

## The History of Race Relations in South Africa

T. R. H. Davenport

### INTRODUCTORY COMPARISONS

Historians do not solve social problems. Indeed it is even possible that they may have a sordid professional interest in keeping them unsolved. They prefer the society which in the Chinese proverb 'has been through interesting times', rather than the lucky country which has no history at all. More seriously I believe that the function of historians is to be not so much that of direct social analysis as that of helping people to reflect; and the objects of that reflection are the unique situations which give a faithful expression, voice or texture to the events we are trying to understand. The history of race relations in South Africa is an enormous area; so instead of trying to cover the whole of it let us look at a few representative and illuminating situations, beginning with the story of Eva.

Eva was a much valued interpreter in the service of the Dutch East India Company. The Journal of the Company had quite a lot to say about her. For example, on 16 November 1663:

Eva who speaks Dutch perfectly has this evening gone off with her two children, procreated by a European, without our exactly knowing the reason. This woman is certainly born of Hottentoo parents, but has since her childhood

been educated in the house of Mr. Riebeeck, and brought into Christianity. Last year she was baptised.

On 22 November 1663 Eva is reported to be staying in the country with a freeman named Tielman Hendrikz: 'We doubt if we shall fetch her back, as this lewd vixen has often played us this trick.' But she in fact returned two days later, and after a further five months on 26 April 1664, it is announced that 'Eva is engaged to be married to Pieter van Meerhof, the first marriage contracted here according to Christian usage with a native', the Council of Policy having given its approval on 12 April and promoted van Meerhof to the rank of surgeon. The couple did not wait long, for a little marriage feast was given on 2 June 1664 in the Commander's house. Eva was accommodated on Robben Island with her husband and children — there was nothing suspicious about that. All of these children may have been by van Meerhof, though this is by no means certain. Her husband was later sent on an expedition to the Indian Ocean, but tragedy hit the family when as reported in the Journal of the 27 February 1668, that is less than four years after their marriage, van Meerhof was murdered in Madagascar. The consequence was more than sad; almost exactly a year later the Journal records on 8 February 1669:

in the evening the three children begotten by the late surgeon Pieter van Meerhof out of the female Hottentoo Eva, appear in the hall naked and destitute, the eldest sending in word that his mother being quite drunk had with all her household things and bedding gone to the Hottentoots, and that in their home which had been prepared and finally furnished for her in the house of the old pottery she had left nothing behind, in the shape of food or clothing or otherwise . . . This afternoon in consequence of her excessive drunkenness and her shameful behaviour in the hall at the dinner table of the Commander she had been severely reprimanded and advised to live a better and more civilised life.

The medicine had evidently been too strong.

At the news of her flight, it was decided to put the custody of her children in the hands of Jan Reynierszoon, a deacon of the church, and his wife. Meanwhile Eva, 'that Hottentot pig', was found again drunk and disorderly and imprisoned in the Fort. She was sent back to Robben Island on 26 March. After a further four years about which we have no details she emerges again. On 28 July 1673 she brings another baby forward for baptism. A year and a day later came the last entry of all, on 29 July 1674:

This day departed this life a certain female Hottentoo named Eva long ago taken from the African brood in her tender childhood by the Honourable van Riebeeck and educated in his house, and being thus transformed from a female Hottentoo almost into a Netherland woman was married to a certain chief surgeon of the Residency by whom she had three children. Since his death, however, she had brought forward as many illegitimate children and for the rest led such an irregular life that for a long while the desire would have existed of getting rid of her, had it not been for the hope of the conversion of this brutal aboriginal which was always hovering between.

There is quality of real compassion, I think, about that unfulfilled conditional: 'The desire would have existed of getting rid of her had it not been . . .'

