

THE CRISIS IN THE INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS

by Edgar Brookes

The Schlebusch Commission which has already done so much harm, predictable and unpredictable, nearly succeeded in splitting the South African Institute of Race Relations right down the middle—a split which would have left most of the middle-aged and elderly on one side and most of the young on the other.

The General Purposes Committee of the Institute decided to send a delegation to give evidence to the Schlebusch Commission. This was not motivated by any wish to please the Government but simply by the conviction of those who conduct the affairs of the Institute that they and the Institute had nothing to hide. Resignations on the part of some of the younger members followed and, under the Constitution of the Institute, a Special Council Meeting was called to consider the matter.

The division of opinion arose to some extent out of the discontent of the growing number of younger members and their feeling that the Institute was not pursuing a sufficiently "activist" policy. The discontent of the younger members was not a matter to be brushed aside. No society can afford to mortgage its future for its present, and now that the Liberal Party and some other organisations that appealed to youth have been closed down or interfered with, young members were beginning to turn to the Institute as one of the few organisations left which they could support.

To a lesser extent there arose the question of the dissatisfaction of black members of the Institute. The Institute has always, since its very first meeting, had some African members, and the older Africans have stood by the Institute during the years. The African population as a whole is not particularly anxious for immediate revolution, but younger African leaders are very dissatisfied with anything that looks like time-serving or truckling to the Government.

When the Special Meeting of the Council took place, after a very full and unrestricted debate a compromise resolution was carried, and carried by 91 votes to 10. In terms of this resolution the Institute withdrew its offer to give evidence to the Schlebusch Commission although the Council authorised its officers to produce documents if they were

compelled by subpoena to do so. This was on the whole felt to be a victory by the younger members of the Council and not regarded as a defeat by the older members. On the voting figures a majority of the younger members must have supported the resolution. Thus ended the danger of a split, and Institute members, with mutual goodwill, were able to join hands for the next stages of the struggle.

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Those who are not familiar with the past history of the Institute may not have realised that the demand for an "activist" policy goes back a long way. When the Institute was started it was dominated by the Fabian slogan, "Measurement and publicity". Rheinallt Jones, the founder of the Institute, was a Welsh Liberal who believed in this slogan and also had that faith in reason which is a mark of the Liberal creed. His personality left a deep impress on the Institute and as, in its earlier stages, he was on the staff of and closely associated with the University of the Witwatersrand, there tended to be an academic, upper-middle class outlook on the part of the leading Institute members. These things are all open to question and at the same time they can all be defended. Whatever may be the frame of mind of the 1970's, there is no reason to feel penitent for having believed that human beings are able to exercise their reasoning faculties.

The fundamental point, however, has been neatly put in the phrase, "Is the Institute to be a Ministry of Munitions or a Ministry of War?" Rheinallt Jones and others of the earlier members of the Institute felt that it must supply more active political bodies with facts. This, of course, it has done with immense success. Rheinallt Jones had the qualities of his defects and he was a most meticulously accurate research worker.

Quite early in the history of the Institute a section of its members began to press for more active policies. The pressure came mainly at that date from the Western Cape and its most eloquent spokesman was the late Douglas Buchanan, at one time M.P. for the Transkei. For the moment the Ministry of Munitions outlook won the day, but there were intermittent grumbings and murmurings which came out into the open after the election of 1948.

With all its wish to remain neutral between political parties, the Institute could not agree to the policy of apartheid and as the Government proceeded with its very dubious legislative programme the Institute came out more and more in opposition. Long before the Schibusch Commission it had ceased to be merely a Ministry of Munitions and was to some extent at any rate a Ministry of War.

It must be clear to all honest thinkers that this process cannot be carried much further without some damage to the Institute. One thinks of the withdrawal of financial support from individuals and Trusts and although this cannot be a main factor, it cannot be left entirely out of account. It is important that the Institute's scrupulously

impartial research should continue to receive respect and too militant a policy may discount the value of this research. On the other hand neither the Institute nor any other public body can afford to antagonise the mass of its younger members. Nor must the Institute ever part company with black intellectual leadership. Care will be needed for many years to come to preserve the Institute on an even keel, but after the statesmanlike attitude of the recent Special Council Meeting, there is every reason for hope that the Institute will not remain merely neutral, but at the same time will not come to be regarded as a body for organising political opposition to the Government. That at least is the hope of many of the Institute's members, young and old.□

THE THREAT TO ALICE SEMINARY

by Alan Paton

In the late nineteen-fifties representatives of seven South African Churches planned a bold forward move. This was to give up training their candidates for the ministry in separate schools, and to set up the Federal Theological Seminary of Southern Africa. There would be four separate colleges, Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian and Anglican, but the hope was strong that union would become closer.

The need to find a new site was increased by other factors. The London Missionary Society property of Tiger Kloof was declared white. So was St. Peter's, Rosettenville.

Although these Churches planned a common seminary, they had to take regard of the laws of the country and therefore white students were to be excluded. But it was hoped that the Government would agree to the admission of Coloured and Indian students. Further, many of the staff-members would be white.

The Rev. W. R. Booth, then principal of Adams United

Theological School, was given six months leave and commissioned to find a site. After much travel he recommended a site of 220 acres close to the town of Alice. The ground was offered as a gift by the Church of Scotland Mission.

It was felt to be imperative to get the approval of the Government, especially as Coloured and Indian students would require permits. Mr. W. Maree, Minister of Bantu Education, at a meeting with representatives of the Churches, promised to help in this matter, which fell in the province of his colleague, the Minister of Internal Affairs. The representatives naturally asked whether the Seminary would have security of tenure. They were told in open meeting by Mr. C. B. Young, Secretary of Bantu Administration and Development, that the Government would not wish to exercise rights of expropriation even if it had the legal right to do so.

The course seemed to be set fair. In 1962 buildings worth over R600 000 were begun. Water, electricity, tarred roads