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GIVE GROUND WHILE YOU CAN
by Arthur Keppel - Jones

**AN ADDRESS TO THE FEDERAL
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**
by Prof. C. L. S. Nyembezi

TRADE UNION ORGANISATION IN THE 1920's
by Sheila Hindson and Selby Msimang



A JOURNAL OF LIBERAL AND RADICAL OPINION

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NOTE The last issue of Reality was incorrectly numbered and dated. The top of Page 2 should have read — Vol. 8 No. 6 — January 1977

EDITORIALS

1 1977-ANOTHER GRIM YEAR?

1976 was a bad year for South Africa. Will 1977 be any better?

1976 was the year of the student revolt — in Soweto, the Black university colleges, the Coloured and African townships of the Western Cape, and dozens of other places. It was the year in which an unknown number of Black people died or were injured through police action, or at the hands of thugs whose activities the police have been unable or unwilling to control for years, or in clashes between permanent urban dwellers and migrant workers which some people claim were provoked by the police. It was the year in which over a thousand young people fled from the attentions of these same police to shelter in Swaziland and Botswana — a much more spectacular potential accretion to the strength of an external guerilla army than years of PAC and ANC recruiting could have hoped to achieve. It was the year in which death

in detention became commonplace — it happened more than once a month on average. It was the year of the Angola debacle, of steady deterioration in the Rhodesian situation, of the withering away of 'detente', of total isolation at the UN. It was the year of the fall in the gold price, of massive inflation, of widespread and growing unemployment. And it was also the year of Transkei independence, an irrelevant distraction from the real issues which face us.

Looking at this catalogue it would be comforting to conclude that no year could possibly be worse than 1976, but could not 1977 be? Things in Rhodesia will almost certainly get worse this year. There is no one in public life in that country, either Black or White, who is big enough to pull its conflicting elements together. Our economic situation is also likely to deteriorate. Already the estimates of unemployment are starting to pass the million mark. Most

depressing of all, the attitude of the government towards the obvious and urgent need for change in the basic cause of all the trouble, its own policies, offers no hope that each year it remains in office can do anything but make our situation worse.

Although many boycotting Black children returned to school in the new year, and the Government has promised improvements in Bantu Education, the fact is that "Bantu Education" and "Coloured Education" remain, and these are what Black people don't want. Discriminatory education was a central issue in the upheavals of 1976. It is rejected by parents, teachers and students alike, and while it remains, any spark could set off a series of explosions as widespread as those of last year. And, of course, it is not only discriminatory education, but everything else that goes with it to make up the policy of apartheid, that people reject. But this rejection, as the opening session of the 1977 Parliament made sadly clear, is something the Government will neither acknowledge nor do anything about. While one Black person after another, in evidence before the Cillie Commission has given this deep-seated Black hatred of the present system as the basic cause of Soweto and its aftermath, the Nationalist response has been to blame it all on agitators, to take steps to protect its agents from the consequences of any illegal action they may have taken during the disturbances, and to threaten legislation which will ensure that, next time something similar happens, we won't know about it. Thus there will be an Indemnity Bill, retrospective to June 16th last year, to make it virtually impossible for anyone who has suffered as a result of police action, to get redress. And there are strong indications that a law will be introduced which

will make it impossible for the Press to publish accounts of future police action, before these have been cleared by the authorities.

What of any lasting value will all this achieve? The Minister of Justice started the year off, waving Russian-made weapons and booby-traps about in the House of Assembly, telling us they had been found in Soweto, where an urban guerilla movement had been crushed. He also told the Assembly that some people who die in the hands of the Security Police do so because they are under orders to commit suicide rather than talk. And he announced, with pride it seems, that there are already 52 trials under the Terrorism Act scheduled to be heard in 1977.

As well as making all these dramatic announcements, shouldn't the Minister be asking himself a few questions? Like — how is it that a policy, which it was said would bring only peace and goodwill, instead, after 29 years, has produced people who, if the Minister is to be believed, are prepared to die, either as urban guerillas or in detention, to get rid of it? Or, how have we moved from a situation in 1948 where political trials of Black people were virtually unknown to one where several dozen can be going on at the same time? Shouldn't the policy be changed?

But the policy will not be changed. Mr Vorster himself has said so. He has again told the House of Assembly, in his first speech of the year, that the only place an urban African can hope to exercise political rights is in a homeland. It is this unyielding adherence to the illusion that urban Africans do not belong to "White South Africa" which ensures that the rest of 1977 will be grim.□

2 A VALUABLE CONFERENCE

The Conference of the South African Institute of Race Relations, held at the Edenroc Hotel in Durban from January 11th to the 14th, was a success — but of course the word "success" has a very qualified, scaled-down meaning in the bleak South Africa of 1977.

The theme of the conference was "The urgent need for fundamental change in South Africa". The speakers — both those at the lectern and those on the floor — expressed a variety of viewpoints and emphases (at one end of the spectrum there were the classical capitalists, at the other were radicals and the proponents of black consciousness); but, in the face of the present situation in the country, there was an essential unanimity of attitudes: the structures of South African society must be changed fundamentally and rapidly if the country is to avoid ever-increasing violence, confusion and despair. This was found to be true of every important sphere of the national life — the political, the economic, the social, the educational, the ecclesiastical. And what is above all needed (it was agreed) is a real movement towards general participation, a sharing of initiative and power.

The conference was haunted — as such gatherings inevitably are — by the knowledge that the power of the state and of the police is directed specifically against any real sharing (Sham

sharing, of course, is another matter.) For many members of the conference the underlying sense of haunted gloom may have focussed on something more precise: the image, now familiar on television screens, of the face of the Prime Minister — hard, unhappy, impassive, incapable of any movement either of imagination or of generosity.

But gloom was not allowed to dominate and paralyse the conference. Everyone seemed to feel that certain things could be done and must be done; and indeed there was probably a tacit agreement that Mr Vorster's stolid misery is preferable to the smiling pseudo-omniscience of Dr Verwoerd.

And so there were many plans and suggestions. Of all these, two proposals stood out firmly: (i) that, after due investigation and perhaps in collaboration with other bodies, the Institute set up an agency which would have as its sole aim the changing of the attitudes of the white population; and (ii) that — while recognising that its own efforts could never be a substitute for the real thing — the Institute consider calling its own National Convention. Both recommendations were accepted, after the Conference, by the Institute's Council and Executive Committee. Let us hope, then, that before long some cheering events may begin to take place.□

SELBY MSIMANG AND TRADE UNION ORGANISATION IN THE 1920's

Compiled by Sheila Hindson from Interviews with Selby Msimang.

I have, throughout my life, been associated with many groups, amongst them the African National Congress, the Joint Council of Europeans and Africans, the South African Institute of Race Relations and the Liberal Party. These activities have been well documented by others. People often ask me about my activities in the period just after the First World War, when I was organising workers. I have chosen to speak about this aspect of my life because it is perhaps the least well known, and perhaps the most interesting from many points of view. Perhaps, too, it will throw light on and dispel certain myths and misunderstandings about the early days of the ICU, and my relationship with Clements Kadalie.

My consciousness of exploitation came to me when I started working on the mines. I had had a good missionary education at the Wesleyan Institutions of Kilnerton, Edendale and Healdtown. At these places I had learned Sotho and some Xhosa. With the advantages of my education and these African languages, I became interpreter to a mining inspector on the Rand. His job was to enforce mining and labour regulations, collect taxes, and generally see that the mine workers carried out their work properly. If workers had complaints they would come to our office to make a statement. This was at no small cost, for they lost labour-time, for which they were not paid. But the workers grievances were seldom dealt with satisfactorily. This was the beginning of real understanding for me. Of course I had experienced many of the indignities and iniquities of the South African social system, from personal insult to pass laws. But for the first time I began to see the chain that linked the mines to the poverty of the reserves.

I saw how a man recruited from his home would already be in debt to the local trader, who was usually also the local recruiter. He would supply the worker's family with food before he left home. The cost of this, and of transport to the mines, would be deducted from his pay. The scale of pay was so low, that a worker could not even make £3.00 in three months. In fact, some would wait for up to four months before being in a position to send even a small remittance home. When we speak of the poverty of the reserves, we must remember why. With this

situation, my job was most painful, for we, the tax collectors, would then come along and claim £1.00 for tax. It was the intolerably low wages on the mines that first set my mind thinking along the lines of organising workers for better living and working conditions.

