

Alex Hepple's Column:

THE HIGH COURT OF PARLIAMENT

By Alex Hepple, M.P.



Mr. Alex Hepple, M.P.

AN all-night sitting of Parliament gives the public the impression of an exciting experience. As soon as Cape Town hears that Parliament is to sit through the night, crowds flock to the House to get tickets for the public galleries. People are prepared to wait long hours in the queue and to suffer great discomfort in order to watch Members of Parliament engaged in a marathon debate. Many visitors exhibit an excited expectancy that belongs to a first-night crowd at the theatre.

Mr. Alex Hepple, M.P., will be writing this Cape Town commentary for "Forward" each week. Whenever opinions are expressed they are those of a writer and are not to be read as opinions of this Journal.

● The Diligent and the Weary

BY midnight the enthusiasm of most of the visitors has worn off and they begin to desert the galleries. A few die-hards sit on, some even to the dawn. Perhaps they are the diligent, hero-worshipping constituents who have sworn to suffer in sympathy with their Members. For the average M.P. an all-night sitting is a dreary event; he accepts it as a ruthless device of a Government determined to exhaust the Opposition.

Sitting through the night is tolerable. What beats the bravest is the second day, when the grey dawn dissolves into daylight, the morning wears on into the afternoon, and the sun sets for the second time, torturing tired minds with the grim prospect of perhaps another night of it.

● Restless Anxiety

THIS was the fourth all-night sitting of the present Parliament. It was not the longest, although it lasted just under 30 hours. When it began, no one could foretell how long it would keep going. When, in the early afternoon, the Leader of the House announced that the debate would continue without interruption until finished, members quickly made arrangements to fortify themselves with blankets, cushions and other paraphernalia, in the hope that they could snatch some sleep somewhere, sometime during the night.

Usually they are unable to do more than catnap. If your name is far down on the list of speakers, you cannot sleep until you have got your speech off your mind; if you have already spoken, your mind is churning with the things you should have said and didn't, and you cannot rest in your anxiety to know how much longer it will be before the division bells start ringing.

● Tedious Repetition

AS the debate progresses, speaker after speaker searches for new facts and new approaches. The further down the line, the less hope a member has of finding anything new to say. Yet he feels he has a duty to have his opinion down on record; he feels it is not enough merely to cast his vote at the end.

Stating his own viewpoint on the principles and specific aspects of the Bill cannot get him past Mr. Speaker's firm determination not to allow the repetition of arguments. Often M.P.s complain that the early speakers in a debate "pinch all their points."

The rules of the House forbid "tedious repetition." That annihilates many members.

In a thirty-hour debate "points" not only get "pinched"—they are so quickly gobbled up that only the astute, the ingenious and the voluble are able to keep on arguing.

● The High Court of Parliament

BEHIND the Labour benches in Parliament are special bays reserved for Senators. It is a favourite resting place for members during an all-night sitting. The members who chose this corner this year seemed to be severe sufferers from whatever causes loud snoring. Their cacophony needed to be interrupted at times so that we could hear speakers at the far end of the House. This was not the best atmosphere in which to create Judges of the proposed High Court of Parliament, the highest Court of the land. Against the travesty of the rule of law, the Opposition was bound to fight with all its might. If ever an Opposition needed to resist it was now.

The Bill was yet another step in the plans to give the Nationalist Party permanent political power. It can be justly said that the united Opposition performed its task with efficiency and thoroughness.

Even the more timid and gentle members became determined and forceful in their speeches.

● Desperate Men

THIS Bill is a desperate necessity for the Nationalists. If they do not override the decision of the Appeal Court, they cannot remove the Coloured voters from the common roll; and if they do not remove the Coloured voters from the common roll before the next election, their chances of victory are reduced. Time is running out. The Nats. have determined that nothing will thwart them. Such considerations as the Constitution, the solemn compact of Union, justice for the Coloured people and democratic institutions are to be swept aside.

● What Will History Say?

"THIS is an historic occasion," declared one Nat. M.P. But will it be one of those historic occasions that are remembered with sadness? What story will history tell, after the final chapter has been written?

As the loud "Hoor, hoors" were resounding inside the Chamber while the Clerk read the High Court of Parliament Bill for a second time, I wondered how many of us present there would be alive to see the final results of this and other works of the Nationalist Government which came into power in 1948 on the promise to give the people white bread and mutton.

