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THE CAPRICORN



AFRICA SOCIETY

PHONE: 26910 - CABLES: "CAPAFRICA"

P.O. Box 170, SALISBURY, SOUTHERN RHODESIA

REF: P/C

5th March, 1958.

Dear Paton.

I thought you might be interested in the enclosed copy of a letter to 'Africa South' in answer to Julius Nyerere's attack on the Capricorn Africa Society in an article in that magazine entitled "The Entrenchment of Privilege."

Unfortunately, 'Africa South' refuses to publish my reply, which is annoying, for I had been invited to write the letter in the first place, and the attack, unanswered, does considerable damage to the Society.

I would very much like your comments on this letter if you have the time.

*Yours Sincerely
David Stirling*

DAVID STIRLING

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Natal.

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CAPRICORN AFRICA SOCIETY

P.O. Box 170,
SALISBURY.

18th February, 1958.

The Editor,
Africa South,
2 Vlam Gebou,
Parliament Street,
CAPE TOWN.

Sir,

Julius Nyerere correctly observes that many eminent Christian leaders are members of the Capricorn Africa Society, but implies that they are traitors to their religion in giving their support to the Society. To soften this condemnation, he suggests that they are probably innocent victims of Capricorn guile who have failed to detect the Society's real and sinister intentions. (In point of fact, most of these eminent Christians, along with equally able and well-known Hindu and Moslem leaders, themselves actively participated in the drawing up of the Capricorn Contract). To sustain his accusations Mr. Nyerere enters with great gusto into the old game of quoting out of context.

Mr. Nyerere's main theme is that Capricorn stands for the entrenchment of privilege, yet perhaps Capricorn's most basic and often-repeated maxim states:

"that friendships and associations will not extensively bridge the frontiers of race, nor will the ever-increasing tension resulting from the aggressive and defensive nationalisms of race be diminished until the foot of the ladder of opportunity is seen to be within reach of the most backward, and there is seen to be no block on this ladder for anyone of any race to achieve by merit the highest positions in the country".

To make progress up the rungs of this ladder means the acquiring of training and qualifications in a variety of ways which make it possible for an African to improve his station in life and increase his standard of living, and it is the first call on Capricorn's energies to press the State to provide sufficient training facilities of all kinds. It is dishonest for Mr. Nyerere wilfully to interpret the rungs of this ladder as a defensive structure designed to protect privilege; would he rather eliminate all protection of standards and values by awarding trade qualifications without apprenticeship and certificates of education without schooling and without examinations?

Perhaps the most outrageous and spectacular of Mr. Nyerere's misdirected shafts against the Society is his claim that the United Tanganyika Party functions as the political wing of the Society in Tanganyika. In reality, many months before Mr. Nyerere could have written his article, the Tanganyika National Party was in the process of formation with the express purpose of opposing and defeating the United Tanganyika Party and of supporting in the political field the six precepts of the Capricorn Contract.

That Mr. Nyerere is capable of identifying Capricorn with the very policy which its supporters are rallying to oppose tends to undermine my confidence in his sincerity of purpose.

Both T.A.N.U. and Capricorn supporters oppose the new franchise proposals in Tanganyika, and both support the basic principle of the Common Roll. The difference between us is that TANU insists on the universal franchise, because the vote is regarded as a natural right, while we believe that the vote "is a responsibility to be exercised for the common good", and that therefore it should be confined to those likely to be capable of understanding its responsibilities. On Capricorn's electoral proposals Mr. Nyerere again misdirects his readers. He suggests that the qualifications proposed are designed to keep power in the hands of the Europeans and their friends, and ignores the fact that the qualifications submitted in the Contract would yield the Africans in Tanganyika a very large statistical majority on the voters' roll from the start, and that this majority would be constantly increased as more and more Africans came up the ladder, until, without any debasement of the qualifications, the Capricorn franchise would eventually become in effect a universal one, as educational, health and other services improved.

The great problem in Tanganyika is to provide for representation of those who would not, in the first stages, be enfranchised. On this difficult subject I would like to quote from a paragraph, with which I profoundly agree, in Mr. Nyerere's article :-

"It is the implicit doctrine of African society that those in places of leadership owe their position not just to their superior wisdom and service, but also to the wisdom and free consent of the common people who elevate them to leadership. Even the simplest understand that there can be no responsibility of leadership that is not founded upon a responsible people. Chiefs and Councils of Elders do not act without confidence that the people are solidly behind them. They may not print ballots and set up other formal machinery every now and then, but they do consult their constituency constantly A plan that would divide us from our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters who are poorer or less educated than we are, can hardly enjoy our patriotic fervour".

I have seen the draft proposals of the Tanganyika National Party, and they include the establishing of a second, or upper, House, which would be invested with certain powers of restriction and veto over legislation initiated, and passed by the Lower House. This House would be mainly made up of these Chiefs to which Mr. Nyerere refers, whose source of political authority would be the Councils of Elders and the ordinary people. I submit that we honour the principle implicit in Mr. Nyerere's paragraph more fully and honourably than does Mr. Nyerere himself, who is constantly working to expand his own particular source of political authority by disrupting the people's confidence in their Councils of Elders and Chiefs, and appropriating the casualties of the old system among the populace to his own cause. Mr. Nyerere does not give a fig for Chiefs or Councils of Elders; whereas I regard their position as of great importance at present although I agree that their influence will tend to diminish as the franchise on which the Lower House is elected constantly broadens and progress is made towards the full status of a modern democratic state.

Mr. Nyerere's last charge against the Society is on its land policy. By artful twisting of the Society's statement on this subject, he establishes our apparent intention as being almost exactly opposite to our true intention; but, rather than counter the corkscrew of his argument, I prefer simply to point out that if Capricorn has its way in Tanganyika, the electorate and the legislature in Tanganyika will be predominantly African, and is it likely that these African legislatures would design any legislation on land which would undermine the real interests of the African people?

The underlying difference between Mr. Nyerere and the Society is that we believe in a nationalism capable of embracing the aspirations of the whole human race, whereas Mr. Nyerere's nationalism is a narrow one of the exclusive interests of his particular race. It is the Capricorn aim to establish a sense of common national purpose in Tanganyika shared in by all tribes and all races which will be strong enough to ensure that race or tribe is no longer at the root of political division.

Yours faithfully,

DAVID STIRLING.

23 Lynton Road,
KLOOF,
Natal.

26th June, 1958.

Dear Stirling,

In going through an accumulation of papers, I was sorry to find a letter which you had written to me asking for my comments on something that you wrote to the Editor of AFRICA SOUTH, commenting on Julius Nyerere's criticism of Capricorn. I am just on the point of leaving for the Congo, and shall try to write to you more fully when I return, especially about the situation as I see it in our parts of Africa.

The recent elections have shown that liberal opinion in Rhodesia is not much stronger than it is in South Africa, which is what I always thought to be the case. It must have been a great blow for Garfield Todd and his Party, but I hope that under no circumstances will they think of retiring from the fray.

With apologies,

Yours sincerely,

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