

TELEGRAMME :  
„PUNIV“, PRETORIA.  
TELEFOON 4-3111.

Historis  
kundgen  
New Republic  
Nackel

56



Verwysingsnommer.....

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA,  
PRETORIA.

Departement : .....

554 Glyn Street,  
Hatfield, PRETORIA.  
24 October 1958.

Alan Paton Esq.,  
KLOOF, Natal.

Dear Mr. Paton,

What an absolute lout you must think me and what a perfect right you have to do so! I could make the excuse that there has been a rush of work during the past weeks and that one often wishes that the day and night were somewhat longer, but that is no excuse for not immediately answering your letter, especially in view of your very kind remarks to the Carnegie Corporation. That letter has made me feel as if I were to some extent masquerading, for the simple reason that I realize how little I can do in the South African situation today.

It is very true that, as you say, there are indications that many people are willing to think along more progressive lines, but the process is a slow one, and there is the tendency among whites in South Africa to think that there is enough time and that the mere fact of a trend is already an indication that people will eventually realize that what we are doing is unjust as well as inexpedient. But I wonder whether reality will allow us all that time. I doubt whether the fact of progressive trends in white thought will have much influence on non-white thought. I am very concerned over the alliance between the A.N.C. and the Congress of Democrats whom I regard as a dangerous organization in the sense that I believe that they (the C.O.D.'s) would like to see violent solutions and emotional upheavals. I may be wrong in this, but when I addressed a meeting of the Students' branch of your party in Johannesburg some weeks ago, I had the feeling that the questioners, who were mostly members of the C.O.D.'s, were thinking and working along those lines.

Unless we are to have a violent climax to the things that are happening - and I believe that would be disastrous for the future social and racial pattern of the country - the A.N.C. in particular and the non-whites in general will have to become convinced that the progressive trend in white thought can and will become a factor of decisive importance. The question asked me by the C.O.D.'s at that meeting, and to which I had no effective reply, was how I could reject all unconstitutional and violent methods or methods that could and presumedly would lead to violence, such as strikes, and nevertheless hold out the hope that things will change.

I can see no other way than a change of heart in the whites



56

TELEGRAMME :  
„PUNIV“, PRETORIA.  
TELEFOON 4-8111.

Verwysingsnommer.....



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA,  
PRETORIA.

Departement :.....

of the country as a whole, and the signs of such change are so small and as yet so far removed from decisive political action, that I believe time is against us.

I have often thought of the large number of members or supporters of the United Party who realize the need. Some days ago I was asked to address a branch meeting of the U.P. here in Pretoria, and I was struck by the fact that they agreed, as individuals, with my very outspoken criticism of the U.P. leaders. But I had the impression that they were not prepared to move as far to the left of the U.P. as for example the Liberal Party, with its policy of a common and unqualified voters' role. I think that, to quote the Harvard philosopher Whitehead, they fear or realize that an evil institution can become so integral a part of a society that to remove that evil suddenly would cause such society to collapse. There is some truth in that. I could well visualize that a relatively sudden transition to e.g. a common voters' role, could have disastrous results, and I am more in favour of a qualified role, with some acceptable norm as a qualification, but applying to all races in the country, without any discrimination.

I think I could defend that on purely ethical and logical ~~groun~~ grounds. From the point of view of pure expediency, it could be said that a policy of that nature would be acceptable to far more whites than are at present prepared to support the Liberal Party, and if my contention is right, that we must either have a change in white attitudes or otherwise face violence and chaos, such addition to the ranks of voters who can influence the political sphere is the only hope.

When you have time, I shall be very glad to hear your comments on this. In the meantime I wish to assure you of my best wishes and my appreciation of the great work that you are doing in the sphere of racial relations.

Yours very sincerely,

*Philip Pistor*



56  
23 Lynton Road,  
KLOOF,  
Natal.

7th November, 1958.

Dear Professor Pistorius,

Thank you for your letter of October 24. I was not thinking that you were a lout - I just wanted to make sure that you had received my letter, because letters appear now and then to go astray.

It is very understandable that you should be holding fast to the idea that a change of heart is the only way. Shall we be a little less ambitious and say that a change of attitude is the only way. I do not think we should rule out the possibility of such change, but it will be largely brought about by external events, by what many call extra-Parliamentary events, such as boycotts and strikes. I can understand that the very words have distasteful associations for you, but it is hard to know what other ways are open to unenfranchised people. They certainly want to see a change in white attitudes, but they will not hesitate to play what part they can in changing these attitudes. Now of course I understand that it is difficult to distinguish between outright revolutionary acts and massive evolutionary acts, and I readily understand the danger that the second may become the first. The simile of the safety valve is very apt here. Will the safety valve reduce the tensions, or will the mere tinkering with it blow the whole place to pieces? We frankly do not know. This same struggle that goes on in your own mind goes on in the Liberal Party also between those who hate violence so much that they even hate all kinds of pressure, and those who accept the necessity for these pressures, even though they concede that they may be dangerous. It seems to me that unless one accepts this second point of view, one might as well say, I was against apartheid and I still do not like it very much, but I am now prepared to work for it as the only hope for the future.

As you know, many of us feel unable to accept the qualified roll, because it was tried in 1853, and in a hundred and five years it has withered completely away. What hope today has one of securing the support of the African people for a qualified roll when it has already been tried once with the net result that the white voters took it away piece by piece? You may even promise constitutional entrenchments for the roll, and they will reply that entrenchments have proved to be worth nothing.



56

You close with an appreciation of the great work that I am doing in the sphere of race relations, but at the same time you say that you realise how little you are doing yourself. Well I think you are doing a lot, and you think I am doing a lot, and each of us thinks himself to be doing too little. So we had better strike an average I think and content ourselves by saying that whatever we are doing adds something to the too small store of inter-racial trust. There is no need for me to tell you that many a battle has to be fought, not because one must win, but because one must defend those things in which one believes.

Best wishes for the success of your application.

Yours sincerely,

P.S. I have given much thought to the alliance of the ANC and GOD, but I simply dare not start a discussion on this. It is so complicated that it will have to wait until we meet.

**Collection Number: AD1169**

**Collection Name: Alan Paton Papers, 1952-1988**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:* Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand

*Location:* Johannesburg

©2016

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document forms part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.