

THE MAN BEHIND THE "SABOTAGE" BILL

(From an article by Donald Wood, Cape Times,
24/5/62)

I ASKED Mr. Vorster if he was satisfied with the way things were going in South Africa. Would he ever be prepared to serve on a multi-racial cabinet? "I am satisfied with the way things are going. I have not had one sleepless night over South Africa's future. A multi-racial government would never work, and I am absolutely and resolutely opposed to the idea. I am sure that we can and that we are, achieving unity in this country," he declared.

So there is the man behind the dreaded "Sabotage Bill." He is not the Frankenstein monster some of his opponents make him out to be. Neither is he intentionally a would-be dictator, bent on using the "Sabotage" Bill to persecute milkmen who go on strike or innocent trespassers found in a dynamited post office. He is not this kind of political ogre at all.

What he is is something far more dangerous than that. He is the classic Nationalist and the embodiment of the essential spirit of Nationalism today. This spirit is compounded of deep sincerity, unwavering conviction, and a tragic lack of capacity to understand an opponent's point of view. Where his opponent's point of view is based on democracy in its fullest and best sense, this lack of understanding becomes doubly tragic—for who can explain democracy to a spirit that cannot comprehend it? To those who believe in democracy, no explanation is necessary. To those who do not, no explanation is possible.

For the real danger of the Nationalist is that he actually believes he is a democrat, that he is doing this country a favour, and that he can take "constructive" criticism. Yet let any opponent give full vent to convictions as deeply held as his and he dismisses the thought as "irresponsible." Thus only tame, quiet, and conservative criticism is acknowledged as "constructive". How can this ever be reconciled with the spirit of democracy?

And how can anybody hope to expect tolerance from men who, like the Communists, only interpret its meaning in relation to their own philosophy?

The answer to these questions is the key to the real menace of Nationalism, and it is the reason why Mr. Vorster, with his Bill, constitutes a danger to political freedom of expression in South Africa.

After talking these matters over with Mr. Vorster, one wonders how long it would take to persuade him that there are many thousands of South Africans who would gladly undergo all the persecution he has undergone, suffer twice as much as he has suffered,* and spend many more years in the political wilderness than he—to wrest this country from the control of men such as himself, his colleagues, his leader, and the spirit behind the amazing Bill he is sponsoring in the Assembly this week.

*In Koffiefontein Internment Camp during the last war.

Points From The Press

Salutations to the Black Sash.

WARMEST salutations to the women of the Black Sash who stood up so fearlessly and with such dignity when they were at the mercy of South African storm-trooping scum in Johannesburg last week.

It is no easy matter to appear in public particularly if one is normally a woman unaccustomed to drawing attention to oneself.

Molly Reinhardt, Sunday Times, 3/6/62.

Thank you, Molly!

Silence Gives Consent.

HOW low can the Nationalists sink? On the supposition that silence gives consent one can only conclude that the behaviour of the oafs on the City Hall steps has the approval of the Government, since no word of repudiation has come from any spokesman of theirs.

It is not too late for the Prime Minister to repudiate these monstrous allies, in the Press of both languages, and on Radio South Africa.

From Letters to the Editor, Rand Daily Mail, 25/5/62.

For Hoodlums Only.

THE ruffians who are attacking the Sash women at the Johannesburg City Hall are doing the whole protest against the Sabotage Bill a great service. They are demonstrating that the Sash—the most pacific movement in all the history of resistance—is a significant challenge to the conscience of Nationalism.

The one body in the country to whom the hooligans are doing no credit is the Government. We are not suggesting that the Government instigated them. But it is more than probable that the mobs are inflamed with the Government's twisted philosophies, and the Government can now see where those philosophies lead: to knocking down dignified, often elderly and always totally passive White women.

From Sub-leader, The Star, 21/5/62.

Ugly Episode.

THE cowardly attack on the Black Sash women . . . in the small hours of Sunday morning is typical of the kind of thing which is bound to occur when a government takes the lead in creating an hysterical state of mind among its supporters. For a long time now the Nationalists have been playing on the emotions of their followers. Their speeches have been shot through with violent imagery, and it is no wonder that young and irresponsible Nationalists catch an infection from this heady talk, thinking of themselves as engaged in a kind of holy crusade which can be made to justify almost anything.

From leading article, Rand Daily Mail, 21/5/62.

The limit where freedom begins and ends, where its rights and duties come together, is called law, and the State itself must bow to the law.

Albert Camus.