

LIBERAL OPINION



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WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE ?

By THE NATIONAL CHAIRMAN

The Liberal Party in South Africa has reached its nadir. Repeated bannings have deprived us of the instructed manpower which we have built up and through which we were able to keep in touch with country branches. Never have there been so many of our members under restriction as at the present time. With the General Election only a few weeks away from us we have regretfully had to abandon the idea of putting up even one Liberal candidate for Parliament.

In view of this it would be surprising if the question did not arise in many hearts whether it is worth continuing as a political party or not. Ought we to go into indefinite recess or ought we to reconstitute ourselves as a purely educational body without political aims or hopes? Where do we go from here?

The principles for which we stand are very dear to us and we believe that they are essential for the future happiness and good government of our country. One does not commit one's self to such principles lightly in the atmosphere of South African life. We did not enter the Liberal Party lightly. These principles have not lost their validity nor their imperative call to loyal consciences. The need

is greater than it has ever been. It is therefore no time for those of us who have a real sense of patriotic duty to withdraw from our position.

COURAGE AND HOPE

The Liberal Party is therefore not going to be dissolved. We are going to continue with courage and hope. Our main task is obviously education, but we are not going to close the door to contesting Parliamentary elections the minute we are in a position to do so. We know deep in our hearts that we are not using or desirous of using subversive methods or sabotage, as we also know that our colleagues who have been banned stood four-square for constitutional and peaceful methods. If we are banned, let it be, as it will be, a tyrannical act of government. Let it not be due to anything in our own conduct which could conceivably render banning justified.

We must meet and discuss new techniques. They will obviously have to do with methods of educating public opinion. It may be that we shall have to concentrate on liberal doctrines and principles and less on the Liberal Party as such. We have a real obligation laid upon us to get across to our fellow citizens the principles for which we stand. We believe them to be just, we also believe them to be in the best political interests of South Africa from the long term point of view. Let us take heart of grace, determined to keep our subscriptions paid up and our activities greater than ever before. Let us also be flexible enough to seek new methods and new ways of making our influence felt.

This is our position in the year 1966, at the lowest ebb of our fortunes. It might help us to remember the words of Marshal Foch in a similar time of darkness: "My centre is crumbling, my left wing is beginning to retreat, my right wing is out-flanked. I advance."

EDGAR BROOKES.

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U.D.I.

Since Mr. Smith declared his illegal independence on November 11th the Rhodesian situation has changed almost daily, and it may be quite different on the day when this article is read to what it was on the day it was written.

As the New Year started there was a feeling in the air that what had gone before was no more than preliminary skirmishing, backed up by a slow and largely invisible build-up of Mr. Wilson's economic weapons. Sanctions had not yet had an opportunity to make themselves really felt and Mr. Smith's supporters were able to ignore the future, drown their uneasy fears about it in the Christmas spirit and put off until tomorrow thoughts which did not bear thinking today.

1966 is that tomorrow and, whatever other uncertainties it may hold, there is one thing about it which is quite certain. Before the year is out Mr. Smith will either be toppled or be very near to doing so, or he will have survived and Western influence in Africa will have suffered a set-back from which it may never recover. And not only the West. Non-racialism in Africa, too, will have been driven desperately on the defensive. The Lagos Prime Ministers' conference had wisely given Mr. Wilson time in which to make his sanctions policy work, but if it has not worked by July, anything can happen.

SOUTH AFRICAN REACTIONS

South African political reactions to UDI have been more than interesting. Dr. Verwoerd continues to be extremely cautious and probably deliberately confusing. Sir de Villiers Graaff is all for Smith. No doubt he hopes that white South Africa's obvious emotional involvement with its Rhodesian "kith and kin", and the fact that only he has come out in open support of them, will bring him votes and seats in the General Election. We think he will be disappointed. The Progressives have adopted a line that "this is no affair of ours and we must keep out of it or we may get caught up in the backwash". It is rumoured that they are gravely split over UDI, many of their supporters wanting all-out support of Mr. Smith as, clearly, do many of Dr. Verwoerd's.

