

An immoral law

Early in February, Tony Brink, geologist, lecturer and householder, went to prison because he refused to pay a fine for "illegally" employing Mrs. Suzanne Sepanya so she could be near her husband and two young children. Four days after he went into the Fort to serve a 15-day sentence, he was released, the money he had on him when he went into prison being used to pay the balance of the R15 fine he had elected not to pay. Now, Mrs. Sepanya is back on the West Rand, her husband and children remain on in Witkoppen and when she pays them a visit she risks being prosecuted for being in the prescribed area of Sandton. The stamp in her reference book means "endorsed out" of the municipal area of Sandton. This is the statement made by Tony Brink to the magistrate who sentenced him.

‘I own a five acre property in Witkoppen, Sandton and have lived there for the past 12 years. Four months ago, at a time when I was looking for a domestic servant, it was suggested to me by a nearby neighbour that I might employ Suzanna Sepanya, the wife of the Rhodesian-born African man in her employ. My neighbour explained that Suzanna Sepanya’s husband was legally registered in her service in Sandton and was applying for South African citizenship by virtue of his marriage to Suzanna who is a locally-born woman. Until such time as his application for South African citizenship was considered he was not entitled to work for any other employer but herself.

‘Suzanna’s two youngest children, aged 12 and 15, live with her husband and attend the local Witkoppen Bantu Farm School. Suzanna naturally wanted to live with her husband and two young children and as the R26 per month which her husband earned was not sufficient to cater for their needs, she was looking for a job nearby.

‘I accordingly agreed to employ Suzanna as a domestic servant and went to the offices of the Sandton Bantu Affairs authorities in Alexandra Township to ask for her to be registered as being in my employ. I was informed that it was not possible for her to be employed in Sandton as she had previously been registered in the non-prescribed area of Krugersdorp.

‘Furthermore, as she had grown up in Randfontein, she was not eligible for registration in Sandton. In spite of this, however, Suzanna wished to remain in my employ in order to be near her husband and two sons. She was

prepared to face the possibility of being arrested as an illegal resident, and I was prepared to face the possibility of being charged with employing her illegally. Nevertheless, I tried on two further occasions to get her registered, but my application was turned down both times.

‘A further attempt to have her registered as in my employ, this time by the employer of her husband, resulted in an endorsement being stamped in Suzanna’s reference book to the effect that she was to leave the municipal area of Sandton within 72 hours, that was by January 21, 1973.

‘The day after this endorsement had been made in her reference book Inspector de Klerk, Jr., arrived at my home and, having examined the reference book, served a summons on me to appear in this court under a charge of having employed her illegally. The summons indicated that I could elect to pay an admission of guilt of R20.

‘I did not pay the admission of guilt. I am a practising Christian and I try to live according to my understanding of Christ’s teachings. I consider a law such as that under which I have been charged, which has the effect of denying a husband and wife, and a mother and her children the right of living together to be an immoral and unchristian law.

‘I fully realise that I was breaking the Urban Areas Act by employing Suzanna Sepanya, but I am prepared in conscience to face the consequences of having done so.

‘Suzanna and her husband were married

in the Christian rite. Christ has said "What God has put together let no man put asunder". I take this injunction seriously, and I will not be party to any manmade law or action which defies it.

Suzanna left Sandton on January 21, 1973, as required by the endorsement in her reference book. She is not permitted to return.

Even if she were to come to visit her husband and children, she would face the prospect of arrest.

"The law which has been responsible for this is the law I broke. I stand before this court now, prepared to bear the consequences of having thus chosen to act in accordance with my conscience as a Christian."

What is so funny?

ELEANOR ANDERSON

On catching sight of a Black Sash demonstration, people react in all manner of ways.

Some react by not reacting, save for a small tightening of lip and nostril, and simply cease to see. Others, passing by even unto the other side of the road, rev up their cars, with fierce little roars, and really punish the chewing gum in their mouths, for it has become more than cud. Still others laugh.

Considering that this demonstration concerns hostels and the splitting up of African families, one wonders where the joke lies. One man, with a hard and handsome face, pauses in his Volkswagen alongside the row of women and laughs terrifyingly, showing every well-stopped molar. What is so funny about separating a small child from its mother?

In another car a man nudges his wife, laughs sneeringly, and her heavily lipsticked mouth joins in the mirth. In a bus a pretty young woman holds hands with a small boy next to her and snickers at a poster which has caught her eye. The poster says "Give families family life".

Several young men in a combi pause for the robot, but it is only when the vehicle moves on that one of them has the boldness to shout an obscenity at the women. Does he agree that it is obscene to forcibly separate a man from his wife?

Many people read the slogans on the posters, mouthing the words as if they were hard to understand. "Kinders by ouers" should not pose such great difficulty. A middle-aged man shouts "bloody fools!" and speeds away. A uniformed African chauffeur and his employer gaze non-committally at the posters. A hefty

White truck driver, whose passenger is a small, neat African in overalls, drives his elbow hard into his ribs and bids him share the jest, and the small man, who has been looking with concern at the women, giggles wretchedly.

A young man in a slick red Alfa waits for the green light and looks so nice that one hopes, hopes, that he will not laugh. But he does. A young couple with granny in the back seat stare scornfully, and as they drive on granny, unseen by them, blows the Black Sashers a fluttery kiss.

Why is whiteness so superior? Whiteness puts one in mind of snow of lilies, of clean linen and purity and flags of truce, but it is also associated with fear, and leprosy, and sun-bleached bones.

Bus number 77, Slegs Vir Nie-Blankes, is going to Greenside. Bus number 77, For Europeans, is going to Greenside too. Will they ever meet?

