

# LIBERAL OPINION

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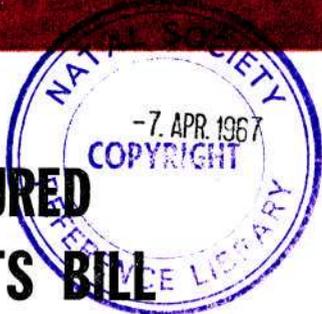
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## COLOURED CADETS BILL

A national statement by Dr. Margaret Ballinger

THE Training Centre for Coloured Cadets Bill, now before Parliament, purports to deal with the acknowledged social evil of unemployed and largely - unemployable Coloured youths. This evil is due largely to social and economic insecurity and its cure cannot lie in extending and deepening that insecurity. Yet that is what this Bill, if translated into law, will inevitably do.

According to the terms of the Bill, every Coloured male between the ages of 18 and 24 must apply to a registering officer (in plain language, a policeman or someone else designated by the Minister) for a registration certificate. If this is issued to him he becomes a "recruit", and if he is then called up to undergo "training" he becomes a "cadet" and receives "pay and allowance".

Training is vaguely defined as "for any kind of employment", but "physical exercises and the performance of any kind of work" are specifically mentioned. Since the Workmen's Compensation Act, the Apprenticeship Act and the Wage Act do not apply to the cadets, it is clearly not the intention to train skilled labour.

Once he has been registered a recruit must produce his certificate on demand\* to a registering officer (in plain language, it must be repeated, a policeman) and he may be arrested

without warrant if it is reasonably suspected that he has failed to comply with the law. Every registered recruit must notify the police of a change of address.

Recruits who are at school or the university, are in full-time employment, are apprenticed, or are physically or mentally unfit may (not "shall") be exempted from training. There will obviously have to be written proof of such exemption. **In practice, therefore, every Coloured youth of the apparent age of 18 to 24 may at any time** be asked by a policeman to produce a piece of paper — a certificate either of registration or of exemption — and if he fails to do so may be arrested and lodged in the cells pending trial.

**Those in any way familiar with what Africans have to endure will not easily agree to the extension of what is virtually the pass system to yet another section of the community.**

Cadets at training centres will be under rigorous semi-military discipline. Indeed, the language of the Bill — recruit, cadet, pay and allowance — creates the impression of a military establishment and is reminiscent of the Special Service Battalion of the 'thirties, with this vital difference: S.S.B. took white youths and turned them into efficient soldiers to serve their country; this Bill proposes to take Coloured youths to turn them into semi-skilled labour in the interests of private employers.

South Africans of all colours should be under no illusions about the effects of this Bill. It can only increase immensely the sense of insecurity of the Coloured people — of the tens of thousands of parents whose children will now for the first time be forced into contact with the police, of the tens of thousands of exempted youths who will, nevertheless, be compelled to carry pieces of paper, and of the thousands of displaced youths whose welfare the Bill purports to have at heart.

The Liberal Party of South Africa wishes to draw attention to the fact that Coloured people, apart from officially-nominated Coloured Affairs Council, have clearly not been consulted on what should have been a welfare scheme, but which has, in fact, all the features of a penal measure — and one, moreover, which seriously invades the parental rights of the Coloured population.

\*This provision subsequently altered to "within seven days" — an amendment put forward by Mrs. Helen Suzman. — Ed.

## ANOTHER TWIST OF THE KNIFE

by Prof. A. S. Mathews

IN moving the second reading debate in the House of Assembly, Mr. P. C. Pelser, the Minister of Justice, described the Suppression of Communism Amendment Bill as "an innocuous little Bill". There is only one sense in which this description has any meaning at all. The Bill, when it becomes law, need not be feared by Mr. Pelser or by any of his loyal supporters. People arbitrarily deprived of the right to professional practice or of the right to belong to lawful organisations on the Minister's *verboden* list, will not think the measure innocuous. It will not be thought innocuous by those who are un-South African enough to retain a respect for certain basic principles of justice which the Bill will destroy when it becomes law. In making his remark, Mr. Pelser showed no feeling for language, no awareness of the monstrous implications of his "little" legislative measure.

His justification of the measure is equally open to attack on account of an absence of particularity which is the more surprising for having come from a lawyer. He claimed that communists had infiltrated the legal profession and had asserted themselves "particularly vigorously" in it. This charge will not send shudders down the spines of any except the pathologically gullible. The Minister is also reported to have said that persons charged under the Suppression of Communism Act preferred a certain type of legal representation and that if they could not get it they preferred to go without. This cannot rank even as an excuse for depriving people of their professional livelihood because they hold unorthodox views.

When the Minister and his colleagues did become precise in argument they were unconvincing. Some lawyers, he charged, had been the spearhead in subversive activities and had planned the downfall of South Africa. This may be true, but it does not make Mr. Pelser's measure one whit more desirable. A lawyer who commits a crime may be convicted and imprisoned just like any other person, and the courts have power under the present laws to debar him from practice. If his offence falls short of a crime, he can still be punished for