

WHITE IMMIGRATION

TO SOUTH AFRICA

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### **Preface**

This Christian Institute document neither seeks to attack immigrants as such, nor suggests that all white immigrants are racists. The Christian Institute has enjoyed substantial support from immigrants in its opposition to racism and appreciates the commendable efforts made by numbers of white immigrants to establish a non-racial and more just South African society.

What the document does reveal is the aspect of corporate guilt and corporate responsibility which inevitably prevail in regard to white immigration.

The concept of corporate guilt is one which has long been proclaimed in the Christian Institute. It leads the white South African to acknowledge that he is part of the oppressing community in relation to his oppressed black brother. For much as he might challenge the oppressive forces, his hands are never completely clean. This awareness need not necessitate sack-cloth and ashes penitence, but a sense of corporate guilt is redemptive in that it creates a greater sense of social responsibility and stewardship.

In the particular instance of immigration, the white immigrant shares in corporate guilt. He inherits, through the unjust and discriminatory laws of the land, a privileged position which is denied to the majority of South Africans. While he is not instrumental in formulating these laws he inevitably derives enhanced opportunity and material well-being through them at the expense of his neighbour. His hands are not clean.

For the white immigrant who takes Christian principles seriously, this document will hopefully lead to a heightened sense of responsibility and a constructive participation with the forces seeking to eradicate discriminatory practices in our country.

The challenge is not confined to the white immigrant, however. In the belief that our unjust immigration laws contribute to racial bitterness and thus increase the possibilities of insurrection, this call to reconsider the whole matter is an expression of concern for the peace and well-being of South Africa. It suggests that whites should embark upon the overdue discipline of looking at our situation through the eyes of blacks, who are often deprived of exercising their birthright through laws bolstered by the government's immigration policy.

The wonder of Christ is seen in both His becoming man and His capacity "to feel sympathy with our weaknesses" (Heb. 4 v 15). Given a willingness to see white immigration as a means of perpetuating the black man's economic and material weakness, whites will be enabled to stand where the black now stands and in understanding his feelings understand the problem.

It is a difficult discipline, but a Christian and redemptive one.

### **Introduction**

The South African government vigorously promotes white immigration to the Republic and at the same time encourages birth control among its black citizens. This apparent paradox is resolved by recognising that white immigration is an important instrument in helping to maintain the status quo in the South African political economy, based as it is on the maintenance of white power and privilege and the denial of rights and advancement opportunities to the black majority.

It must also be recognised that South Africa pursues at least three very different immigration policies. On the one hand, there is a policy to attract skilled white workers and their families to settle in the country, a policy that is "quite openly aimed at strengthening the position of the white minority in South Africa, and in particular at keeping managerial and skilled occupation in the white-controlled economy as far as possible in the hands of that minority".

On the other hand, there is a policy of recruiting large numbers of unskilled African workers from neighbouring states such as Malawi, Mozambique and Lesotho, particularly for labour on the mines. These workers are, however, strictly temporary migrants, admitted only on contract and without their families. Whereas the white immigrant enjoys immediately all the benefits and privileges of white society and in time can qualify for naturalisation and the franchise, foreign African workers are subject to segregation and all the other inequalities of apartheid, and can never aspire to citizenship. The third policy is in regard to other races not classified "white" in terms of South African racial legislation, particularly those of Asian descent, whose entry is positively discouraged in order not to add to the numbers of the existing Asian minorities already resident in the country.

A major instrument controlling the immigration and naturalisation of Indians, for example, is the Immigration Regulation Act. It has been said that between the passing of this Act in 1953 and the end of 1970, only one Indian was allowed to immigrate to South Africa.

From the above it is clear that the South African government follows a selective and racially discriminatory immigration policy with the purpose of bolstering the privileged white ~~immigrants~~, benefitting from the labour of foreign Africans without accepting any long-term responsibility for them, and preventing the strengthening of the other black ethnic minorities.

The Christian Institute is concerned for the present to consider the first of these—the immigration of skilled white workers and their families—and to express its reasoned viewpoint in the light of its commitment to Christian principles of social justice. In this statement we do not include the position of visiting academics, church workers and others who come to this country for shorter or longer periods to make their skills available to South Africa. Those who come specifically to train black South Africans often play a valuable role.

#### **Christian Principles with Regard to Immigration**

The main principle of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that man must love God and his fellow human-beings. Man's love for God must also be shown in his conduct towards his neighbour. Thus God requires of man that he respect the life, opportunities and property of his fellow-man. This means that he must *promote* the interests of others, *protect* the property of others, and *provide* the opportunities for the unrestricted development of his neighbour as far as possible.