The Liberal Party has no problem about Mr. Smith. The sooner he collapses the better. As Alan Paton said in his public statement when UDI was announced, one of the inevitable consequences of Mr. Smith's illegal seizure of power would be a steady drift towards an authoritarian state on the South African model. White Rhodesia would daily become more like white South Africa. And so it has been. Mr. Smith had enough arbitrary powers to frighten most people long before November 11th. He added to them by declaring a state of emergency and proceeding to imprison some of his more outspoken opponents without trial. He has set out to keep Rhodesians as ignorant as possible of what is building up against them by imposing a censorship far more rigid than anything South Africa has yet experienced. None of this was unexpected. What has been interesting is the ease with which the Smith Government has slipped into the attitudes and clichés of every other dictatorship. It has put on the mantle of injured innocence and set about blaming everyone else for all that its own actions have precipitated. One is reminded of Hitler and the Czechs and the Poles, who stood out so provocatively against German aspirations, that he had no course left but to attack them. Mr. Smith is no Hitler, but he has certainly learnt some lessons from him, and it is worth reminding ourselves that it was Mr. Smith and nobody else who declared independence and that he did so with full knowledge of the consequences. It is also worth reminding ourselves that he had no need at all to do so. Looked at from the most cynical point of view he could probably have stalled on the extension of African rights in Rhodesia for years without anyone being sufficiently provoked to do anything effective about it.

RESENTMENT

However, Smith chose UDI, and he must now face the consequences. If he did not know that by UDI he would affront every single thinking African on the continent, and build up a resentment that would not be stilled until he was brought down, then he was very badly informed. The truth of the matter is that, since UDI, Mr. Smith has no long term future in Africa at all. If he survives sanctions he may last awhile, but at what cost? He need not think that Mao Tse Tung will leave him in peace. Sooner or later, if sanctions fail, Rhodesia's border with Zambia will be-

come a guerilla frontier . . . and the guerillas will have Chinese training, they will have Chinese weapons, and they will have Chinese ideas. And Mr. Smith will be able to do very little about them, for if he dares try to take counter-measures across the Zambian border he will have the whole world about his ears.

The prospect, if sanctions fail, is that the whole of Black Africa will have been driven right out of the Western orbit and into the Chinese and hopes for the development of fully non-racial communities in Africa will have suffered gravely. For China does not hesitate to punt the racial line, and why should she hesitate to do so when Mr. Smith will have prepared such fruitful ground for her? On the other hand, if sanctions work, the West will have won a considerable victory and its prestige in the uncommitted world will rise dramatically. For it will have shown that it is prepared to act with vigour and determination against its own "kith and kin" when they attempt to consolidate white racial supremacy over an unwilling majority.

NON-RACIAL RHODESIA

The Liberal Party hopes that the sanctions campaign works and works soon. For if Mr. Smith is brought down without serious bloodshed in Rhodesia it may well be that his crazy seizure of power will have done exactly the opposite of what he hoped for and have laid a broader and more solid basis for a future non-racial Rhodesia than seemed possible before UDI. For UDI has succeeded in aligning a large part of the upper echelons of the Rhodesian "Establishment" against the Government. The Governor's dignified stand, the clear identification of the Chief Justice with him, the known fact that all the other Judges oppose Smith and the reported unhappiness of business and professional leaders—all these hold out hope for the future. For although these people may not be in line with the African Nationalists, they are at least a good deal closer to them than they used to be, and the Nationalists themselves may well have been impressed by the refusal of the leading white citizens to strike any bargains with Smith.

The Lagos Conference has been followed by plans for increased sanctions against Rhodesia and by rumours that these will be accompanied by peace proposals from Mr. Wilson. Is it too much to hope that out of

these will be built a political bridge which will lead peacefully from the present white-supremacist rule to a fully representative, non-racial government?

AFRICAN NATIONALISM DEBATE

REPLY BY PETER ROYLE TO DR. BROOKES' LETTERS IN "LIBERAL OPINION", MAY, 1965, AND AUGUST, 1965

In a healthy democracy there must be vigorous debate. In the course of the following article I shall therefore put my case as sharply as I can. But I wish it to be understood that I intend no rancour, and that my respect for Dr. Brookes withstands the disagreement I shall express with his views.