Very nearly three hundred years later

another matrimonial tragedy from the same district, but this time the marriage was broken not by the death of one of the partners, but as a direct consequence of the law of the land. It should be explained, so that the following extract can be understood, that unless a man and his wife both qualify in terms of long residence, usually fifteen years, to live in South African Urban Areas under the Bantu Urban Areas Act, there is no guarantee that they will be allowed to live together save in the Bantu Homelands. In June 1971, the Ladies of the Black Sash Office in Cape Town reported for the second time on the case of Mrs. B. M. whose initials rather than her name were given for security reasons. She had been required to leave Cape Town and settle at Nqamakwe in the Transkei two years earlier and as a result of this she and her husband who continued to live in Cape Town had drifted apart. The report goes on:

At first her husband supported her but now he is no longer interested, he has another wife and two new children. This is B's third visit to Cape Town from Nqamakwe since her resettlement. The authorities refuse to allow her to remain here to work to support her six children and insist that she returns to Nqamakwe. They have been most helpful and persistent in their efforts to make her husband build her a house at Nqamakwe and support her and the six children, but he is not interested in a wife and family who live 700 miles away. He has told her this in writing. The break-up of this marriage is to our certain knowledge the result of the enforced separation. Her husband has worked in Cape Town for the South African Railways and Harbours since 1951, and when Mrs. B. M. was re-settled she had herself lived here continuously for 17 years, but it was not quite 15 years since she first registered in 1950 so that she didn't qualify technically — it is now five years since we have watched the marriage being broken by Government policy.

Two matrimonial situations. Eva was almost if not quite unique. Mrs. B. M. could be paralleled many times. Eva belongs to the early salad days of cultural contact: Mrs B. M. to the tired, frightened present. I suppose the most striking difference between the two stories is

the humanity of the former and the austere monumental insensitivity which underlies the latter. But there is more to it than that. In the first story it is incidental that Eva was black, in that neither the blackness of her skin nor the error of her ways was allowed to affect the fact of her acceptance. She had been accepted on merit; the quality of her service to the Company was quite considerable (you can see that from van Riebeeck's Journal), and she continued to be accepted for the duration of her tragic life, because the ruling community to which she had been admitted could not bring itself to write her off. Mrs. B. M. was the wrong colour and had been written off, the victim of a law that was made by people who might have imagined but did not know her circumstances, and was administered by others who were not allowed to care about them. One wonders why it is that injustice in history is so often committed by proxy.

#### THE FRONTIER

A formative influence in the development of race relations in South Africa was the frontier. That moving area of settlement on the hither edge, not of free land as F. J. Turner wrote, but of contested land where rival cultures battled it out for possession. There are many frontiers in the heroic age of South African history, and I shall only choose one, and that one of the least discussed, because in my view it affords a rich variety of illustrative material to emphasise the many moods of frontier conflict. I refer to the frontier between Bushman and Trekboer. In the very early eighteenth century conflicts between Trekboer and Bushmen were taking place not far from Paarl, say 35 miles from Cape Town. At the time of the first British occupation in the 1790s the troubled areas had moved 100 miles inland to the region of Ceres and the Koue Bokkeveld, 70 years later to the dry region beyond Victoria West, perhaps 300 miles inland. Large commandos were led against the Bushmen in the 1770s, as the conflict between the hunter-gatherers and the stock farmers reached a climax. Many on both sides suffered greatly. Here, from Moodie's record is the anguished plea of one Trekboer who lived in the region of Graaff Reinet. It suffers somewhat in translation, but it retains that quality of urgency and exasperation which I believe we must see in

the outlook of the Trekboer if we are to understand the harsher reactions which so often characterised his behaviour on the frontier. Some struck out wildly at the elusive foes, others played tricks on them. Carel van der Merwe was at his wits end and on the point of tears as he wrote to ask for help on 19 December 1777:

Worthy Brother, David Schalk van der Merwe. Should this letter reach you safe it will be pleasing to me. As regards myself I am not yet quite well, and now the glands are so swollen in my thighs that I can scarce walk. But as to conditions in the country, it is very bad, because the Bossiesmans have so much their own way without opposition and they have pushed in so far that they have passed me and are around me day and night. On the 18th day of this month in the evening they attacked Piet Venter's herdsmen close to his house and wounded them very severely, and murdered a very great number of sheep. From Dirk Coetse also a lot and from Koster a lot of cattle away. Klaas Smit very severely wounded. Here are no farms or very few that do not suffer under their violence. O Heavenly King, look down upon us to our comfort and to the terror of our haughty enemies for murder and riot are daily getting more and more the upper hand and thus we must live in great extremity. I therefore beg you [h's brother] in God's name that you will give us so much help that will beat the robbers out of the mountains, were it so many Hottentots as quick as you can send them to me . . . We are much too weak to oppose the numbers that have collected together in hundreds and thousands and advanced against us, so that we are not certain for our lives for an hour.

