea that South Africa is one society, and the idea that every South African should participate in the government of his country, and that so long as

he does not, he will continue to suffer the cruelties of job reservation, of race classification, of influx control. **Why does Liberalism arouse such hatred in the Nationalist heart? Is it because it threatens civilisation, or because it threatens baasskap? Why are such savage steps taken against a relatively powerless organisation? It is because it holds a powerful idea, a powerful idea that will in the end bring crashing down the whole structure of baasskap, with its gross inequalities of wealth and privilege. And it ought to be brought down too. It is no doubt true that the standard of living has risen for all in South Africa, but the shocking disparity between white and non-white income remains. There can be no lasting peace for this country until an active programme is launched to distribute more equitably the wealth of our country.**

It may be true that many of our African citizens enjoy a higher standard of living than is enjoyed by many citizens of other African countries. The aim of the Liberal Party is not to keep ahead of other African countries; its aim is to ensure the more equitable distribution of wealth and privilege here at home. And we think it can be done. We believe that the rate of economic expansion in South Africa, spectacular as it is, could be made even more spectacular if the racial and economic barriers were removed, that we could have an industrial revolution here that would, without totalitarian control and interference in the lives of citizens, strike a death blow at poverty. We shall consider this further tomorrow.

This present crisis, of which Liberals are most intensely aware, is in fact a crisis of us all, a crisis of freedom. It is not only Liberalism that faces a crisis, but every kind of non-conformity, whether of politics, religion, or literature. Every kind of opposition is facing the crisis. Take the most recent example. The Nationalists, disliking the idea of being on the same electoral roll as Coloured people, ordered them to be put on a separate roll; but the Nationalists, disliking equally the idea of sitting in the same Parliament as Coloured people, ordered them to be represented by white persons. Now comes along the Progressive Party, prepared to use this form of representation created by the Nationalists. But Dr. Verwoerd is outraged; he warns the Progressive Party not to "interfere" in non-white politics. How then may a white person solicit the support of Coloured voters? There is only one answer. He must be a Nationalist.

I give the reply of the Liberal Party to Dr.

Verwoerd's warning. We have no intention whatever of heeding it. We are not a "white" Party, and we do not recognise "non-white" politics. We recognise only one politics, and that is the politics of South Africa, and that means how to create a society out of our diversity of peoples. We intend to pursue this course as long as we are able.

" THIS SMILING MAN "

It is time white South Africans awakened to the direction in which Dr. Verwoerd, this benevolent and smiling man, is leading them. He is promising them security at the expense of everything that makes life worth living. He tells us that the race question is disappearing from the scene, and this in a country where Sobukwe is jailed indefinitely, where Mandela is jailed for life, where Luthuli is confined, where hundreds are in prison for continuing political activities, where Mantanzima is feted on the very Reef where not one of his own people has any real liberty, where Indian bar-men are thrown out of their jobs because their occupation has been reserved, where a white person who is classified as Coloured has no grounds of appeal unless he does it in 30 days.

Where are we going? We have recently witnessed the unedifying spectacle of leading Rotarians assuring the Prime Minister that they stand four-square behind the Government. What business is it of Rotary to support any Government? These leaders have degraded the ideal of Rotary, and their motto should be "subservience before self". In any case Rotary itself suffers from a lie in the soul, because it is a colour-bar society in an international organisation, like the International Arts League of Youth, which is a colour-bar society with an international name.

I not only ask where we are going. I ask where Dr. Verwoerd is going. Is he losing his grip on himself? Is it not a fantastic thing that Dr. Verwoerd, when he is so anxious to unite white people, should write to the Methodist Church in such insulting language? And why does he do it? Because he is beside himself to think that after 16 years of Nationalist rule, the Methodist Church of South Africa should dare to elect an African as its President. But the Methodist Church is in crisis itself, as indeed all Christian churches are in South Africa. Congratulations to the Diocese of Pretoria on its decision to do away with racial discrimination in stipends. But the other dioceses, and the other churches, including the

Methodist Church, have a long way to go. When people stand aside and pity or execrate the Liberal Party, let them remember that their own crisis is no less grave. What could be graver than the crisis of the Dutch Reformed Church, which, though a Christian Church, affirms the colour bar, not merely within society but within the church. The Prime Minister levels the charge of hypocrisy against the Methodists. The truth is that the charge can be levelled against all humanity, and not least against the Prime Minister himself. The important thing is not whether people and organisations are hypocritical, but whether they know they are and try to be less so. The Liberal crisis is merely the white spot that indicates the presence of a monstrous suppuration throughout the whole body politic. This is not primarily a crisis of law and order caused by saboteurs, it is primarily a crisis of freedom caused by apartheid.

A CHALLENGE

I quote from the Christian Recorder of today. "If this noble spirit of liberal thinking and liberal living passes from the South African scene, we have harmed the future, almost beyond repair. We will have educated and shaped a generation, perhaps two, without any knowledge of the liberal spirit in their education and growth. That means that in 10 or 15 years' time, we will have a crop of adults who have no knowledge of the proper relation between freedom and responsibility, so important for the happiness of a nation and its people." These are important words. The editorial goes on, "we look to the churches to maintain that high religion which causes the liberal spirit to flower." Well, that is a challenge, because sometimes churches try to maintain the high religion, but they don't want the liberal spirit to flower." I am reminded of the saying of Samuel Butler, who said it was the greatest wish of English parents that their children would learn Christian principles, and their greatest fear that they would live by them. We don't need lip service to the liberal spirit; we need people who will live by it.

That's what we need, men and women who will live by the liberal spirit. The days are dark, and I think Dr. Verwoerd and Mr. Vorster will make them yet darker. But I think it is a good sign that the Prime Minister is provoked into insolence by the presence of nonconformity. It shows—whatever the omens

may appear to be—that liberalism is a powerful force, much more powerful than its proponents. Never forget that. The ideas don't die, and they live in you. And while they live in you, there's hope for our people and our country.

REPUBLICA CORRUPTISSIMA

THE STRANGLEHOLD OF THE LAW

BY A LAWYER

The increasing regulation of life by law is a phenomenon which all Western countries have experienced this century. The "laissez faire" policy of government has been exchanged for one which demands a higher degree of State intervention and regulation in the interest of general welfare.

In South Africa the increased regulation of life, especially in its economic aspects, is reflected in laws dealing with wages, work conditions, financial institutions and factories, to take only a few random examples. What distinguishes our country from the many other Western countries with which it shares these developments is that legislative intervention in this country is not restricted to the economic sector of life but has encroached into other spheres.

A SINISTER DEVELOPMENT

In the economic sphere an increased measure of State control is obviously desirable, but in other departments of life legal regulation is a sinister development. The extent of the invasion of law into non-economic areas of life in South Africa is alarming, and the following matters are subject, in a varying degree, to legal regulation:

1. **What people may read, write or say. The control goes far beyond suppression of pornographic material.**
2. **Marriage and sexual relations—between whom these may take place.**
3. **What people may and may not be neighbours.**
4. **With whom people may associate—both socially and politically.**