Dr. Brookes seems to think that my article on nationalism might be a plea for support for the African counterpart of Afrikaner nationalism. How he can believe this, in the light of what I wrote, I find it difficult to understand; and the criticism implied in his request that I define my terms I cannot accept. By "African nationalists" I meant those who are commonly known, both by themselves and by others, as African nationalists. It is as if I were to say: "Christianity is responsible for the Inquisition", and someone were to retort: "But that was not Christianity: Christianity is a religion of brotherhood and love. You must define your terms."

Furthermore, to state that my use of the term "African nationalism" is incorrect is beside the point. It is no doubt incorrect (it is certainly undiplomatic) to use the term "Western bloc" to cover nations such as Japan and Malaysia, but the point is that it is done. And nobody, to my knowledge, allows himself to be confused by it, or sees in it any proof of confusion on the part of those who use the term in this way. In any case, it was partly to **clear up** the confusion caused by the use of the term "nationalist" to describe African freedom movements that I wrote the article to which Dr. Brookes takes exception.

LEAST BAD POLICY

However, this discussion is not a mere war of words. Dr. Brookes seems to believe that if African nationalists are likely to do things which are strictly incompatible with the principles of the Liberal Party, then they should not be supported by Liberals. Now, I do not deny that they **are** likely to do such things. It is quite conceivable, for example, that in this country as in Tanzania, the group that attains power may want to set up a one-party State. But before throwing up our hands in horror, let us concede that in certain circumstances this may be the least bad policy that could be pursued, and that absolute liberalism is often simply impracticable. If, for example, there were strong grounds for believing that one-man-one-vote would lead to the election of a Hitler, it would be stupid and immoral to object to the establishment of a benevolent dictatorship, even though such a régime could not be said to fulfil all the requirements of liberalism. But because liberalism may be impracticable, even immoral, this does not mean that liberals should cease to be liberals, or that they should cease to take part in any form of political activity: it means simply that it is their duty to collaborate with the party that is the least likely to abuse its power when in office and that offers the best prospect of the ultimate triumph of liberalism. The question we must ask, therefore, is not: Does African nationalism conflict at any point with liberalism? It is: Granted that it will conflict with liberalism, should we not nevertheless collaborate with it on the grounds that failure to do so will lead to the perpetuation of something worse and the certain rejection of all liberal ideals on the part of African nationalists?

ABSTRACT MORALISM

Dr. Brookes's approach to this question seems to me to be one of abstract moralism. It is not enough to preach virtue in the hope that one day it will triumph. History is made by men, and to be politically effective one must make an effort to understand them, especially when one disagrees with them.

His attitude to the party's franchise policy is odd. "If [African domination] is what we are asked to approve, what answer have we to the critics of 'one man, one vote' who argue that our policy means the domination of

white by black instead of the reverse?" Surely the only relevant question would be: Is African domination (which term Dr. Brookes is using in its bad sense) likely to result from a policy of one-man-one-vote? In other words, **are** African nationalists Black racialists? If he thinks they are, then it is surely, according to his own way of thinking, irresponsible of him to advocate universal suffrage—unless he thinks a government so elected would **not** be headed by African nationalists; and this, which is almost inconceivable, he clearly does **not** think—or if he does, his question is meaningless.

OVERRIDING CONSIDERATION

Personally, I have no qualms about this policy. The overriding consideration on the African continent is that the humanity that the African has been denied should be restored (on this depends also our own humanity); and, as anyone who attended the Natal Convention so admirably conceived by Dr. Brookes will realize, his disfranchisement has become for him the symbol of his dehumanization. But to advocate one-man-one-vote on this ground would be sentimental if African nationalists were fundamentally racialistic. However, I do not believe they are. They will almost certainly, none the less, find it difficult not to give the Whites a taste of their own medicine if even White liberals wash their hands of them. The best way to end up in the tiger's belly is not to attempt to ride it, but to try and tame it with high-sounding words.

Dr. Brookes says I give the impression that the old philosophies of liberalism are outdated. They **are**. And in saying this, I am not seeking to be fashionable: it is simply that ideals are conceived by men, and men are changed by the history they create. The pursuit of truth does not consist in scanning the heavens for absolutes. I believe, however, that old-fashioned liberalism (dare I say: and therefore Dr. Brookes?) will always fulfil an invaluable

function; but that henceforth, in an age which has understood that man's basic needs can be met only through collective action, this function will be primarily critical.