We often imagine the white farmer in his pursuit of the Bushmen as inclined to shoot on sight, considering them to be mere vermin to be exterminated; but the story has more nuance than that, as can be seen from the pages of Heinrich Lichtenstein who travelled through the Cape in the early nineteenth century during the time of the Batavian Republic. He knew that hunting expeditions into Bushman territory chased away their game, but he also noticed

efforts being made by frontier Boers to reach a peaceful accommodation with the hunter-gatherers of the Karoo: a share of the bag after a hunt perhaps, or gifts of stock in the hope that they would use them for breeding. More frequently some kind of dancgeld in the form of 'sheep, tobacco, brandy, beads, buttons and other trifles', as Lichtenstein put it, which it was hoped would keep the marauders away.

But were the Bushmen really so unfriendly? Burchell who travelled through the Cape interior about a decade later than Lichtenstein was surprised at the ease with which he could get through to a small Bushman community in the Northern Cape. He made contact, they accepted him, they danced for him, he gave them presents in return and wrote enthusiastically:

so much confidence and good will shown us by a people whom the Klaarwater missionaries had represented as the most ferocious of savages, warmed my heart with equally kind feelings towards them, and dispelled from my own mind every sensation of fear, however firmly I had resolved that no favourable appearances should ever lull our vigilance to sleep. But most of my Hottentots betrayed their timidity, and both by their looks and their conversation declared their uneasiness at seeing so many visitors around them, although the number including the women amounted to only fourteen.

Conflict on the Bushman frontier continued down into the late nineteenth century, as the Bushmen receded steadily towards the Orange River. A nasty incident took place in the 1860s when some Bushmen prisoners were murdered by their escort, and a special magistrate L. Anthing was sent North by the Cape Government to conduct an inquiry. His report as J. S. Marais observed is a terrible document. But what seems to shine through it is the fact that even after a real breakdown of relations between frontier farmer and pagan hunter and when something like open warfare had broken out again, conditions still existed for the restoration of law, order and inter-racial confidence, by the intervention of a single magistrate. I quote now from Anthing's report:

I proceeded to the scene of these occurrences, but before I reached it the Bushmen had made another inroad on

the cattle of some other persons and had swept off some forty head, twenty of which were subsequently recovered; and a commando had gone to attack the Bushmen, but were obliged to retire after a little skirmishing in which one of the commando party was slightly wounded by an arrow while two of the Bushwomen received bullet wounds. Although it was generally believed that the Bushmen, of whose probable number I got rather exaggerated accounts, would refuse to surrender and would offer a desperate resistance, it turned out otherwise. I sent word to them that I was a magistrate come to administer justice to all alike, which had the effect of bringing them to surrender without a resort to force. So I marched all the prisoners, including women and children to Kenhardt where I completed the examinations and forwarded these to the Acting Attorney-General. I now had a hundred prisoners who had to be guarded by night and day by armed men, the gaol which we had commenced building not having been completed. In spite of the guard eight of the prisoners, those who were in arrest for the murder of the Lourenses and the two young men near the Hartbeest River and who were kept chained and handcuffed, effected their escape and we had great trouble getting them back. I may mention that four of these escaped prisoners, murderers of the Lourenses, were after a fruitless search of about fourteen days by a patrol I had sent out eventually brought in by other Bushmen, their own kinsmen, who had at first supplied them with weapons as they had been informed by the prisoners they had been released, but who upon learning that they had escaped from custody, sought them again in the desert and there where no white man was present to prompt them, but merely for the sake of justice disarmed and arrested the fugitives and brought them back to me. I mention the circumstance as showing the influence the report of our proceedings and professions was spreading among the so-called intractable Bushmen.

Did it need a newcomer to shatter the stereotype and break the spell of mutual hatred on the frontier? That has often happened in South Africa. In the experience of Burchell and Anthing it seems to have worked. Why didn't it work in the case of a John Philip or a Mahatma Gandhi, or a Harold Macmillan? I leave the question with you.