As a result of the devastation of the Natives Land Act of 1913 and our treatment by employers during the First World War, I was further convinced that our salvation as a race lay in the harnessing of our power as workers. The operation of the Natives Land Act in 1913 forced great numbers of Africans off the land. Our people had truly become victims of a devilish conspiracy to destroy our economic independence and compel us to submit to a pernicious form of slavery. It should be remembered that the Anglo-Boer War had left many Boers in a state of dire poverty and many of them had abandoned their farms to take up employment in the gold mines. They had left their farms in the hands of Africans on a half share basis. Many Africans had seized the opportunity to make good profits. There developed among them a healthy competitive spirit. All this was taken away from them. Africans were deprived of the right to lease or purchase property on the free market, or in any way to have an interest in land. The Act made squatting and share cropping by Africans illegal. Most of the evicted families drifted into urban and industrial areas having lost their livestock and means of subsistence. The suffering was immeasurable. The First World War ended in 1918, and was immediately followed by a most devastating influenza epidemic. I felt that the time was ripe to organise the people on a number of fronts.

During the whole period of the war, African wages had remained static in spite of the rising cost of living. White employers seemed unaware of the discontent that was building up amongst workers. Families were unable to make ends meet. Unrest might flare up at any moment. I was living in Bloemfontein at this time, and decided that the only way to remedy the situation was to organise workers in the town for higher wages, particularly those in municipal employment. By this time I was beginning to make a name for myself in the location, because I had managed to expose the maladministration of location funds. The matter had been corrected

to the advantage of the location accounts. So when I called a meeting early in 1919, people came to listen to me. Existing wages were two shillings a day; hardly enough to maintain a man with a family of five, when the cost of living was so high. My plan was to put pressure on white employers by means of mass meetings. All our meetings were attended by a reporter from "The Friend", who gave us a very good press. The town thus became aware of our agitation.

Our demand was for an increase of 2/6d a day, to bring wages up to 4/6d. This figure was not arbitrary, it had been arrived at by computing the necessities of life. The City Council's response was to call a meeting of the Advisory Board, consisting of nominated and elected members, to ask them to outline their position in the affair. The Advisory Board refused to support us and accepted a rise of sixpence a day on existing wages. I was incensed and wrote to "The Friend" saying that Board members had no right to make agreements for the workers, whose interests they did not represent. I rejected their suggestion outright. The next development was that I was invited, with my committee, to meet councillors and employers to discuss the matter. I invited some members of the Advisory Board to join the committee, thus swinging some of them over to our side. The meeting was inconclusive, with employers failing to agree with one another about a fair wage.

The strategy we adopted in trying to achieve our demands was fairly simple, but required co-operation amongst the workers. There was to be no hostility and all employers were to be approached during tea break on a particular day with the demand for a daily wage of 4/6d. This went according to plan. Only the washerwomen, interestingly enough, were a bit aggressive. They refused to do the washing unless they were paid 4/6d. Confused housewives telephoned their husbands, only to find that their workers were demanding the same thing. That is how things were in Bloemfontein in those days.

I had no notion of calling a strike. We were not organised enough, nor did we have any strike funds to see us through such an eventuality. But some of my men, influenced perhaps from outside, thought otherwise. They demanded a strike. I pointed out that if they could go from house to house in the location, collecting £1.00 from each household, to establish a fund, then we could consider a strike. The matter rested there, for at this point I was arrested and charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act. Though I was not long in jail, when I came out martial law had been withdrawn and the local situation had altered. I tried to reorganise the workers, only to find that the municipal employees, the largest proportion of our members, had been persuaded by the white municipal trade union, to join them. They were enticed with the offer of better benefits. I warned the workers that they were making a mistake. The motives of the municipal trade union were self-interested: to control African wages in order to increase white wages, and to cause divisions within our ranks, and so weaken our ability to combine successfully for higher wages.

I began to realize at the same time that one of the major causes of our weakness as a community was lack of funds. This was so not only in the case of trade unions, but in all aspects of our life. So I devised a scheme for setting up a sort of self-help fund in every Free State town as a means of fighting discrimination. I printed a thousand cards and travelled from town to town, holding public and private

meetings in the locations, urging the people to organise themselves. When I left Bloemfontein, I had enough money to reach Thaba'Nchu. All I required was to be reimbursed for the cost of printing and my travel expenses; hospitality was accorded to me in each town. Most towns took the idea seriously and were able to raise huge sums of money. Frankfort alone was able to assist Sol. T. Plaatje with £100.00 when he was stranded in England with the second ANC deputation after the war.

The work of setting up these funds, and organising committees to administer them, was entirely independent of the ANC. My plan was that in each town and district, vigilance committees would be set up to look after the interests of the people in the district. Once the committee and fund were set up in each town, I did not keep track of what happened to them. It was to be an exercise in the organisation of self help schemes. Only later, when I was living in Johannesburg, did I learn from Keable Mote, a member of Kadalie's Industrial and Commercial Workers Union, that the ICU had reaped where I had sown. Most of these embryonic organisations set up to protect communities, were captured by the ICU, and their funds appropriated and dissipated because of lack of control. The people were left stranded.

After I had been arrested under the Riotous Assemblies Act in March 1919, Clements Kadalie started communicating with me. I was invited to address a meeting of the ICU when it was first launched in Cape Town in August 1919. I spent ten days with Kadalie, in which time I got to know him well. We decided to call a conference of all workers and existing worker organisations in Bloemfontein the next year. I reported these moves to the ANC conference, but it decided to hold aloof from these activities, and as a result suffered declining popularity. In July 1920 the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union conference convened in Bloemfontein. The Cape Town delegation attended in full force, led by Clements Kadalie, who was acting secretary of the conference. The draft constitution submitted by the Cape delegation was adopted. Though they wished to abbreviate the name of the organisation to ICU, the majority opinion at the conference chose ICWU, the full initials.

At the election of office bearers, I was chosen as President. The office of General Secretary, surprisingly, went to a Kimberley teacher, Mr Mache, in spite of Kadalie having the full backing of the Cape delegation, as well as my own support. In protest they left the conference with Kadalie, who took with him all the conference papers, including the draft constitution. I did not wish to confuse the issue for workers and thereby split the movement, so over the next few months I tried to negotiate a compromise with Kadalie. He was unwilling to work with me or come to a compromise, so towards the end of 1920 I decided to resign. I handed the Bloemfontein group over to him and left for Johannesburg.

Immediately after the July conference, events occurred in Port Elizabeth which were to advance support for the new organisation. Samuel Masabalala had left the conference to begin organising in Port Elizabeth among both Africans and Coloureds. The response was tremendous. He called on workers to demand 10 shillings a day. The City Council tried to counter this by inviting Dr Rubusana, a noted African leader from East London, to use his influence against Masabalala. At his first meeting, Rubusana was assaulted by some of Masabalala's followers, but it was Masabalala

who was arrested and charged with assault. At this, a large group of workers marched on the Court House to demand his release. It was met by a fusillade of firearms, and twenty-three people were shot dead.

I was urgently called to Port Elizabeth by the Secretary of the ICWU branch. Upon my arrival I heard that the workers were planning a strike. I realized that here was a very delicate situation, feeling was running high, and the least mistake might end in a bloodbath. My reception amongst the workers was favourable, and I announced that on the Sunday morning we would hold a service at the graves of the 23 victims, and in the afternoon we would meet to discuss our strategy. Meanwhile I met the Mayor, the Magistrate and the Chief of Police, all of whom I assured that I had no preconceived plans and wished to settle the matter fairly and peacefully.

A white Presbyterian minister held the church service, attended by 30,000 people, men and women, African and Coloured. It went off without incident, except for one tense moment when two white youths appeared. The crowd started shouting at them, so I quickly told them to go away. That afternoon, on a hillock just outside Korsten, I faced the same huge crowd on my dais, a packing case on the back of a lorry. There were Xhosa and Coloured interpreters scattered around the great concourse. You could see the mounted police in the distance. It was a trying time for me. I, a complete stranger, had to win the confidence of the people. It must have been a moving speech, for there were tears on many of the faces before me. I urged for an opportunity to meet employers and present the workers case, and hence I asked for a reversal of the strike resolution. My pleas were unanimously accepted. I promised, too, to try and secure Masabalala's release.