PRACTICABILITY

All this has been fairly theoretical. But the disagreement between Dr. Brookes and myself has not been about the **practicability** of collaboration with African nationalism, but its moral desirability. The question now arises, however: **Can** the Liberal party do what I ask of it? And if so, how?

First of all, on the question of violence, raised by Dr. Brookes, I wish to say unequivocally that I do not advocate it. However, even though I do not believe that the alternative to violence is impotence or the disbandment of the party (which would be a mistake because it might lead to further demoralization of the non-European population, and also to increased police interference with the Progressives), I must confess that in practice I cannot see many things the party could do that it is not already doing. I should, nevertheless, like to make the following suggestions:

1. Given the impossibility, in view of government legislation and the incarceration of African leaders, of making common cause with nationalist organizations within South Africa, the party should establish fraternal relations with nationalist parties in other parts of Africa: Zambia, Rhodesia, and the protectorates readily spring to mind. And where such relations already exist, let us hear more of them. What has happened, for example, to the connection with President Nyerere and his party? (The party should not establish such relations with parties whose behaviour consistently violates the principles of liberalism, e.g., the Convention People's Party of Ghana.)

2. The party should make more public statements on international issues. Given its inability to contest sensibly even a single seat in the general election, should it not be devoting more attention to its educative task? It is clear that events in the world at large, and especially, of course, in other parts of Africa, are making a great impact on the minds of White South Africans. Should not the Liberal party be continually commenting, praising, excusing, and condemning, so that the public has a clearer image of what it stands for? Can we honestly say we are doing enough to make people face the realities of their age? And doesn't the drift away from liberalism in this country show that even liberals are liable to desert the fold out of a sense of disillusionment brought about by an initial political naïveté that we have failed to dispel, and that we have sometimes been guilty of encouraging? This is not the same as collaborating with African nationalism, but it might at least create a climate in which African nationalism, and consequently the Liberal party, would be less feared.

3. The party should as soon as possible (and I realize that for some time it will be out of the question) elect an African leader. I am not suggesting that at present Africans are being discriminated against: I am simply suggesting that where there are no really good grounds against it (such as incompetence or illiberalism), they should be brought in greater numbers into the policy-making bodies of the party; and that eventually we should aim at having an African national leader. No doubt this suggestion will elicit protests of "inverted racialism" or "discrimination in reverse". And clearly, under normal conditions, one should simply elect the best man for the job, irrespective of race. But in the present circumstances the best man for this particular job **will be an African**. For such a choice would have three extremely beneficial effects. First, it would result in increased African membership. Second, it would bring publicity

for a moderate, liberal African, whose declarations might help to allay White fears, and would, in any case, make it more difficult for White to portray all Africans as racialists (and their difficulty would increase in proportion to the increase in party membership). And, third, it would put Liberals in a stronger position vis-à-vis other left-wing groups when the day of reckoning comes.

"THE NEW TOWNSMEN"

A PAMPHLET ALL SHOULD READ

"Two-thirds of the people of South Africa—the Republic's 12,000,000 African citizens—have no secure right to live and work in the industrialised and developed parts of their own country.

"Any security of residence or employment they may enjoy outside the Reserves is dependent on administrative discretion.

"This, in the starkest and clearest possible terms, is the central fact about South Africa's legislation controlling the lives and movements of Africans."

Thus begins **The New Townsmen**, a pamphlet setting out the legal position of Africans in the White areas today, written by Dr. O. D. Wollheim, M.P.C., and published by the Civil Rights League (P.O. Box 3807, Cape Town). The booklet is cheap (it costs ten cents), and it is brief (the front cover tells us that the reading time is twenty minutes). It is something that all South Africans should read. All reasonably alert people are aware that in the last two or three years the laws

governing the lives of urban Africans have become stricter and fiercer; but most people, and indeed most of those who are victims of the new legislation, would be unable to say exactly what the latest law says, what its meaning is, and how its provisions differ from the provisions of previous laws. In other words, most South Africans, even liberally-minded ones, are somewhat ignorant of the gigantic scheme of injustice and inhumanity that the Government is now vigorously and monstrously putting into action. The main areas of this ignorance Dr. Wollheim's pamphlet effectively removes.

