

super Africans. They are going to have to change their way of life and this way of thinking, and Mr Vorster is going to have to change as much as anyone.

The policy which Mr Vorster applies to South Africa is a minority policy imposed on a majority of people. No amount of talk of "separate freedoms" and "multi-nationalism" and "independent homelands" can alter the fact that no Black man had anything to do with coining these catch-phrases or working out the policies behind them. The one consistent theme of Nationalist government over the past 27 years has been that all fundamental questions are decided by the Party and presented to the rest of us as accomplished facts. This is particularly true of race policy. What African leader would ever have agreed to Nationalist policy if he had had any say in the matter? Who on earth would ever accept that freedom for African people, such as it is, should be confined to 13% of the country; that in the other 87% of the country, where more than half the African population lives and a much higher percentage works, they should have no control over the laws by which they are governed; that the vast wealth of that 87%, which has been created by the joint effort of people of all races over many generations, should now be regarded as a White asset; that there should be gross discrimination on a purely racial basis in the provision of every

single social service—education, health, pension, to name just three? One has only to cast the most superficial glance at the South African scene to see that, up till now, this has been a country in which 17% of the population has always imposed its political views on the other 83%, whether they liked it or not. Black Africa is affronted by this, as it is by a hundred-and-one laws which prohibit mixed club sport, mixed trade unions, mixed schools, mixed marriages, and so on—each one hurtful and offensive, all seen as the acts of people who regard themselves as **super** Africans.

Mr Vorster has certainly achieved more than most people expected in his six months, but he has only just started out on a long hard road if what he wants to do, as surely he must, is to achieve real acceptance for South Africa in Africa. To do that he is going to have to set about dismantling the apartheid edifice which his Party has spent 27 years erecting and he is going to have to sit down with people of all colours and many viewpoints in South Africa and work out a new policy which is reasonably acceptable to them all. Can he bring himself to do it, if not immediately, at least within a reasonable time! We certainly hope so, because only then will Black Africa cease to regard White South Africans as bigoted **super** Africans and welcome them as part of the continent. □

THE GOVERNMENT AND THE CHRISTIAN INSTITUTE

The Government's shameful treatment of the Christian Institute has been fully discussed in the newspapers. There seems to be no point, therefore, in repeating either the main facts of the case or even the primary reasons for the indignation and dismay which all civilised and alert South Africans have felt. What we propose to do instead is to consider some of the wider implications of the Government's action.

The Christian Institute, as a body dedicated to the study and the implementation of the social aspects of Christ's teaching, has found, not surprisingly, that it is bound to be sharply critical of the way in which South African society is organised. The C. I. has in fact stated boldly that apartheid is unChristian. But—argues our Government—apartheid is the cherished ideal of one political party, and therefore to criticise it is to indulge in politics, and therefore a body which does so has no right to receive money from overseas sources.

In terms of crude power-politics, the Government's argument was to some extent predictable: the Nats want to stay in power and they are happy to have a crack at anyone who says anything at all which disagrees with their traditional dogmas. Nevertheless this latest act of theirs is somewhat remarkable. For one thing, they seem to be prepared to enter into combat with all those Christian denominations who have declared that apartheid is incompatible with the Gospels' statements about love and justice. Why have they done this? Is it because they are confident that when confronted by the might of the state most Christians wilt and become silent or allow their views to go a little blurred or return to the safety of purely private prayer? If this is the Government's assumption, let us devoutly hope that it is a mistaken one. The second remarkable feature of this latest piece of tyranny is that it should have been performed for all the world to see (the world sees most things

nowadays) at just the moment when Mr Vorster and some of his supposedly more enlightened colleagues are trying to convince this same world that the Government is beginning to become a little reasonable.

The fact is, of course, that at the same time as Mr Vorster and Co. are taking pains to persuade the world at large that they are becoming more liberal, they are taking equally intense pains to persuade the right wing of their own party that, for all the malicious distortions of the local and overseas press, they are certainly not lapsing into the frightful heresy of liberalism. There is perhaps some small significance in the fact that, a week or so after the disabling of the Christian Institute, there came the proclamation that apartheid was soon to be dismantled in Namibia/South-West Africa. Not that we wish to accuse Mr Vorster of downright machiavellianism: we believe that Nationalists are not really capable of machiavellianism, a procedure which—

evil though it is—requires considerable intelligence and finesse.

All successful politicians, alas, seem to have to learn the art of saying slightly different things to different groups of people. But it isn't often that one has the spectacle of a public figure making pronouncements which contradict one another completely. Mr Vorster is sometimes pictured, by some of the sillier South African journalists, as an impressive and triumphant figure, bestriding the narrow world of Southern African politics like some sort of colossus. But perhaps a truer picture of him is this: he is standing on a patch of ground which is steadily being washed away by the currents of powerful feeling that he and his predecessors have by their foolishness brought into being. So far from being mighty and triumphant, Mr Vorster is a small man, uncertain, confused, and rather pathetic. □

THE “LEGALISATION” OF ABORTION IN SOUTH AFRICA

by Marjorie Dyer

In the face of a world tendency to make legal abortion freely available to women, South Africa's Abortion & Sterilization Bill of 1975 is starkly reactionary.

While the first Roman Catholic country, France, has legalised abortion in 1974, and while even in Italy, under the direct domination of the Vatican, there is a demand for a liberal law, and while legal abortion is now available to half the world's women, South Africa's legislators have produced a bill which is inhumanitarian and cumbersome, prescribes heavy penalties for abuse, and is bound to perpetuate the problems created by over-fertility and unplanned procreation.

In 1973 a draft bill was read in Parliament; this was then referred to an all-male Parliamentary Select Committee which heard evidence for a year before producing the Abortion & Sterilization Bill of 1974. There were protests about the all-male committee. At the time of its constitution there were two women in the House, neither of whom was invited to serve on the committee; cf. the Lane Committee which deliberated in England for three years on the working of the British Abortion Act, under the chairmanship of a woman—

Mrs Justice Lane—and consisted of 10 women out of 16 members. In replying this year in the House to repeated protests about the all-male Select Committee, a Member stated that there was no need to have a woman on the Committee for “if one wanted to abolish capital punishment today surely one would not appoint a bunch of murderers to go into the matter”!

As a result of its deliberations the Select Committee produced a Bill which differed significantly from the original draft bill of 1973. The original bill contained a clause which stated that a medical practitioner could procure an abortion “where the continued pregnancy may endanger the life of the woman concerned or may constitute a serious threat to her physical or mental health”. This clause was similar to one in the British Abortion Act which has been widely interpreted there, virtually to authorise abortion on request. Approximately 80% of abortions done in Britain today are done for psychological reasons.

But in our 1974 bill the physical and mental indications for abortion have been separated. As far as the physical indication is concerned, the doctor has to certify that