The Mayor and employers met me with my committee the next day. The Mayor congratulated me for averting trouble. Almost to a man, however, the employers blamed Masabalala for the upheaval amongst the workers. I argued that if Masabalala had not raised the voice of the workers, some worse crisis might have occurred. There was already in existence a smouldering volcano of dissatisfaction, which was on the verge of eruption. To meet the workers demands might avert this. The Mayor urged us all to negotiate. A committee composed of five representatives from each group was appointed to discuss the matter. It decided to recommend a minimum wage of six shillings for inexperienced, unskilled workers, while a sliding scale for more experienced workers in different categories would need to be negotiated. The wage had been 2/8d per day. I thought we had achieved something of a success.

Masabalala's case remained to be settled. Dr Rubusana agreed to settle the matter out of court, and Masabalala was released. I briefed him on the developments that had taken place. To my surprise he rejected the compromise, and announced that he was prepared to fight for a minimum wage of 10 shillings a day. But his stand did not win the support of the workers. Negotiations with employers were not yet complete, we still had to negotiate the sliding scale for more experienced workers. When Masabalala opposed this, he lost the support of most of the people. I remained in Port Elizabeth for another month trying to consolidate the work begun by Masabalala.

On my return to Bloemfontein, when it became clear that Kadalie would not contemplate working with me, I resigned



From "History of the TUC"

from the ICWU. The Port Elizabeth affair was the last time I participated in ICWU activities. I felt we could not run two parallel organisations, it would confuse the issue. Some years later, when the ICU had a large membership in Johannesburg, and Kadalie was on a visit to England, A.W.G. Champion approached me to help once again in the movement. Champion had decided that he wanted to return to Natal and organise there, and he needed an organiser in Johannesburg. At this time I was aware that there was no control over the finances of the ICU. For this reason I declined to rejoin.

When I arrived in Johannesburg, I received a message through S.M. Makgatho, at this time President of the ANC in the Transvaal, to see Madeley, Labour M.P. for Benoni. Madeley had certain funds sent to him by an international workers organisation or union in England to use for organising African trade unions. A white man had been employed to do this, but had been unsuccessful. He had then approached Makgatho, asking him to recommend someone to do this work. He thought of me. When I went to see Madeley, he told me that funds had been exhausted, but he hoped to be able to raise more from his English sources. I had been working for a month, when, in January, the 1922 strike broke out. I could do little during this time. I saw Madeley after the strike, but he had been unable to secure funds for me, so the job fell through. I then became immersed in the struggle against the Urban Areas Bill and thenceforward had little to do with trade union activity.

Despite all our struggles, I have never felt the futility of our efforts. The belief I had in the 1920's in trade unionism and other community organisation has remained with me. I still believe that if we could so organise our people as to be ready and willing to withhold their labour when called upon to do so, it would be the most powerful weapon we have.]]

ANYWAY, NO WHITE MAN HERE WOULD THINK LIKE THIS

by Gertrud Strauss

She is black, not white like my wife beside me in her beach-robe on the sand. She is a young girl, Zulu probably, not approaching bad-tempered middle age as my wife is, and I am watching her without any intention of getting to know her. Or of getting closer to the borderline of sand and water where she is.

What caught my eye at first was her manner of undressing. She'd come to the beach in red taffeta — she'd waded with her bare feet and gone a bit deeper till the spray had got her hem wet. She seemed intent then on getting more of the cool wetness on her skin and took the taffeta shift off. I really thought she'd be naked underneath but she had a bathing costume on, conservative blue, one-piece and neat, and revealed a taut good body. The taffeta dress she quickly took to the waiting children, four of them, one toddler, two little girls and an older boy, all sitting obediently in a row, watching her run in for a swim.

I can see her now, eager with anticipation, I know she wants to share in the excitement of the waves, but she comes to a stop gradually, a little frightened. They don't usually learn to swim and she can't, I'm sure, else nothing would keep her from flinging herself into the surging movement. She bends down and scoops up the water that has swirled round her ankles and sprays it with cupped hands onto the full length of her legs, her arms and body.

She hardly moves her legs at all, as though she were standing perched on a rock in the middle of a stream. Where I imagine she must have learnt those movements of bending down to all sides and scooping water. And that central pivot, the controlled inner point of the outgoing movement, it's astonishing how it grips me. And I could go on watching her doing just this for a very long time.

Only, now she turns to the children and sees the boy with a white plastic bucket marked "Economic P.V.A.". He has undressed without my taking notice and now sits stark naked, happily awaiting each wave. When it subsides one sees all of his body, big tummy, penis and all. She beckons to him to bring her the bucket. He's just tried to catch an inch of water with it but obeys her immediately. Without shifting her feet or bending her legs much, she reaches down to receive the onshoot of the wave in the bucket which she holds surrounded with both hands and flicks up to empty it all over the length of herself.

Now she scoops less water holding the bucket by its rim with one hand only, to pour down into the bathing costume

which she pulls at with her free hand, leaving a gap between the fitted bra and her breasts. She draws her tummy in too, I can see it quite well, to let the gap go down like a funnel for the water to be poured into. Her back seems eel-like elastic; she bends it, straightens it, and pours again and again to delight in the feel of the cold liquid running down her naked flesh inside the costume.

It's a bit silly perhaps, all this bucket-splashing, when the whole surf foams and rejoices just beyond where she dares to go, but I'm happy that here the beaches haven't yet been zoned and I can just sit and watch her, even with my wife reading sun-bespectacled next to me.

The internal cleansing has given her all she can get out of it and now she must share. For she runs with a filled bucket to each one of the dry children and empties it against them. They like it too and laugh, not minding their dripping clothes. The youngest one is tentative and looks frightened but he doesn't flinch and receives the flood bravely. She finishes his wash by wiping the snotty nose with a much practised movement of the back of her hand. He's had his bath now, she's quite satisfied with all of them and looks for her taffeta dress on the dry sand.

But one can't wear that over a wet bathing costume. Nor does she, as it's not in the least bit odd to her to bare her breasts to the sea wind by pulling down the top of her costume. Then, with arms lifted, she finds her way into the stiff material of her shift and has to smoothe it over the wet skin that clings to it at every point. When the skirt hangs down far enough, up to mid-thigh, she gropes under it, not caring how much she lifts it again, to pull down the costume from underneath. Of course I know as she does this that she won't have any dry panties to wear.

I turn to watch her as she walks flat-footed up the beach sands with the procession of little children struggling on behind her. Inside the red taffeta stiffness she carries her body straight, but a black V of skin shows up between the shoulder-blades where the zip stays undone.

Once or twice she half turns round and speaks to the children very loudly, ordering them to get a move on. It spoils it a bit, the impatient female bossiness, but it might as well, seeing that I'm not supposed to be watching a black woman like this anyway. □

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The white alternative...

GIVE GROUND WHILE YOU CAN

Reprinted from the Sunday Tribune January 16, 1977

by Prof. Arthur Keppel-Jones

The future of South Africa will be decided by the Western powers, indirectly by the South African Government and its black and white opponents.

The Western powers, of which the United States is the one that counts could not afford to fight for South Africa in its present form even against a direct Soviet attack. To do so would be to drive the Third World, which means most of three continents into the arms of the Russians. All South Africa's wealth and strategic bases could not compensate for that.

American and other Western support against Soviet imperialism would be given only if the West were satisfied that enough concessions had been made to black demands.

What they regarded as big enough would depend mainly on the judgment of South African blacks and Third World governments.

Nothing short of total surrender of political and economic power to the black majority would satisfy black radicals, either in South Africa or elsewhere.

But if the radicals were in control, they would let the Russians in anyway.

If this were the alternative, the whites would no doubt prefer to die with their boots on.

But this is not the only alternative to the status quo. The Western powers would not want the Russians to take control of South Africa. There are several Third World countries that would not want it either. All would settle for less than a total surrender to radical demands, and there may still be enough black South Africans to accept a system in which power was shared and minorities protected.

Everything therefore, depends on concessions by the South African Government and acceptance of them by its opponents. Time is running out. White South Africa is like a fish which the receding tide has left stranded on the beach.

What has receded is the tide, flowing for the last few centuries and, being at its flood early in this one, of white racial supremacy in the world.

By using very forceful means to preserve that supremacy within their own borders the white South Africans have been able to avoid noticing that the tide has gone out.

