

SHORT STORY

CIRCUS STYLE

by Getrud Strauss

A black man in a red overall called Boswell Circus over his back. Animals too of course and clowns and glittering costumes, tricks and stunts and trapeze. But he looks on sullen, too familiar with the show. And too familiar with his coke bottle carrying which continues as relentlessly as the persistent hammering cheerfulness of the music. His body balances the weight of the bottles in their red plastic carrying tray. He leans far back with his shoulders, arms straightened and supported by the bulk of his torso, bottles and tray resting against his stomach but jolting away glassily with each step. He releases the hold not bending forward an inch and allows the bulk to crash down on the planks of the steep aisle. White arms stretch out from the rows of spectators, mothers and fathers tell their thirsty kids to wait, the boy will open their bottles. Some impatient ones come out onto the aisles and grab the drinks; one woman takes six bottles out of the tray and waits for the black man to open them. But he gestures with a nod to the side she should put the bottles back again. She refuses, putting back would be to relinquish her right. He battles with her stubbornness but finally returns all six bottles to the tray himself in one neat row. The bottle opener is gripped

expertly in the palm of his hand and with the roll of the drums and the crescendo supporting the juggler's act he glides over the bottles with a single strong movement, extracting all tops in one row with incredible speed. His face remains grim, he is fiercely intent on being allowed the display of such skill. He hates the white woman a row further down who keeps on waving one unopened bottle in his face. Again from him the sideways nod for her to put the bottle down in the tray. She does not, he will not open it in mid-air—or only eventually. It makes him sick to open it thus, his muscular arms despise the little task. He needs the support of the tray for the execution of his skill. Only bottles lined up like soldiers are worthy his attack; then he wipes the heads off with one concentrated stroke.

Rows of white kiddies and Moms and Dads clap eager and excited, taken in by the lion's show of ferocity. They don't take in the black man's art and anger.□

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FEDERALISM-OPPORTUNITY OR EVASION

by Edgar Brookes

The minds of many thinkers in South Africa during recent years have turned to federation as a solution of our country's difficulties. Even the Report of the Sprocas Political Commission went rather far in that direction (the present writer signed, for that reason, a minority report). Leo Marquard has stood unwaveringly for a federation. Many more superficial thinkers have been equally sure, without his background of study and experience.

There are two ways of approaching the subject. One is the belief that federation is worthwhile for its own sake. The other is that the federal system holds a possible solution of the issue of race and colour in our national franchise.

Those who hold the former view have not hesitated to blame the fathers of the National Convention for rushing our country into a legislative union. Two outstanding South Africans who did not sit in the Convention—W.P. Schreiner and "Onze Jan"—were strongly in favour of federation. So was the somewhat undistinguished delegation of Natal in the Convention. Some of us have been loath to accept that giants like Steyn, Smuts and Merriman were wrong on this vital point.

Be that as it may, there is nothing to prevent a Liberal from supporting federalism on its own merits and arguing that the