Taking another's property, his opportunity or his future by coercion, by fraud or without his free consent constitutes theft or stealing. Theft can be accomplished by indirect means, even by legal means, in the sense of laws which benefit particular groups and which are to the detriment of any other particular group. The state can thus become the agency whereby theft of opportunity is accomplished, and this can occur particularly in the field of labour, and more particularly against the black man when, for example, the opportunity which should be open to him is given instead to a 'white' immigrant—an action which is all the more to be deplored when moral cover is lent to it by legal enactment.

Immigration as it is practised in South Africa, is also a threat to the security and peace of this country. For as long as some South Africans are deprived of their basic rights, according to the principles of justice, while 'foreigners' enjoy them, for just so long are such serenity and calm and peace as do exist merely superficial. Man was created in the image of God and he was given the privilege and responsibility of having dominion over the earth. This responsibility for one's land in the field of politics, labour, education, economics and family life is a divine calling, and there can be no peace if this right and privilege is denied to the majority of South African but given to white foreigners.

### **The Factual Position**

The Immigrants Selection Board, established in terms of the Aliens Act of 1937, grants the right of permanent residence only to those who are "likely to become readily assimilated with the European inhabitants and to become a desirable inhabitant of the Republic within a reasonable period".<sup>3</sup>

In 1969 the Minister of Immigration, Dr Piet Koornhof, described the measures taken to ensure that only "pure white" immigrants are admitted to the country:

- (i) each immigrant must declare on his application form that he and all the persons concerned are of "pure white" descent;
- (ii) "a very clear" photograph of himself and his next-of-kin must be submitted;
- (iii) South African immigration officers abroad personally interview all applicants;
- (iv) despite these precautions, the Department of Immigration has "well-trained" immigration passport control officers who keep a careful look-out for any "doubtful cases" who might arrive in South Africa.<sup>4</sup>

The government also seeks to ensure that white immigration does not upset the linguistic ratio and the religious composition of the existing white population.<sup>5</sup> Thus Protestants are preferred to Catholics and atheists are not acceptable at all. The urgent need for white manpower has in recent years, however, tended to offset these

Kingdom and those countries of Western Europe where this may be permitted by the governments concerned. All services are free, except that employers are required to pay for such advertisements as they may wish to place".

Among those South African diplomatic missions in Europe which are actively promoting immigration to the Republic are South Africa House in London, and the embassies in the Federal Republic of Germany (in Cologne), the Netherlands (at the Hague), Portugal (in Lisbon) and Italy (in Rome).

In the decade between 1962 and November 1972, a total of 415 334 white immigrants came to South Africa. During the same period 98 879 South Africans emigrated, the net gain being 316 455, an annual average of about 31 000.<sup>9</sup>

The peak of white immigration was reached in 1966 (48 051), with about 40 000 immigrants arriving per annum for the next three years. From 1971 there has been a marked decrease in the figures, with the provisional figures for 1973 showing a net gain of only 17 624, the lowest level for ten years.<sup>10</sup>

The main sources of white immigrants to South Africa in the period 1966 to November 1972 were as follows<sup>11</sup>:

United Kingdom	114 606
Other African Countries	57 158
Western Germany	21 920
Portugal	14 877
Netherlands	9 434
Italy	8 975
Greece	6 587

Several features are worthy of note:

- (i) The United Kingdom is the greatest single source of immigrants and the proportion from this country has grown to more than 50 per cent of the total.
- (ii) The flow of white immigrants from other African countries was at its peak in the early and middle sixties (14 473 in 1966)

and coincided with the movement towards independence in the rest of Africa. By 1972 the figure was less than 4 000 and suggests that African countries are becoming exhausted as a source of white immigration. Impending independence in Angola and Mozambique will probably, however, result in considerable numbers of white immigrants from these countries. This may also occur when Rhodesia achieves majority rule. South Africa has thus played a role as a haven for whites who have been unable to accept black rule in other African states. Many such whites are racist and embittered and have undoubtedly had an effect in hardening the racial prejudices of native white South Africans. This was very marked in Natal with its influx of post-uhuru settlers from Kenya.

- (iii) Although the numbers involved are relatively small, Austria and Switzerland have grown steadily in importance as sources of white immigration to South Africa (respectively from 519 and 795 in 1966 to 897 and 1 385 in 1971).