It is a dangerous delusion, but also a natural one. It is not easy for anyone to adjust to colossal changes occurring at

great speed, or to the realisation that the familiar world is about to crash in ruins. But the effort is worth making if something can be saved from the wreck.

Can it? If by something it means white racial supremacy, privilege and exclusiveness then the answer is no. But those are not the only things that are threatened.

Peace, stability, individual liberty, the rule of law (these at present in a rather battered condition), government by consent (not now a characteristic of African countries, white or black), and private property (a sacred cow to Americans) are at stake too.

Can some of all this be saved if racial discrimination is genuinely abandoned? The omens are not good, because, over the years, white governments have gone to some lengths to ensure that none of these things, except peace of a sort is attainable.

That makes it easy for them to believe they "have nothing to lose but their chains." Yet, if the chances are not good now, they will be worse later. The longer the whites delay the surrender of their monopoly of power and privilege, the higher the price they will have to pay when the inevitable surrender is made.

Thirty years ago they could have struck a good bargain but they chose apartheid instead.

The body of moderate Africans dwindles all the time. In 1976, the Coloured people braved the police bullets for no other reason than to show they sided with the blacks against the whites — the ultimate result of the subversion of the Constitution in 1955.

The whites cannot escape from this trap by the use of force.

There is a strong temptation for them to do so because of their vast superiority over the blacks in this respect. But they should remember the Americans had a force greatly superior to that of the North Vietnamese.

Nearer home, Milner, the most powerful man in South African history, made the mistake of thinking that people were inanimate pieces on a chessboard, to be pushed around as the player chose. He failed, and the Americans failed.

If white South Africa chose to preserve the status quo by an unlimited use of its physical power it would fail too. Physical

force can win a battle, but cannot hold a society together if most of its members are alienated.

Nor if — as would happen in this case — its use resulted in the total and active hostility of the rest of the world.

There is nothing to do but to get rid of racial discrimination — and to do it quickly. But what then? If it is done, it will be done to prevent a Communist take-over.

A surrender of power which leads to a Communist take-over anyway is therefore, ruled out.

Can the baby be saved when the bathwater is emptied?

This appears to be the object of the negotiations for a new, united and expanded opposition party. Such a party would be caught on the horns of a familiar old dilemma.

To have any hope of achieving power under the present dispensation, it would have to win the support of a large number of Nationalist voters, and to do that it would have to water down its non-racial principles to the point almost of non-existence.

If it stood by its principles, it would have no hope of achieving power. That is what happened when the old game was played according to the old rules. But the old rules are not likely to remain in force much longer.

There are two probable alternatives.

One is that the domestic violence and repression and the

foreign pressure will soon make a crack in the apparently rigid structure, which will then crumble as a revolutionary situation produces rapid changes;

The other is that the initiative for controlled, though far-reaching, change is taken by a section of the National Party, which then aligns itself with the other verligte elements, these together coming to power and quickly dismantling the apartheid structure.

If this could be done to the satisfaction of a substantial section of the black population, itself brought in to share the power, there might be a glimmer of hope.

I am not optimistic. A large verligte — very verligte — break-away from the National Party would not be in character. The tradition (now more than a century old) that all Afrikaners must stand together at all costs, the appeal of *stem Nasionaal*, the horror of *skeuring*, run too deep. But if there are not enough Nationalists able to rise above these traditions we shall see the strange and terrible sight of the self-immolation of a people, *Stem Nasionaal* would have become the swan-song of Afrikanerdom.

White South Africa in general, and the Afrikaners, in particular, would prove to have been no better than Louis XVI or Nicholas II — monarchs who, lacking intelligence and strength of character, went to their deaths without a glimmer of understanding of what had hit them. □

A NEW CONCEPT OF POVERTY

by Patrick Kearney

“ for the first time in history one will be able to give scientific proof that ‘blessed are the poor’ who voluntarily set community limits to what shall be enough and therefore good enough for our society.”¹

Poverty is looked upon as a scourge of the human race, preventing man from being all that he could be, and providing a constant provocation to violent conflict all over the world. It is therefore very strange to find a man actively encouraging poverty, and stranger still for a visitor to one of the world’s poorest countries anxiously reaching out for ‘development’, to tell the inhabitants that they ought to see poverty as an ideal. Yet this is what that redoubtable critic Ivan Illich did at a recent conference on development held in the Palace of King Moshoeshe II in Lesotho (March 8 - 13, 1976).

Of course there have been people like St Francis, who extolled “Sister Poverty” and freely chose poverty for himself and made it a condition for those who wished to follow him. Such freely chosen poverty has always been a feature of monastic life, drawing its inspiration from the Gospel injunction:

“Go sell what you have, and give to the poor, and come follow me, and you will have treasure in heaven.”² Members

of religious orders take a vow of poverty in order to obey this command more faithfully. At its best, this practice has provided a model for those who were not members of religious orders. But it has also had the rather unfortunate effect of leading the majority of members of Christian Churches to believe that only religious could take Christ’s invitation seriously.

What is significantly different about Illich’s words is that he is not only suggesting the need for all Christians to look seriously at poverty as an ideal, but that we have reached a global situation where such an attitude is essential for all people.

In this article I would like to examine this idea more closely, first of all by determining what Illich is not saying. He is, of course, not extolling that poverty of misery which the Church at one time seemed to condone by holding out the hope of heaven, almost as a distraction. The poverty of misery is now roundly condemned by the same Church: “ the Christian must be aware that in facing poverty he is facing no accident but something in our society which is evil. He is confronted by sin which has to be overcome in the Spirit of Christ. The response starts in locating in the structures of our society, what it is that brings about poverty.”³

¹ Illich, I. “How will we pass on Christianity?”

² Matthew 19:21

³ Weston, A. “Poverty: the Christian Response,”

The poverty that Illich is advocating is rather that of the man who says to God and to his neighbour: "Never, never let anything get between me and you."⁴ What has led him to consider such a desperate imperative that it needs to be preached to all men, whether they believe in God or not? And what has led that severely practical economist, Lady Jackson (Barbara Ward) to say in similar vein: "The vows taken by religious bodies, of poverty, obedience and loving restraint . . . are symbols of the kind of vow whole societies have to consider."⁵

The answer is very simple: that amalgam of problems which confronts mankind in our age: the resource crisis, pollution, inflation, food shortages, racial discrimination and gross inequalities. The combined effect of these is to threaten the survival of man.

Each one of these problems calls for the exercise of some sort of restraint by individuals and societies. This is what Illich would call the setting of limits. This is a novel idea: in South Africa, as elsewhere, an attempt has been made to focus upon minimum wage levels for everyone, by publicising widely such figures as the Poverty Datum Line, and employers have been urged to pay at least that amount or else to have on their consciences a serious degree of malnutrition suffered by worker's children. The "Effective Minimum Level" is a slightly more generous index, taking account of a few expenses beyond the barest needs for survival. But one hears no discussion of what might be called the "Wealth Datum Line" or "Effective Maximum Level", that level of income which the majority agree should be the *highest* allowed to anyone in a society. Illich's argument is that unless we focus on such maxima not only in the sphere of wages but in all aspects of societal organisation, the *minima* will always be impossible to achieve.

He derives this idea at least partly from the famous report of the "Club of Rome" entitled *Limits to Growth*⁶. This book represents the findings of a team of outstanding scientists, educators, economists, humanists, industrialists, national and international civil servants. The title is intended to be understood in both its meanings:

- (i) The earth's resources are limited, and the way they are presently being used by nations which believe in unlimited growth can only lead to major ecological disaster. Thus, in this sense of the title, there are inherent limits to growth in the fact that the earth's resources are limited.
- (ii) If an ecological disaster is to be avoided, then the earth's resources must be used in a totally new way. Societies must agree to restrict their use of these resources: by democratic process they must impose limits or maxima.

In terms of the purpose of this article I would like to focus rather on the limits or maxima that individuals should impose on themselves rather than upon such societal limits. In Illich's thinking the individual 'anarchic' action may help

to usher in the societal change.