● The Economic Outlook

WHILE Parliament devoted its time and energies to the High Court of Parliament Bill, the country's economic health showed clear signs of deteriorating. At Potchefstroom, Mr. C. te Water, Chairman of the National Veld Trust, warned South Africa of a "crisis winter" ahead with serious scarcities of meat, vegetables, dairy products, sugar and other necessities of life.

In the Senate, Mr. Eric Louw, Minister of Economic Affairs, welcomed the prospect of a "small recession" as being long overdue. He could see in the misery of unemployment and industrial slow-downs the best way to bring down the cost of living. Meanwhile, the past month had brought with it rises in the prices of milk, fish eggs, sugar, sweets, cold drinks, haircuts and other everyday needs of the people.

● The Will of the People

THROUGHOUT the debate on the High Court of Parliament, Government members referred to the "Volkswil." Now it is up to the people to decide. Do they want a Government which forsakes the economic well-being of its people for the more selfish and dangerous advantages of securing its own political future. The people of South Africa can no longer be apathetic.

Written by Alex Hepple, M.P., House of Assembly, Cape Town.

THE BIRTH PANGS OF A NEW JUDICIARY



Mr. Alex. Hepple

THE Committee stage of the High Court of Parliament Bill was reached at the beginning of the week and there was consternation in the Government ranks when it was discovered that the Opposition were refusing to assist in knocking the Bill into shape. "You cannot improve upon a fraud," said Mr. J. G. N. Strauss, Leader of the United Party, "so we shall move no amendments to any of the clauses of this Bill, which is designed to circumvent the Constitution."

"We shall have no part in this illegal, iniquitous scheme to entrench the Nationalist Party in power," declared Mr. John Christie, Leader of the Labour Party. To record this attitude, the Opposition voted against every clause. The putting of each clause by the Chairman, the calling for divisions, the two minutes ringing of the division bells, the counting of the votes, and the declaration of each result, all took time.

● The Goose Step

FOR nearly two hours members were compelled to remain seated. The Nats. were restless under this forced confinement. It interfered with their daily routine of flocking in and out of the House, in what assumes the form of mass entrance and mass exodus. When one of their Ministers makes a speech, they sit in their places in rapt attention; immediately he sits down they rise almost to a man and storm out of the House, like schoolboys at the ringing of the bell. When their benches are deserted and one of their Ministers rises to speak, the Nat. grapevine gets busy and the faithful come marching from all corners of the building to hear the message. As the Labour benches are at the Bar of the House, we catch the full brunt of these noisy, excited entrances and exits. One never gets used to it.

● "Never Mind the Ball"

AS clause after clause of the High Court of Parliament Bill was voted on, members anxiously watched the clock. This unexpected detention had caused havoc in normal afternoon arrangements. With growing impatience, the Nats. cheered their majorities on each division. This was one of the unnecessary delays of democratic government. "We have the majority, so why waste all this time," one of them said. We had heard it before—"Never mind the ball, get on with the game."

Suddenly the voting was over. The stampede for the exit began. It was terrific, considering these were embryo judges.

The next day the Report stage was taken. Once again the Opposition refused to offer any amendments. This brought on the Third Reading on the Wednesday, several days earlier than the Government had anticipated. In the circumstances, it was expected that they would allow ample time for Opposition speakers to make their last criticisms and comments. The Third Reading is Parliament's last chance to examine and consider any Bill before it finally goes to the Senate for confirmation. To everyone's surprise a Nat. whip

moved the closure on the second day of the debate. The gag was being applied.

● Reluctant Judges

THE closure of the debate at this stage deprived a considerable number of members of an opportunity to speak. The next speaker would have been Leo Lovell. He had spent some time preparing and had waited many anxious hours for his turn, which now was snatched away from him with cruel suddenness. Like all other Opposition members, he was one of the reluctant judges, who thought it necessary to tell the House and the country why he would vote against the setting up of a High Court of Parliament.

But the gag was on. The shocked look on Leo Lovell's face was the shocked hurt look of democracy itself. The steamroller of despotism was on the move. The Bill was read a third time.

There followed a noisy hour in which the Opposition moved the adjournment of the House because of the Government's stifling of discussion. One member complained that the galleries were crowded with police and detectives, and a Nationalist member threatened to deal with a Labour member outside. In this turmoil and acrimony the Bill was on its way to the Senate, nearing the end of its journey.

● Born To Be a Judge

A NEW greatness was being thrust upon the humble M.P.'s. Looking over the Assembly one tried to envisage the High Court in Session.