#### THE LAND

The frontier produced its own special kind of tensions. In settled areas which the fighting had passed over, the relationship between Black and White began to readjust on different lines, some of which came to be regarded as ideologically appropriate, and others not. I can put this simply by saying that in the farming areas, if a black man settled on a white man's land and became his servant and earned his right to occupy the land, either by working for him or by paying a cash rent, this was all right. Only comparatively recently has labour tenancy come to be frowned upon. But if a black man clubbed together with his neighbours and bought a white man's farm or alternatively ran his own stock on the white man's farm and became a share-cropper, this came to be regarded as improper.

In the Land Act of 1913 the Union Government tried to do something about this kind of aberration. The objections of white farmers to share-cropping were clearly expressed by a Free State Parliamentarian, Mr J. G. Keyter, in evidence to the Beaumont Land Commission of 1916 set up to propose the extension of African Reserve land in terms of the 1913 Act:

We have all along taken up the position that the natives in the Free State should be the servants and they know it. I am certain that we are doing the coloured people, that is all blacks, no injustice whatever. There are certain natives who have come here and who absolutely refuse to be servants. They are fairly well to do and they want a part of the farm to sow on shares [that is, to take part in share-cropping]. They have their youngsters to look after their stock, and they themselves are free to go about and do what they like. I see in the newspaper lately that they say that all the farmer needs to do is to draw a line and say to his boy; 'You sow this part for yourself and then you sow that part for me'

and the papers say where is the difference to the old sowing on the halves? Well, when the boy had his whole piece of ground to sow and be given part of the crops, he was not a servant but a partner, a master. The half-share system is a pernicious system because you take away from your neighbours, natives who ought to be servants.

But for Sam Tshabalala who lived in the north-eastern Free State like Keyter, things appeared rather differently:

I am a Zulu, I live in the district of Bethlehem. I am many years in the Free State and I have worked on the farms. It is very hard now to stay on the farms; it is difficult to stay on because after the native has ploughed and sown his master always sends the native off the farm. He says the agreement has been broken; many natives come to the magistrate and complain of being turned off, and the magistrate cannot help us. The police say 'Go to a lawyer'. The farmer who turned me off was able to get boys after I left. All the trouble lies in this, that we have no land to go to with our stock.

Exaggeration? Possibly, here and there, and some suggestion of a stereotype response, but there is no doubt whatever that anyone who has read Sol Plaatje's book *Native Life in South Africa* will know that deprivation of land on a vast scale following conquest and then legislative action after conquest, created immense resentment among the deprived.

Loss of land destroyed economic independence. In Southern Rhodesia things were less serious as the Tribal Land continued to feed its inhabitants, but in South Africa the Reserves ceased to be able to feed their populations in the 1930s. They became net importers of food. This did more than cause soil erosion and malnutrition. It destroyed the argument in favour of peasant holdings, for this kind of farming no longer made economic sense. But many years were wasted before Government dared to admit that such was the case. Meanwhile resentment continued to grow. It has manifested itself in statements by the political leaders of KwaZulu and the Transkei for an extension of the area of African sovereignty and apparently African landownership as well. The South African Prime Minister replied insisting on the frontiers laid down in the 1936

Act. But the 1936 Act referred to ownership, not sovereignty. Demands for an extension of the area of African sovereignty are as I see it compelling, but to encourage peasant cultivation in areas where there has been capitalised farming would be to reduce the capacity of the soil to sustain life. Yet because of the resentments built up because of land ownership, there is a danger that this will have to happen. No wonder then that a major part of our story must seem to be tensions over the holding of land.

## THE TOWNS

Let us now look at the towns. I suppose that of all the contrasts between the outlook of Blacks and Whites in the urban areas where crowds of people live close together and where work is provided for them by mine, factory and shop, the greatest antithesis of all has been that between desire for freedom on the one side and for control on the other. The African who protested against the pass laws and took part in one or other of the many pass-burning campaigns in the history of the Union reflected this desire for freedom. So did the member of the Native Representative Council who commented that 'our locations are nothing but zoos. If you want to get into a native location you have to go through a gate.' I take as a representative statement part of an address by a remarkable South African, Richard Godlo, now a forgotten man living in Uitenhage, who in his day was not only a member of the Native Conference set up by General Smuts in 1920 and of the Native Representative Council set up in 1936, but also the founder and for many years President of the less well known Location Advisory Boards Congress, This Congress, which had met annually since 1929 and had become increasingly representative of urban African opinion as the years went by, usually attracted a good attendance by delegates from all provinces, that is African delegates mainly, as well as by Municipal Councillors and Senior Members of the Department of Native Affairs in Pretoria. Godlo has been the first President, and held this office for many years. He was recalled in 1956 to preside over the closing sessions of this Congress, for the Government had decided to withdraw support from it on account of its alleged involvement in politics. How it could avoid getting involved in politics

was not clear to Godlo and he said so; but he ended with a broad plea for the kinds of freedom which the white people could generally take for granted, but which of course black townsmen could not:

Therefore much as we may be loth to do so, the conditions under which our people live in the urban areas make it essential that we should re-state our humble and modest demands for the recognition of the permanent character of the urban African population, and implicit in that recognition are the following minimum rights that are denied to us by current legislation:

1. The right to participate in the local self-government granted to urban local authorities [in other words the Advisory Boards will not do].
2. The right to possess and own a home in the urban areas [a plea for some kind of secure tenure].
3. The right to come and go [an implied attack on the pass laws].
4. The right to sell one's labour to the highest bidder [freedom of contract, an implied attack on the Industrial Conciliation legislation].
5. The right to the inviolability of one's home against [liquor raids, pass raids].
6. The right to self-expression [freedom of speech and assembly].

And if at times circumstances over which we have no control make us fall foul of the present laws, may I be permitted to make a further appeal to those in authority in the famous lines of Charles Dickens. 'But gentlemen, gentlemen, dealing with other men like me begin at the right end. Give us kinder laws to bring us back when we are going wrong, don't set gaol, gaol, gaol afore us everywhere we turn'.

Godlo loved this quotation, and he used it on two occasions. An attempt was made in 1942 when Colin Steyn was Minister of Justice and Denys Reitz was Minister of Native Affairs to get rid of gaol sentences for statutory offences, such as not having one's pass on one's person. At that time it was found that 300,000 had been imprisoned for this kind of offence on the Rand over the previous three years. The order went out not to search for passes unless a crime was suspected. It was then discovered

however, that relaxation of pass control resulted in non-registration by work-seekers at the Urban Labour Bureaux; the laws therefore were enforced again. After Sharpeville the injunction went out again to desist, but current arrests for pass offences now exceed half a million every year although the terminology has changed. Freedom was what the African wanted, along the lines that Godlo suggested. Control was what the white man wanted for the kind of reasons, for example, that Sir Theophilus Shepstone put forward when recommending a plan for the regulation of casual labour in Durban in May 1873:

A large number of labourers flocked to the two towns, that is Durban and Maritzburg, to supply themselves with whatever they want, and heretofore, monthly services in establishments or families has been the means used to obtain their object. Lately the idea of day, 'togt' or job work seems to have become important, and the consequence is that a large proportion of these men refuse to accept any employment that will bind them longer than a day. As a rule they demand, and employers are compelled by their necessity to give, wages far in excess of the highest rate paid to monthly servants. These men have no homes, and as soon as their hours of work are over they are free to wander about by night and to resume or not their work by day as they please.

This system, says Shepstone, is calculated to produce and does produce insecurity in the towns, it destroys or fails to create any feeling of mutual interest between master and servant and threatens if not checked to produce a large and fluctuating native population living in the towns but having no home in them. Of course, Shepstone had a very strong point; the situation did produce a good deal of social chaos. So the regulations were drawn up, the badge the 'togt' worker had to wear, the monthly fee, the register of 'togt' labourers, the obligation of the labourer to accept whatever work was offered at a fixed wage, and in due course the obligation to live in a compound when the day's work was done.

