

It is a privilege to make a contribution to the 1987 Stephanian Table Tennis Club's Master Brochure.

The Club is 26 years old this year, and has firmly established a place in the firmament of clubs seeking egalitarian sport. The Club has played a signal role in giving us outstanding players, sports administrators and sportspersons dedicated to change in sport.

Also, tribute must be paid to Stephanian Table Tennis Club chairperson, Mr Pedro Meyer. When a definitive history of table tennis in South Africa is written, Pedro Meyer will feature prominently in the new history. In passing, it must be stated emphatically that when such history writing is undertaken, it will be a proper analysis unlike the historical efforts of the past or merely anecdotal. The Board is indeed very proud of Mr Pedro Meyer, Stephanian Table Tennis Club and others of this calibre.

May I at this juncture take the opportunity of voicing some ideas for your consideration.

We have come to an important milestone in our history. The road ahead has a number of diversions and any wrong turning can lead us into a cul de sac. The end of a phase in the history of "non-racial" sport has been reached. The past 3-4 years has also been a period of foment and re-thinking in the "non-racial" sports movement. In some ways there has been an inability to clarify issues. Endless conferences in various forums have not been able to provide new input, guidance and fresh ideas except to repeat the same rhetoric. At the same time with some hindsight and using retrospectoscope, leadership has crystalised itself into various factions unable to give unequivocal direction in problems facing sports-persons.

To illustrate a point, let us take the slogan: "No normal sport in an abnormal society." As a general principle, slogans must be based on demonstrable facts and proper analyses. The question that we must ask ourselves is: Is there a need to modify this slogan?

With the rapid development of the independent labour movement, new concepts have come to the fore. Sport as an institution will sooner or later be placed on the agenda of the labour movement. Thus it is necessary to define more precisely the terms "normal sport" and "abnormal society".

As we are aware, sport mirrors the social system in which it is played. By "normal sport" do we mean sport as played in the West (or North)? Are Western concepts of sport "normal"?

We all agree that South Africa is an "abnormal society". But the real problem is: What is a normal society? Is Western Society a normal society? Is a Welfare State a normal society? Are the new "democracies" of the 3rd world normal societies? Is the attainment of a Westminster type parliamentary system the ideal system? These are questions that need to be asked in order to obtain the correct answers. We are passing through a crucial phase, and if we do not re-assess our positions we may well be left in the marshes completely by passed in the historical process.

In the recent past, attempts have been made to pose certain problems for re-examination, for example:

- Is sport in its present form the new opium of the people?
- How does sport relate to the development of capitalism in South Africa?
- The ideas prevalent in a society are those of the ruling class: Have we merely taken over Western ideas of administering sport with its pyramidal structure together with its hierarchical and bureaucratic methods?
- Have we lost sight of democratic decision making and accountability to our constituencies?

Basically, we should try to think of our struggle not in simplistic ethnic terms as a fight for "non-racialism", but as a struggle for the total transformation of society, including sport, to one where there is no class exploitation. We need to build up a new view of sport not using the term "non-racial" but a broader world view, namely egalitarian sport. We must commence the task of creating a working

class culture of sport in which we eliminate concepts of elitism, nationalism, western-type competition, etc.

The questions raised are difficult and we do not have easy answers. However, it is absolutely necessary that they be brought to the fore.

Egalitarian sportpersons have formidable tasks ahead of them!

On behalf of the Board, I wish Stephanian Table Tennis Club all the best for the Masters and do firmly believe that the Club will continue its tradition of producing table tennis players concerned with the good of the game and for egalitarian sport in a new society.

E I Vawda  
PRESIDENT