"The change which has to be brought about can only be lived. We cannot plan our way to humanity. Each one of us and each of the groups with which we live and work must become a model of the era we desire to create."⁷

Speaking in Melbourne in 1972 in response to a questioner who had asked with some anguish what individuals could do about the steadily growing world crisis, Illich replied:

" decide with a few friends what you personally can do without. There are many things which you can do without — not because you want to give them to somebody else — but simply because these things which you need increasingly make it impossible for you to do things in a way which is really human and which most people could share. I am speaking of voluntary poverty as the only way to own the earth, on a personal level."⁸

It is clear that Illich is going very much further than the Club of Rome. He is not calling for voluntary poverty simply in response to the resource crisis but also in response to the institutional crisis of our times. The resource crisis is brought about by a consumer mentality — Illich sees such a mentality as rooted in western institutional life, and particularly the school. Thus when he suggests that people should try to determine what they "can do without", he is referring, not simply to personal possessions, but patterns in the use of institutions e.g. spending an extra year at University at great State expenditure which may be depriving the poor of the most elementary learning opportunities or making use of certain kinds of modern medicine which are also only accessible to the rich. He holds that the institutional patterns by means of which education, housing, transportation and health are provided for people as commodities, inevitably lead to inequalities and shortages quite apart from their paralysing effects upon the self-reliance of their client. Those who believe in equality must withdraw their support from these institutions, and attempt to house themselves, to move, to heal and to learn autonomously in ways that *can* be shared by the majority of the earth's people.

A less radical and somewhat different approach to the question of voluntary poverty is that of the "Self-Tax Movement" which, beginning in Europe and the United States, recently made its appearance in South Africa. In some places, it is called the "Life Style Movement". Some of the more important concerns of this movement are expressed as follows:

- "1. Living more simply than others may simply live, recognising that our greed denies another's need.
- 2. Deciding what to buy, how much to spend and what to do without in the light of the urgent need to conserve the Earth's resources and to distribute them more fairly.
- 3. Deciding on what percentage of our net disposable income we are going to give away for the benefit of those in need.

⁴ Illich, I., *ibid.*, pg. 16

⁵ Ward, B., "A New Life in Us," *Pro Veritate*, February 1976, pg. 12

⁶ Meadows, D. H., Meadows, D. L., Randers, J., and Behrens, W. W., etc. *The Limits to Growth*, Potomac, London, 1972

⁷ Illich, I., *Celebration of Awareness*, Anchor Books, Doubleday, New York, 1971, pg 90

⁸ Illich, I., "Ivan Illich in Australia" in Lister, I. (ed.) *Deschooling*, Cambridge University Press, London

When circumstances allow, joining or helping to start a "Life Style Cell". These cells meet regularly for mutual support, study and action."⁹

An American group with similar aims is the Shakertown group who have become well known for the so-called "Shakertown Pledge". The more significant of the clauses of this pledge, are the following:

- "1. I declare myself to be a world citizen.
2. I commit myself to lead a life of creative simplicity and to share my personal wealth with the world's poor.
3. I commit myself to lead an ecologically sound life.
4. I commit myself to join with others in reshaping institutions in order to bring about a more just global society in which each person has full access to the needed resources for their physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual growth."¹⁰

The argument of the Johannesburg group which has started the "Self Tax Movement" in South Africa is summed up in these words" people throughout the world are becoming more and more sensitive to the extreme contrast of poverty and wealth in which people live both from country to country and within countries It is because of the structures of society that only a small section possesses most of the wealth of an ever-prospering nation. Whereas White South Africans in the main enjoy one of the world's highest standards of living, the income of most African families is more than 10 times less than that of Whites and below the Poverty Datum Line The response of a number of concerned Whites is to recognise that they have become unwillingly the recipients of money by an unjust distribution and the exploitation of others. A fundamental principle emerges: they have to either diminish their savings and/or regard themselves as persons of integrity Thus these persons strongly desire to redistribute that which does not belong to them, and primarily to the exploited Black community of this country."

Built into this scheme is the sensible awareness that the White standard of living does not provide a realistic model for all in a future, more just society; that if justice is to be achieved then it will not be enough simply to make it possible for blacks to have an equal opportunity to be as affluent as Whites. Justice can only be *possible* if the affluent choose to (or are compelled to) live differently, and if those who

are desperately poor do not have models of unrealistic affluence placed before them.

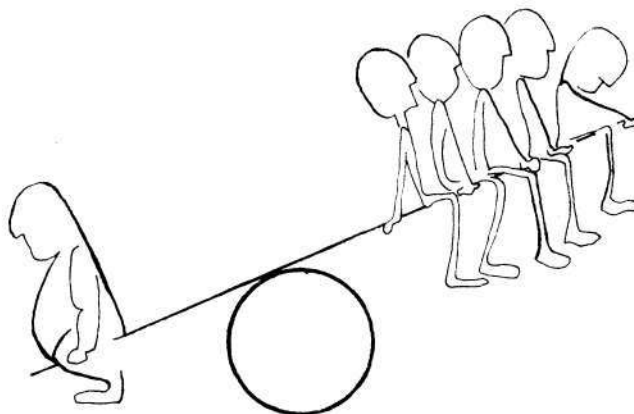
It comes as rather a shock to discover the extent to which even an intelligent man like Mr Harry Oppenheimer can believe that such wealth is possible for the majority of people in a country. In speaking at the same Lesotho Conference as Ivan Illich, he made it clear that he thought it would quickly become possible for the mass of Basuto people to live in the same luxurious style as the expatriate managerial class who came to set up industries. Such was the tempting illusion he dangled before the Basuto. Surely by now there is sufficient evidence available to prove that this simply is not so?"¹¹

The idea of a dignified poverty freely chosen is surely very relevant at the present time in Southern Africa, where the global conflict between capitalism and communism has recently come into very sharp focus. The great majority of White South Africans are violently opposed to Communism, and there is no difficulty in identifying the evils of that system. There is much less awareness of the evils of the Capitalist system. Both systems err — the one in over-stressing the rights of the individual, the other in over-stressing the rights of the group. Both are failing to provide solutions in this last quarter of the 20th century: some other alternative will have to be found, that will also lead to a dramatic redistribution of goods while safeguarding the rights of individuals. Such a redistribution gives the only hope of lasting peace in Southern Africa. Perhaps those who freely choose a life of dignified poverty will be able to light the way ahead, provided that they do not see this as the limit of their political involvement, and continue to work for sharing of land, power and wealth on a national level. The great problem with Christianity, according to Bernard Shaw, is not that it has failed, but that it has never been tried!□

⁹ Frontier Notes, *Frontier*, Spring 1975, pgs. 36, 37

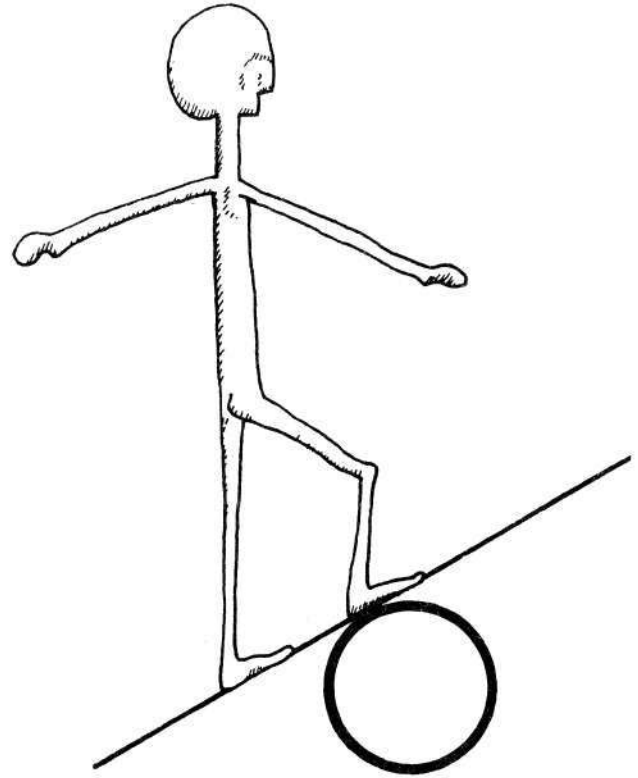
¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pgs 35, 36

¹¹ One particularly good analysis of the relationship between capitalism and poverty is: Frank, A. G. *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America.*



SELF-TAX

A DIAKONIA PUBLICATION



Most white and a few black South Africans enjoy an abnormally high standard of living, at the cost of the vast majority of the country's population.