Compounds were in fact the white man's answer to a variety of control problems; the control of the first Indian labourers to arrive in Durban, the control of illicit diamond deals

in Kimberley where de Beer's established their first compound for Blacks only in 1885. On the Rand Mines compounds were introduced as a technique for more general police control. This was well reflected in the evidence given to the Native Grievances Enquiry Commission in 1913-1914, a Commission which had been set up to probe African mineworkers' participation in the Kleinfontein Strike of 1913. Striking by Africans was already a breach of contract and an indictable offence; but, said the Commissioner, 'during the riots of July, we were within an ace of a native outbreak on a serious scale'. He put this down to the growing number of detribalised and educated Africans on the mines and went on: 'I see no necessity to take an alarmist view. With ordinary care and good government no question of hostilities between native and Europeans should ever arise, but that is not a sufficient reason for neglecting to provide against them.' He then went on to list the advice he had been given by witnesses:

The suggestions that have been made to me as a precaution against a general outbreak among native mine labourers may be grouped as follows:

1. A dormant military organisation among the whites on every mine.
2. A permanent European guard on each mine.
3. The closed compound system.
4. That compounds should be so designed that while open, they should be closable upon an emergency.
5. An intelligence department or secret service in the compounds to keep in touch with native feeling.
6. A mobile force of police available to strike in any direction.
7. The limitation of the number of natives in the compounds to a definite proportion of the number of Europeans.
8. Closer supervision of the compounds at night.
9. Searches for arms at regular intervals.
10. The more complete separation of tribes in the compounds at night as while at work.

#### POLITICAL POWER

Nor was control simply something that had to do with the handling of crowds or the preservation of law and order. It was linked to the problem of political power. As Colonel

Stallard asked quite legitimately, in the report of the Transvaal Local Government Commission in 1922: 'If Africans were allowed to build up a vested interest in the urban areas, how could they possibly be deprived in the long run of the municipal franchise.' For one who saw the towns, rightly or wrongly, as the creation of the white man, this was an intolerable position. But his reaction was merely one illustration of a fear which has run right through the history of the white man's outlook in the past century. The vote was power. To give this kind of power to the black man in the decision-making bodies of the State involved too great a risk. Even in the relatively liberal Cape where the franchise laws did not differentiate between skin colours, the precincts of Parliament remained inviolate, and the voting qualifications were raised when it began to look as if an onslaught on them might take place. Except for the period of special native representation between 1938 and 1959 when the native representatives in Parliament created more fuss than was perhaps anticipated, South Africa has never experienced the hurly-burly of a direct inter-racial slogging match in the highest councils of the land, and from 1938 to 1959 this was only experienced by proxy. This South African visitor to Rhodesia cannot refrain from noticing that Rhodesia has been wise enough to preserve in its legislature those opportunities for inter-racial confrontation which provide a barometer of real feelings, in order to avoid a world of make-believe. But although South Africa has never had this priceless experience, my comments at least show that it has been missed by some.

My first illustration concerns an attempt by a coloured man to join a branch of the Afrikaner Bond, the only occasion of which I am aware that this was tried. The incident took place in the early 1880s in the Eastern Cape, and it is important to note as background that the Afrikaner Bond in the Cape had deliberately refrained from writing a colour bar into its constitution, so as not to alienate coloured voters at the polls. Here is the report of what happened:

After the meeting had been opened by a speech from the Chairman, Mr M. J. Olivier, and the minutes of the previous meeting had been read and approved, the Chairman asked if there were any present who wished to become members

of the Bond, in which case they could give in their names. At this, Michael van Niekerk, a farmer living at Driefontein, asked if anybody could become a member of the Bond. When he was given an affirmative answer he immediately shouted out, 'Jan Krap, come in'. And a Hottentot listening for the name Jan Krap immediately entered through the doors as if at a prearranged sign, and stepped into the meeting. 'Come close, sign your name' said van Niekerk. But Jan Krap's protector was given to understand clearly that according to the Bond constitution one had to have the approval of the Ward Committee before one could become a member of the Bond and furthermore in the presence of Michael van Niekerk, the minutes were read out in which it was expressly declared that nobody who was not a member of the Bond had any right to speak at the meeting without the permission of the Chairman. His introduction of the black man consequently rested on false grounds, through wanting to do something which he was not qualified to do. The Chairman now spoke and made it clear to Jan Krap that they felt under no obligation to admit him as a member of the Bond because they had not yet come to the conviction that there was no dividing line between white and black, whereupon Jan Krap made himself scarce. The Chairman then turned to van Niekerk and in the name of the Bond and in the name of Mr Piet Rademeyer, the host, expressed his displeasure at such behaviour. After he had received the reprimand Jan Wasserman then gave him to understand that he could leave the meeting, which van Niekerk immediately did. His plot had utterly failed and it would probably be better for him to set up a Bond among his own folk on his own farm, with Jan Krap as Chairman while he could then act as Secretary.