I do not, of course, propose to reproduce the pamphlet in this brief notice. What I shall indicate are the main points that Dr. Wollheim covers.

CRUEL ELABORATION

He shows that the recent legislation—finally consolidated in the Bantu Labour Act, No. 67 of 1964—is a cruel elaboration of the principle underlying Section 10 of the Natives Urban Areas Act of 1952, namely, that no African may remain lawfully in any urban area for more than 72 hours. When that Section was introduced, various sorts of persons were exempted: those that could prove that they were born in urban areas, or that they had worked for some specified time in the urban area in question, or that they were wives, unmarried daughters or sons under 18 years who had lawfully entered the urban area and ordinarily lived in the same premises as the husband or father, or that they had received permission to remain from a labour officer. This was a very harsh law, and even when Africans were exempted they often found it extremely difficult to **prove** their rights.

But the new law is infinitely harsher:

"It makes the principle [of the old Section 10] applicable to **all** White areas, which are now called prescribed areas.

"It tightens up the provisions with regard to the residence of wives and children and makes it incalculably harder for families to live together.

"It takes away the **right** of exempted persons to remain in the prescribed areas, and gives officials discretion to apply these exemptions.

"It gives wide powers to officials to declare persons 'idle' or 'undesirable' and therefore to remove them from prescribed areas.

"It makes it much more difficult for 'foreign-born' Africans, even if they have been in an urban area for very many years and have married and brought up families there, to remain in South Africa.

"It sets up labour centres to which certain classes of persons may be referred and from which they may be directed to go to any place specified by the officials."

Dr. Wollheim goes on to show the precise significance, in the terms of the law, of such words as "redundant", "idle" and "undesirable"; and he details some of the effects that the new legislation will have, and has already begun to have, (a) on the labour force, (b) on family life, (c) on foreign Africans, (d) on those qualified to remain in the towns and (e) on the sick, crippled and handicapped. Under heading (b), to take a sample, we read this:

"Previously wives and children were allowed to be with their men if there was sufficient accommodation. Now women are only to be admitted if their labour is required in the urban area. [Note: the law denies the very fact and concept, let alone the sanctity, of marriage.]

"To get into town, a woman must get the written permission of her guardian if she is under 21 years of age, a certificate of approval

from the Native Commissioner of her home area, a permit from the urban labour officer, and a certificate from the local authority that there is accommodation available. The permission to work is then endorsed in her reference book, which also states the contract of service.

"In 1963, 2,331 women were endorsed out of Cape Town, and 4,851 out of Johannesburg."

MR. FRONEMAN'S PRINCIPLE

Other sections of the pamphlet deal with the labour centres (which the Act dishonestly describes as "aid centres"); with the relationship between the apartheid laws and South Africa's economic and social life; and with the ideological theory which underlies the whole legislation. The latter was summed up by Mr. S. F. Froneman, the Nationalist M.P. for Heilbron, when he said that "the Bill contains only one single principle throughout, namely, that the Bantu in the White area constitute only a temporary labour force and not a permanent part of the population of the White area". By way of comment on Mr. Froneman's principle, Dr. Wollheim points to four unanswerable facts:

"1. Two-thirds of South Africa's African population live and work outside the Reserves—in what Mr. Froneman calls the 'White' area.

"2. Many hundreds of thousands of these Africans were born in the urban areas or have spent most of their lives working there; they form a stable, permanently-settled part of the population of the urban areas.

"3. Whites are outnumbered by non-Whites—in most areas by Africans alone—in what is described as the 'White' area; that is, 87 per cent. of the land area of South Africa.

"4. The industrial labour force of the country is almost 70 per cent. African and industry cannot exist without this labour.

The last sentence of the pamphlet is this: "Does South Africa realise what has happened and what the effects of this legislation are?"

Hardly any of the people who have the vote in South Africa realise—or even care. What can be done by those people who do realise or partly realise, and who do care?

A number of things **can** be done. The first of them is to buy this pamphlet, read it, and spread the information that it contains in every possible way.