This harsh fact is borne out by comparisons such as the following:

	A	C	I	W
Per capita monthly income	R10	R29	R37	R184
Expenditure per pupil	R28	R109	R141	R484
Infant mortality rate in Durban municipal area	72,69	23,75	29,36	15,20 (per 1000 live births)

Radical redistribution of the country's resources and the establishment of a just economic system depend on political change. Many white people who are opposed to apartheid feel helpless since their votes do not affect the government. They protest against injustice and deny that they are responsible for it; but they also continue to enjoy the benefits and privileges of wealth.

At the same time, many black people who are trying to establish self-help projects – which not only meet material needs but also help people to develop new and positive

attitudes towards themselves – are desperately short of resources.

Sunday by Sunday, we Christians go to church and celebrate our solidarity with Christ and with one another: but through lack of appropriate social action we run the risk of finding that our worship itself will fall under God's judgment (I Cor. 11:23 – 30).

One way in which the privileged can integrate their beliefs about justice and the struggle for liberation into their ordinary lives is to give over part of their wealth and make it available – without strings – to black self-help projects and programmes and especially to the training of community development workers for the Durban townships. This is not a form of charitable giving – but **RESTITUTION** of money unjustly given to some people by an unjust system.

The Self-Tax Movement, begun by a small group of people in Johannesburg in 1975, provides a practical way of doing this. Through it, people can:

1. Obtain relevant information and guidance.
2. Receive encouragement and support from others already engaged in self-taxing. Some of our ideas of what are indispensable necessities in our style of living are quite false – this can become clear from discussion with other members of the movement.
3. Support positive black action.

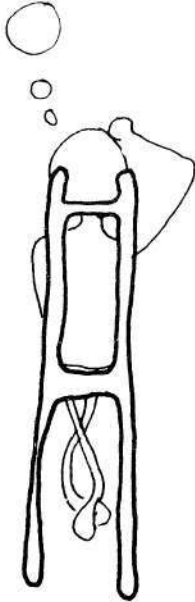
It should be pointed out that joining the Self-Tax Movement does not dispense anyone from public action for human rights, but it can help to make such action credible and integrated.

It is not essential for potential self-taxers to join an organised self-tax movement. But the advantage of doing so is twofold: to themselves (as indicated above), and to the spread of the idea as a valid form of non-violent action for social change.

To apply a statement which has been made in terms of WORLD NEED:

IT IS NECESSARY FOR US TO LIVE MORE
SIMPLY IN ORDER THAT OTHERS MAY SIMPLY
LIVE.

Handwritten numbers and letters in a thought bubble:
 63 3
 147
 R200 64
 47 +16
 21 10 8
 2 4 3 1 39 49
 RJO



HOW TO PROCEED:

- a) Survey your budgeting, style of life and commitments (families should try to do this together and involve all their members).
- b) Consider carefully whether you are paying just wages to your domestic worker or other employees.
- c) Review your priorities and make a provisional list of changes that might be appropriate.
- d) Consider the effect on Nos. (a) and (b) above of a self-tax of 2 per cent, 5 per cent, 10 per cent or more on gross revenue.
- e) Set yourself a target that is realistic but also costly, and confirm the decision in writing.
- f) Contact Diakonia, enclosing a copy of your pledge plus a first payment (cheques or postal orders should be made out to Diakonia Self-Tax Trust Fund).

OR

- g) Contact a black self-help project and convey to them the information about your pledge plus a first payment. (N.B. Diakonia can provide such links if requested.)

Diakonia will undertake to call regular gatherings of those who join the Self-Tax Movement in the Greater Durban Area.

(Further copies of this leaflet are obtainable from: Diakonia, P. O. Box 1879, Durban. Phone: 6-3460). □

THE COST OF APARTHEID

Speaking at the January conference of the Institute of Race Relations, Michael Savage of the University of Cape Town conservatively estimated the annual cost of maintaining the pass laws as follows:

Arrests and summonses	R1 150 116
Patrolling and policing	11 501 160
Prosecutions	1 714 526
Loss of production	7 667 445
Imprisonment	18 749 312
Issuing and updating passes	24 051 568
Labour contracts and labour bureaux	47 160 000
Aid Centres	331 110
Transit camps	500 000
	<hr/>
	112 825 237

"The Challenge of Change and Some Arithmetic of Apartheid",
S.A.I.R.R.

Republished from Diakonia News

Diakonia is a project founded by seven Christian Churches in the greater Durban area. Its purpose is to help Churches to be more effective in responding to social situations that cause widespread suffering.

AN ADDRESS ON THE OCCASION OF THE AWARDS CEREMONY AT THE FEDERAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

by Prof. C.L.S. Nyembezi

Mr President Ladies and Gentlemen, you have asked me to speak to you at a time like this, at a time when our country seems to be moving deeper and deeper into turbulence; at a time when charity is giving place to hatred; at a time when cold fear stalks our country and clouds our reason. It is a time which is having its effect on all of us. It is a time when the Blackman is asking questions, many questions, a time when he is groping to rediscover himself, a time when he casts his eyes in all directions in search of truth.

You are coming into the ministry at a time which is very different from that when our fathers accepted the call to spread the gospel. They preached in a completely different situation. They preached when families were stable and social norms had not been disturbed. They preached when industrialisation had not done the havoc it has done to us in the Black community. They did not have to contend with masses of hungry and jobless people; they did not have to contend with situations of poverty such as we witness today; they did not have to operate in a situation in which crime seems to be the order of the day; they did not have to work in a situation in which laxity of morals seems to be taken for granted; they did not have to contend with a situation in which discriminatory practices generate so much resentment and hatred; they did not have to contend with a situation in which there is such a credibility gap between what the Christians say and do; they did not have to contend with all this which is what you have to contend with. We have today such a complexity of social problems that there is real need for a minister to be well informed about the home conditions of his parishioners. He should be fully aware of their difficulties and hardships. There is no doubt that a very strong case can be made for a specialised ministry with social work as its basis. Our communities need such men. The minister today should also see himself in the role of a social worker. Greater involvement in the day to day life of the people is vital.

With so many people employed in commerce and industry should we not investigate ways of stationing some ministers in those areas even if it means that they are employed as ordinary full time employees doing the work that other people do? Rightly or wrongly I seem to think that ministers would achieve much more that way. That would give them a better chance to reveal the will of God to us in our daily situation.

I wish to appeal to you to spend less time at home in your studies. People yearn for the visit of a minister. The motor car is a very useful invention but in some cases it has affected the work of God adversely particularly in rural areas. I refer to the minister who is always in a desperate hurry to get back home. When ministers depended on public transport or used horses, bicycles and even walked on foot, they were even able to visit societies which today are regarded as inaccessible simply because a car cannot get there. Please do not be ministers who are too much in a hurry.

I have already indicated that we are passing through a period of turbulence. People, including young children, are losing their lives; others are being detained. So far no clear programme of action to meet the situation has come from the Churches. Many people are waiting for such a lead. But should the Church continue to demonstrate its impotence in the present situation it will find itself completely rejected and regarded as irrelevant.

Black people expect the Church to play a more meaningful and positive role in the search for peace and justice — a more meaningful role than the release of press statements or pious declarations. They expect the Church to initiate and support programmes to achieve justice in our country. Either we believe in the brotherhood of Christians irrespective of colour or we don't. Even in the area of Church Unity we find that Churches are moving rather slowly. Black Ministers have organisations such as **IDAMASA** where they adopt impressive but meaningless resolutions on Unity. They talk of exchange of pulpits but how many black ministers are actually engaged in this exchange? And yet the power of the Church depends on its united stand. To me co-operation should not end with exchange of pulpits but should even extend to pastoral work.

In the present situation you are going to be challenged to give a positive lead to your parishioners on the subject of race relations. I seem to sense deep-seated doubt in our young black ministers concerning the genuineness of this brotherhood in Christ. The reason for this is perhaps not far to seek. Even our Church structures have been such that black Christians have developed distrust of their white brethren. What is going to be your reconciliatory role?

One of the main challenges confronting you in your ministry is, in my opinion, to put the record straight. When the Missionaries introduced Christianity to the so-called heathen they worked on the assumption that those people did not know of God at all. Even today, I believe it to be true that in certain quarters it is still maintained that black people did not know of the existence of God before the whites came. Even more tragic is the fact that there are some blacks who also believe this tale. Not only did we know of the existence of God but we also believed in the continuity of life after death. For instance among the ZULU people the custom of UKUGODUSA – “to send home” had to do with the very old who wished to pass on to the land of the spirits. The good news brought by the Missionaries was accompanied by a threat of eternal damnation for the sinners. The idea of eternal damnation was something new to a people who only knew the land of the spirits as a land of bliss.