One of the most significant features of white immigration to South Africa is the break-down of the occupational classification of immigrants. The net gain of immigrants in certain important sectors of the economy from 1968 to mid-1973 has been calculated as follows:

Manufacturing and building workers	27 219
Professional occupations	17 424
Managerial and administrative	2 833
Transport and communications	793

In addition, 15 792 clerical workers, 3 536 workers in service occupations, 4 297 in sales and related occupations and 1 047 agricultural workers arrived in the same period.<sup>20</sup>

It must be noted that all these areas suffer from a shortage of skilled labour. Such shortages are essentially artificially created by the attempt to maintain an industrial colour-bar in the South African economy. The shortage (for example, 5 892 artisans and 1 299 apprentices in the metal and engineering trade, and 6 844 artisans



and 1 146 apprentices in the building trade<sup>14</sup> should logically and morally be met from the vast reservoir of unskilled and semi-skilled black labour in the country.

It is only now that the South African government is giving cautious approval to the training and promotion of black workers to occupy skilled technical jobs. This shift in policy is clearly caused by the failure of its white immigration policy to meet fully the expanding manpower needs of the economy in the light of the government's own adherence to a policy of continued economic growth which it sees as necessary for the maintenance of internal stability. The Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council has estimated that a yearly intake of 40 000 immigrants (13 000 to 14 000 of whom are economically active) is needed to achieve a growth rate of 5,5 per cent, the target set by the Economic Development Programme.

The fall-off of white immigration in the 1970's is thus of direct relevance in improving the position of South Africa's black workers. Although the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council has said that the drop in immigration "should not cause concern" because there are "no vacant jobs", it has also said that from the long-term viewpoint immigration is of the "utmost importance" to the economy.<sup>15</sup>

These statements must be seen in the light of the fact that although the number of Whites, Coloureds and Asians registered as unemployed in June 1972 was relatively very low (12 771), there were 86 721 Africans registered as work-seekers or unemployed at the end of March 1971.<sup>16</sup> The actual figure of African unemployed will be very much higher, and it has been authoritatively estimated that given the current rate of economic growth there will be 728 000 unemployed by 1975, virtually all of them black.<sup>17</sup>

So here we have yet another paradox in this land of paradoxes, that on the one hand workers are energetically sought in Europe and cosseted all the way into jobs in South Africa, while scores of thousands of our own people are out of work, many of them facing penury and even starvation. This paradox, yet again, can only be understood in the light of the discriminatory nature of the South African economy, and the desire to exclude blacks from senior positions in that economy, which would result in their gaining in-

creased scarcity value and bargaining power, with political implications that the white power structure regards as frightful.

There is clearly a direct link between white immigration and the maintenance of the industrial colour-bar. Several specific recent examples can be quoted to illustrate this:

- (i) Under the Bantu Building Workers Act, Africans are excluded from skilled jobs in the building industry in the urban areas, but white foreigners, mainly Portuguese, have been recruited to meet the shortage of building artisans.
- (ii) To meet the shortage of white bus drivers, the Johannesburg City Council proposed to employ Coloureds. This was rejected by the Minister of Labour and an attempt was made to recruit bus drivers in Britain. (The attempt failed, partly through action by the British trade union, but the shortage continues, with the Johannesburg City Council resorting to all sorts of stratagems to keep its buses running, since it is still not allowed to employ Coloured drivers).
- (iii) Even when immigrants themselves have attempted to breach the colour-bar to meet the shortage of skilled labour, they have run foul of the local white unions. Immigrant motor mechanics, for example, have been expelled from the Motor Industry Employee's Union for training Coloured mechanics.<sup>10</sup> In such cases, political considerations generally cause the government to support the white unions.

As economic developments draw white South Africans away from skilled work into managerial and supervisory occupations, the normal process of social mobility should allow for the upward movement of unskilled and semi-skilled black workers into artisan positions, but this movement is frustrated to the extent that white immigrant artisans fill these positions, thereby blocking the entry of black workers.