This last sentence reads a little bit like secretarial impromptu, but this was what was required for *De Tolk*. The Bond newspaper gave these minutes editorial coverage in order to give other branches a lead as to what they should do if faced with a similar predicament.



Unless it should be thought that I am hostile to the Branch of the Bond because it was an Afrikaner body, let me hasten to say that except when it suited them for pragmatic reasons to do otherwise the English-speaking parties were every bit as reluctant to admit members who were not white. In more recent years in the Prevention of Improper Interference Act things have perhaps changed, but then the Progressive Party which is the one mainly affected has substantial Afrikaans as well as English-speaking members.

My second illustration on the issue of political power comes from the debates of the Native Representative Council, the body set up by General Hertzog's Act of 1936, as a partial substitute for the loss of the Common Roll Franchise by the Cape Africans. These debates are thought-provoking, on account not only of the quality of so many of the speeches, but also of the high level of courtesy between African Councillors and white officials, even on occasions when the frustrations came close to breaking-point. During April 1946 they did come to breaking-point. At a special session of the Native Representative Council in Cape Town it was learnt that an African mine-workers strike had been put down with a fair amount of police violence. Relations between the Council and the Government during the middle-war years had in fact been improving. Councillors recognised that a real effort had been made to get to the root of their grievances particularly when Denys Reitz had been Minister and Douglas Smit had been Secretary for Native Affairs; but after the mineworkers strike Dr J. S. Moroka, in disappointment and exasperation at current government indifference to African wishes, moved that the Council should adjourn and he called on the government to abolish forthwith all discriminatory legislation affecting non-Europeans in the country.

This was in fact the climax of a movement which had been building up very smartly over the previous two years. His speech was loaded with feeling, and so were those of other speakers who followed him. One of them was Paul Mosaka who rose shortly afterwards and gave his much quoted and very striking picture of the breakdown of communications:

From the very beginning when the Government proposed to adopt the policy of segregation as the cornerstone of

native legislation, we were far-sighted and intelligent enough to say that was the way of disaster. The experiment has failed, because the Government which is the author of segregation and therefore the author of this Native Representative Council never intended to honour its pledge. It has never bothered itself for one single second about the Council. It is right to say that the Government which established this Council in order that it should be advised by the Council does not know the Council and seemingly does not care to know what the Council says or does. We have been asked to co-operate with a toy telephone. We have been speaking into an apparatus which cannot transmit sound and at the end of which there is nobody to receive the message. Like children we have taken pleasure at the echo of our own voices.

But they still tried to keep the door open. The Gandhian recipe of civil disobedience in 1952, though it resulted in violence, was a gesture of non-provocation. Only in the early 1960s was there a clear move in the direction of violence, and I am not sure then that it was intended to be violence against people. Similarly the latest Black Power campaign is not so much a movement of greater extremism, certainly not in its present stage, as an attempt to test the *bona fides* of government yet again. What Black Power could become is another question. For in the long term it is not a conciliatory move any more than Malan Nationalism was a conciliatory move; but Black Power was surely what the government asked for. For it must be recognised that with the abolition of Hertzog's Native Representative Council in 1951, of the Location Advisory Boards Congress in 1957, of integration at universities in 1959, of the Native Representatives and of the African political parties in 1960, that the main bridges of contact went down. All in effect that remained, apart from a small amount of a liaison from advisory boards and town councils and a few private organisations and a small number of churches, was the hot line that ran via Pretoria, when as is about to happen the link between town councils and their own locations is virtually snapped. And if such bodies as the Institute of Race Relations and the National Union of South African Students were

to have their contacts across the colour line broken, then the association between Black and White in South Africa would have moved almost exclusively into the functional arena. I believe that is very dangerous. When people are treated merely as instruments of production, as Aristotle looked on slaves, or as beings who have almost no rights even in places where they live and work, then we are one stage nearer to not caring what happens to them,

whatever happens to them. Our resettlement camps which are increasing in numbers are an alarming symptom that this kind of danger is upon us. It is implicit in the outlook of those in authority that the slighter the contact between the races, the less scope there will be for racial tension. In other words that the best race relations are no race relations. But that I find impossible to believe.