What is going to be your answer when e.g. the Zulu people assert that you are wrong when you allege that they worshipped idols? What are you going to say when they tell you that when the whites came they, the ZULUS, already had an advanced religion since they believed in one God? What are you going to say when they tell you that Missionaries undermined a structure upon which they should have built? That what they believed and what the Missionaries said were complementary and not mutually exclusive?

As black theologians you are also challenged to interpret clearly what is meant by worship when it is alleged for example that ZULUS worshipped the spirits of their ancestors. The person who takes the view that ancestors must be reversed is baffled when such reverence is branded heathen practice, whereas Christians pray to Saints. Who are these Saints? Are they not people who have been through this life? What is the difference between praying to the Saints and speaking to one's ancestors imploring them to intercede on one's behalf? To you as theological scholars the difference might be clear as daylight but it is not so with many of us laymen to whom you have been sent to labour. What are you going to do to meet the challenge of people who say that they are not getting convincing answers as to the real relationship between Christianity and their indigenous religion? If it is wrong to have a ceremony to remember the ancestors why is it right to erect tombstones? A question now being asked very seriously is whether or not we, as Black people, did not make a big blunder when we turned our backs on our religion.

You are going out to preach Christian charity in a country where it is preached but not practised. You will be preaching against a background of pain and suffering inflicted by Christians on other Christians. You will be preaching against a background in which a section of the Christian community that is able to do so is busy acquiring arms and joining pistol clubs to learn how to shoot; shoot whom? More and more voices in the Black community seem to be saying that Christianity is a thing of the whites. They go so far as to attribute the position of subservience of Black people in this country to the teaching and influence of Missionaries. The tragedy of it all is that some of these people who reject Christianity no longer adhere to their indigenous

beliefs, so that by rejecting Christianity they remain rooted nowhere. In a sense they are like a ship which has lost its compass.

The challenge that confronts you at this time when there is this debate about Christianity being irrelevant is – what are you going to offer to assist the Blackman in his search of himself? How are you going to help him to rediscover himself? To reassure him of his worth? It is necessary to remind our people that our knowledge of God is not something that we have learned from the whites. It has been said that fools rush in where angels fear to tread. But I would be less than honest with myself if I did not accept the role of fool because like many of my people I am in search of the truth. I want to suggest that the time has come when we should take a long, hard look at a little word call UBUNTU, which has been referred to by some as humanism or a devotion to human interests. I want to suggest this morning that there is a dimension to this word which has eluded us for a long time and which deserves much more than casual attention. My reason for saying this is that an acceptable relationship between persons and groups in our society before the whites came had as its basis or core – UBUNTU. There is a way of behaviour which is UBUNTU just as there is a way of behaviour which is not UBUNTU.

It is UBUNTU to love and care for others. It is UBUNTU to act kindly towards others. It is UBUNTU to be hospitable. IT is UBUNTU to be just and fair. It is UBUNTU to be compassionate and to assist those in distress. It is UBUNTU to be truthful and honest so that people know that one's given word is his honour. It is UBUNTU to have good morals. These are but a few examples of what may be regarded as UBUNTU.

On the other hand it is not UBUNTU to take advantage of people who are not able to protect themselves. It is not UBUNTU to do to others what you would not like done to you. It is not UBUNTU to be cruel and callous. It is not UBUNTU to act in a manner which degrades other people. It is not UBUNTU to dehumanise other people. It is not UBUNTU to be greedy and deprive other people of what is legitimately theirs. It is not UBUNTU to be dishonest. Ladies and Gentlemen, what I am trying to project here admittedly in a very inadequate manner, is that UBUNTU is basic to the whole concept of living together peacefully either as individuals or as groups.

The dimension of UBUNTU which I am trying to project here is that when God created man, he planted in him His resemblance; in other words He planted Himself, godliness, which is the attribute that enables man to be godlike in thought and action. UBUNTU is godliness. The source of power is God himself. Man who is created in the image of God is like a sub-station. The sub-station is able to do its work properly if it is in communication with the main station and derives power therefrom. The God in man reveals himself in UBUNTU of an individual. I cannot see how we can claim to be like God if in us there is no UBUNTU. Race relations in our country are bedevilled because of this lack of UBUNTU. An examination of the discriminatory practices and laws in our country will reveal that they lack UBUNTU in their motivation. My understanding of Christ's teaching is that throughout He emphasizes UBUNTU.

I wish to submit in all humility that, in my view, this is the

base upon which the Missionaries should have established their Christian message for every Black man understands what UBUNTU is. Remove UBUNTU from Christian teaching and practically nothing remains.

May I suggest that you, as black theologians, should lead the way in examining this submission and placing UBUNTU in correct perspective. We, as Black people, need to be reminded how wrong we are when we think of Christ as a mere whiteman and not as the personification of UBUNKULUNKULU or the Main Power Station; UBUNKULUNKULU in Christ linking up with UBUNKULUNKULU in man which is UBUNTU, godliness. Those who have a problem in accepting the Holy Trinity and recognising Christ as the son of God and therefore turn their backs on Christianity are, in my

opinion, wrong when they also turn their backs on UBUNTU by resorting to deeds which fail to pass the UBUNTU test. Whatever efforts we may embark upon in our search for the truth that is God, I cannot see how we can do so without acknowledging that a proper appreciation of this dimension of UBUNTU which I have tried to project is our starting point.

As you go out to meet the challenge of the world you go with the good wishes of all of us who pray and will continue to pray that your ministry will be relevant ministry in our time and that UBUNTU or godliness in you will continue to keep you in touch with the Main Source of Power and will always remain your guiding Star in the service of our Lord.□

THE TIME IS SHORT

by Edgar Brookes

The thoughts which follow are addressed in the main to the white citizens of South Africa. Is this an appropriate kind of article for "Reality." "Reality" normally tries to consider all races. But it is the white people of South Africa who must be convinced if radical change is to happen without bloodshed and leaders of black Africa have repeated *ad nauseam* that the business of the whites is to convert their own kind.

There is surely much to be learnt as we look at Rhodesia. Ten years ago, even five years ago, White Rhodesians could have worked out with Black Rhodesians a comparatively painless transition to majority rule. Now this may be impossible. Time is immensely important in our situation.

We get little statesmanship from Mr Vorster, He is like the farmer's dog of whom a tramp said, "He is growling and wagging his tail and I do not know which end to believe." Mr Vorster may feel a moral obligation to support apartheid to the end. But must we follow him? Must we be "butchered to make a Nationalist holiday"? Surely at this late hour we should consider what is best for South Africa rather than what can save the face of the Nationalist Party and its leadership. What we have to make up our minds to is simply this, that *apartheid must go*. It seemed to its supporters a few years ago to be a solution to our problems, practical, safe and even fair. It is none of the three. Detente with other African countries is good and Mr Vorster has made earnest attempts to pursue it, but the changes we need are domestic changes, changes within our own borders, and we need them soon.

It is true that South Africa is not a replica of any other African State. It has a relatively large white population that

goes back more than three hundred years in history. Any wise, kind and right reconstruction of South Africa must respect the part which the white man has played, must respect his present technological ability, must enable him to retain his own self-respect. But if such a reconstruction of South Africa is to be made successful it must be made *now*. The time is short. Soon it will be too late for Black and White to work out peaceful change together. The composition of Parliament is such that it is unrepresentative of the country. What is being done outside Parliament at the present moment is tremendously important.

We repeat that apartheid must go and it must go with White goodwill behind the change. Our task is to create a non-racial South Africa with majority rule based on universal suffrage and yet with such checks and balances, such protection of minorities as will preserve what is best in white South Africa.