It is in the light of this that the Director-General of the International Labour office concludes "immigration is a deliberate instrument of policy to maintain the existing status quo in favour of white labour for as long as possible, and has at least had the effect of retarding long overdue changes in the employment structure. Thus in a very real

sense every immigrant is helping to deprive an African or Coloured worker of an opportunity to fill a skilled job, and every vacant skilled job for which no immigrant can be found increases the pressure to open up the corresponding category of employment to African and Coloured workers".<sup>19</sup>

### **The Arguments for Immigration**

It is sometimes argued, by South African politicians and businessmen, that white immigration actually improves the position of blacks, that each skilled immigrant "creates ten new jobs for African workers". At the very best, in the light of the foregoing analysis, this would merely mean the continued fragmentation of semi-skilled jobs to be performed by blacks, thereby maintaining the present employment hierarchy. And, of course, the argument must be tested against a consistent policy of training and promoting blacks to occupy skilled and responsible positions. There can be no doubt that this would have created countless new jobs for black workers, and would have improved their position infinitely more than white immigration. It is significant that during the past quarter century of rapid economic growth in South Africa, the position of black workers has in fact worsened relative to that of whites.<sup>20</sup> The argument that immigration will improve the position of black workers rests fundamentally on the assumption that economic growth per se will erode apartheid. The Spro-cas Economics and Social Commissions have shown that this assumption cannot be accepted uncritically.

Another argument that is sometimes used to support white immigration, is that immigrants from Europe will leaven the white society, bringing new attitudes and insights, and that this will eventually erode the racist attitudes of white South Africans. But empirical research has shown this to be a false expectation. Prof. John Stone has found "that British immigrants drifted rapidly into the structure of South African society and were rapidly acculturated into South Africa's racial norms and dominant values".<sup>21</sup> Whereas only 21 per cent favoured apartheid while still in Britain, after some time in South Africa the percentage rose to seventy six.<sup>22</sup>

It is relevant here to mention also an opinion poll of 106 American

and Canadian businessmen living in South Africa. This poll, carried out in 1969, revealed that more than three quarters of the businessmen approved of apartheid as "at least an attempt to develop a solution". Only twenty per cent expressed disapproval of apartheid.<sup>23</sup>

Since immigrants benefit immensely from the system, and their standards of living and economic prospects improve significantly in South Africa, they are clearly unlikely to want to change the system. Conversely, they are likely to want to maintain the system. Many of them regard themselves as temporary sojourners (the majority do not apply for citizenship) who wish to derive as much financial benefit from their privileged position in as short a space of time as possible.

The increased wealth of the white immigrant "is based on the racial exploitation of African workers ... the insidious influence of gaining an enhanced standard of living, at the expense of others, causing a vested interest in the maintenance of the economic and political system, affects most immigrants".<sup>24</sup>

### **Conclusion**

As a result of the conclusion that white immigration to South Africa functions to bolster an unjust and discriminatory economic and political system, there is a growing body of public opinion in the world that such immigration should cease. Among those bodies which have called for an end to white immigration to South Africa are the United Nations, the Dutch government, the International Labour Conference, the International Trade Union Conference, the British Council of Churches, and various other churches, students' organisations and anti-apartheid movements. Significantly, no black voice has been raised in South Africa to defend white immigration, while both SASO (South African Students Organisation) and the BPC (Black People's Convention) have openly declared their opposition, despite the risk this entails of governmental wrath and reprisal.

Those calling from within South Africa for action to end white immigration and for other forms of foreign pressure are frequently accused by the white power structure, including the white "opposition" United and Progressive Parties, of being "disloyal" or "unpatriotic" to South Africa. This seems to us to be a complete

prostitution of the concepts of loyalty and patriotism. To be loyal and patriotic to our country means to be concerned for *all* our people, for our total society, and not merely concerned to defend the interests and protect the position of a privileged minority.

We thus have no hesitation in ourselves calling for an immediate end to organised white immigration to the Republic, since this would be in the real interests of our total society. We note with satisfaction the recent decline in the number of white immigrants and we associate ourselves, with all deliberate consideration, with those who are working to bring about an end to the policy of assisted white immigration from Europe. We call on foreign governments to prohibit special South African recruiting organisations from operating in their countries and to dissuade their citizens from emigrating to South Africa.

We call on employers' and workers' organisations strongly to oppose further recruitment and immigration of skilled labour to this country.

We call on British universities to counter the recruiting campaigns conducted by South African companies in their country.

We call on newspapers and journals in Britain and Europe to refuse to carry advertisements for skilled workers in South Africa.

We call on Churches abroad to continue and expand their efforts to counter white immigration to South Africa.

We call on churches in South Africa to take note of the way in which white immigration bolsters our unjust and discriminatory social structures, and to challenge the consciences of immigrants in their congregations.

We call on white immigrants already in South Africa to consider seriously whether their presence here is not in fact adding to the already unjust and inflammatory situation in the country, with its massive potential for future conflict. If they are satisfied that their presence in South Africa is adding to the health and stability of the society, we urge them to work vigorously for an ending of social injustice, political oppression and economic exploitation in their adopted country. We believe that it is only in this way that they will justify their presence here.

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