In politics it is always good to ask what is the alternative. If radical change of this kind is not made within the next few years, one alternative is war. Nationalist leaders may say, and with some justice, that even with the overwhelming number of blacks the whites would be able to hold their own. But would they be allowed to do so? Two or three battles in a civil war would produce a host of casualties, blood would be running deep on the battle fields. In those circumstances would the great nations of the West not have to intervene, if only to stop Russia and China from doing so? We have, as our Prime Minister has told us, not a friend in the world who would stand by us in a real emergency. These are facts which have to be faced. Surely it is better to face them and to make radical changes now than to have far less acceptable changes forced on us because we made up our minds too late.□

— MESSAGE NOT RECEIVED

by Peter Brown

In early February the Government banned two documents issued by the Ministers' Fraternal of the three Cape Town African townships, Langa, Nyanga and Guguletu, The Fraternal represents Ministers from the American Episcopal Church, Catholic Church, Church of the Province of South Africa, Methodist Church of South Africa, Moravian Church, Presbyterian Church of Africa and the United Congregational Church of South Africa. In a supposedly Christian country it could hardly have better credentials.

The first document took the form of a message from the Fraternal to the Government, and White South Africa. REALITY had hoped to publish this message, not because it said anything new, but because it said again what has been said so often before and which continues to go unheeded by the Government of our country at its peril and ours. What the message said, quite simply, was — Black people want full citizenship here!

The second document was a statement by the Fraternal on the role of the Riot Police in the clashes which took place between permanent residents of Nyanga and migrant workers over Christmas. The clashes resulted in many deaths and much damage to property. REALITY had intended publishing a summary of this report and some extracts from it.

It would be impossible for anyone not directly involved in the incidents to which the report refers to vouch for their accuracy. All one can say about the report is that it carries the ring of truth, and that it is quite damning. It quotes details of the alleged experiences of eight unnamed residents of Nyanga at the hands of the Riot Police which are horrifying and convincing. The Ministers' Fraternal was certainly convinced that the stories were true, and its statement reveals a depth of distrust of the Riot Police amongst Cape Town's Black residents which is overwhelming. For, the statement makes it clear, the residents of Nyanga believe that the Riot Police not only supported the migrants in their attacks upon them, but that some of them provoked such attacks, and hampered the residents in their attempts to defend themselves.

The residents of Nyanga might be wrong in these assumptions, but the members of the Ministers' Fraternal clearly think they are not and that a group as responsible as this should hold such a view of what happened at Nyanga over Christmas is something White South Africa desperately needs to know. The Government ban ensures that it will not. Instead it will proceed blindfold a little further along the Nationalist-ordained road to ruin. □

SABC-TV: 'A BIAS AGAINST UNDERSTANDING'

by John van Zyl.

Republished from The Star

With the first anniversary of the introduction of television into South Africa past, most television commentators and journalists have had a stab at assessing its achievements. Their verdict (from both the English and Afrikaans Press) has generally been unfavourable – the hardware is unsurpassed, but the software has hardly begun to realise the potential of the medium. Television has, in fact, been just that: neither good nor bad, just medium.

However, when one callibrates the comments and the specific complaints, a far more disturbing pattern begins to emerge. Beyond the sticky fingers that foul up a newscast and the rank amateurism of some plays (both in the writing and in the production) lies a far more insidious misuse of the medium.

A phrase used by BBC television programmers during a refreshing period of soul-searching a few years ago provides a useful slogan: "a bias against understanding".

It was used to question the quality of news reporting which relied so heavily on the specific and the personalised story to convey a concept, and it raised a number of very interesting principles of television journalism. I would use it to describe three characteristics of SABC-TV which lie behind the complaints levelled at it.

This characteristic is best illustrated by the preponderance of nature programmes which provide a form of anodyne knowledge, mere fact designed to disturb as few viewers as possible, and inform even fewer.

The non-controversial examination of life under the sea, or in Paraguay, or the Galapagos islands eventually results in a sort of numbness, a non-discriminatory piling up of facts about nature.

It is even counterproductive, in that those viewers that take ecology seriously are turned off (the phrase is exact) nature conservation and similar valuable attitudes.

The point about nature and like programmes is that they are ultimately free of ideology – unlike any educational programme investigating the growth of cities or shifts in population, or the processes of history and sociology. The whole structure is never shown, only one facet.

A potentially interesting programme, the interview with Solzhenitsyn, was presented baldly without the subsequent discussion and controversy that followed the programme when it was shown on the BBC. The structures and processes that govern relations between Russia and America, or communism and capitalism, were ignored in favour of some cheap anti-communist propaganda.

Behind every educational programme lies the paranoia of the Nationalist – that discussion will lead to the questioning of authority, the Word revealed if not made flesh.

The Vorster-CBS interview showed the paranoia in full flight, the Prime Minister smugly "outwitting" the interviewers by refusing to divulge any information. The impression created was that he was either afraid the truth would hurt him or that he was afraid he would be trapped into revealing some of the idiocies of government policies.

This attitude infests the whole service. Programmes on black music, have to be doctored to make them appear to be less of a cultural achievement. The very absence of any black culture on TV, or even of investigations of white cultural or sociological processes reveals the mediocrity of the programme devisers. The fatuousness of presenting a programme on Bantu education immediately after the Soweto riots shows an insensitivity that is glaringly obvious in as powerful a medium as TV.

The lesson to be learnt is that television is an informal channel of communication beamed to families in their own homes and therefore sensitive to the exploration and revelation of processes and insensitive to the bald and excessive presentation of fact.

A concomitant of the informality of the medium is the interest of the viewer (in his family situation) in individuals and individual viewpoints, not statements by representatives. Television is a guest invited into the sitting-room and the same basic courtesies obtain. The statements by Cabinet Ministers, and the prepared exegeses by spokesmen like Cliff Saunders and Chris Rencken are alien to the domestic viewing situation.

When comment is needed on TV it is far better to call on individuals not connected with the SABC, like newspaper editors, business executives, and, crucially, the people themselves most affected by an incident or piece of legislation.

The fact that no black pupil is asked what he really thinks about Bantu education (not to mention black headmasters or editors), and that the viewer is given predigested pap by a television employee instead, is part of the bias against understanding.

The so-called pyramid of access which SABC-TV usually exploits results in the same official faces being called on to comment — Dr McCrystal, Dr Uken, Mr Manie Mulder etc — with predictably the same viewpoint.

Television has a hunger for reality, for the idiosyncratic opinion, and has a capacity for making the viewer experience immediately and without mediation.

The small screen begs that personalities be of low key and speak to private experience. The irritation generated through the use of footage of politicians preaching at public meetings can result only in a diminution of respect for politicians (and television producers).

The series of speeches presented as news on the Day of the Covenant — an interesting exercise in the typology of Nationalist rhetoric — could have been interesting only to

very close relatives of the speakers. It is symptomatic of the rule by decree to which one is becoming accustomed.

It was only the pressures of the township riots that forced SABC-TV to present fairly immediate and urgent news that allowed the viewer to experience the extent of the violence. This immediacy, the fact of simultaneity, that something is happening now and you are watching it, is the greatest strength of TV, and seldom exploited by SABC-TV. Not just because of technical reasons, but for ideological ones. Actual news is dangerous, it cannot be predigested and controlled. When the broadcasting authority intervenes between the viewer and the process, it filters away the process or event and substitutes a form of propaganda more or less subtle.

SABC-TV is, finally, good, safe entertainment that cushions the viewer against too much reality.

What is missing is the effective programme (or even shot) you would prefer to forget, but always remember. The concentration camp episode of "The World at War" so typically nearly not shown — proves this point. Instead, the viewer is given an Angolan war trivialised into "Brug 14," stories instead of issues, a public service used as a party mouthpiece, and ultimately, television so dull that the R108-million sticks in your throat when you think of the uses to which it could have been put. □

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A BLACK CHRISTIAN'S QUANDARY

By Fr R. B. Fosker SDB

The Lord says: You must love
your neighbour as yourself —
and even the white-man boss
falls under this command.

Can I love my boss for his cast-off clothes
and his junk that I sometimes get;
while I hate myself
'cos my kids wear rags
and I drink and hope to forget?

Can I love that 'miesies'
in the shop where I pay
full price for my koffie en kaas;
while I hate myself
'cos I daren't complain
as I wait till she's served the baas?

Can I love those 'liberals'
in that English bank
who wouldn't use a non-white sign;
while I hate myself
'cos I know I'm afraid
to cross their invisible line?

Can I love that 'basie'
who calls me his 'boy'
as I carry his books home from school;
while I hate myself
'cos I'm scared to say:
I'm a grandpa, you poor young fool?

The Lord says: You must love
your neighbour as yourself —
but when will the white-man boss
let me *keep* that great command? □