When reason failed, would one learned judge threaten to deal with another outside? Would judges storm in to hear the "near great" and storm out when the "not-so-great" addressed the Court? Would it be ethical for judges to caucus beforehand? Would the learned dissenting judges be "guillotined" before they could hand down their judgments? Would the judges be divided into Government and Opposition benches? Would they have a time limit set upon them? Could they be ordered from the Court? Could they be named?

The Nationalist who said this Parliament was making history said a mouthful.

● The Friendless Worker

PARLIAMENT this week also took the Vote of the Minister of Labour. Every year when this Vote is under discussion, I wish I could pack the galleries with workers from all over the Union. They would be surprised. They would

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see that a mere handful of members remain in the House. They would note, too, that there are no Nationalist members who know or care about the problems of the workers. Those who took part in the debate this year did so only to attack the Trade Union Movement and to defend their Party agents in the Mineworkers' Union. They would observe, afterwards, that the press reports on these debates are meagre and that very little publicity is given to the affairs that affect the bread and butter of the mass of the people.

● Strength-Through-Joy

WHEN Labour men talk about the need for free democratic trades unions, the rights of workers and the needs of the working class, the Nats. cry out—"What about their souls?"

For most of them it is an academic, abstract problem, which can be solved by establishing purified, obedient, Christian-Nationalist, dragged trades unions. Their offer to the workers is a "strength-through-joy," racialistic, Government-sponsored protection racket, instead of self-respect and ability to win for themselves better wages and conditions.

This year I asked the Minister of Labour four questions. Firstly, what were the Government's future plans regarding South Africa's membership of the International Labour Organisation. Secondly, why the Minister had snubbed the Trades and Labour Council by not inviting the Council to participate in his Committee to consider the Report of the Industrial Legislation Commission at the end of May. Thirdly, why the Minister had granted certain Shipping Companies exemption from paying their seamen cost-of-living allowances. Fourthly, whether the Minister would exercise his rights under the Suppression of Communism Act to ensure that the Minister of Justice did not place any Union in jeopardy or deprive any Union Official of his only means of livelihood.

I shall deal with these questions and the replies in my next article.

INTIMIDATION AND TERROR

Forward

IN THE LAND

Assaults On Democratic Institutions



Mr. Alex. Hepple

With unexpected and unnecessary brutality the Government concentrated into one short week a shocking series of assaults upon democratic institutions in South Africa.

They have thrown Sam Kahn out of Parliament and Carneson out of the Cape Provincial Council; they have thrown Solly Sachs into gaol; they have suppressed the "Guardian" newspaper; they have ordered several prominent trade union leaders to resign their offices and their membership of their trade unions; and a meeting of workers on the Johannesburg City Hall steps was broken up by police armed with batons.

● The Anti-Communist Pretext

ALL this was done under the pretence of dealing with Communism. The strong-arm methods were used to enforce that cunning, undemocratic Act styled the Suppression of Communism Act. It side-steps the Courts and permits the Government to do just as they please, covering their despotism and tyranny under the wide provisions of this law. Not since the Nazi brutes of Germany swept into power has such callous disregard for the rights of the people been displayed.

Why was it necessary for the Government to crowd all these acts into a few days? Why was it necessary for them to strike terror among the people? There are several reasons.

One is that they are being swept forward by the torrents of their own desperate plans to remain in power. The fading prospects of success at the next election are frightening them into a state of dangerous hysteria.

They will go to any lengths to prevent the people from defeating them at the next elections. Another reason is that the Nationalists have never liked the workings of democracy and are determined to "mould our national life on a different basis and break away from democracy," to use the words of Dr. Malan.

To this end the people of South Africa are being subjected to waves of intimidation and terror. By this means all tyrants seek to cow the masses into becoming frightened and obedient servants.

The Government were not driven by disorders or emergencies to take the extreme measures which they did last week. Part of their terror campaign was to stage these events dramatically.

LAST week I promised to deal with some matters which I had raised with the Minister of Labour when his vote was under discussion in Parliament. Little did I guess that the Minister and his colleagues had their plans already cut and dried to strike a blow at democracy and workers' organisations.

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● The Banning of the "Guardian"

THE question of the banning of the "Guardian" has been in suspense for a long time. I asked the Minister of Justice in February what he intended to do and he replied that he could not disclose the Cabinet's decision. Four weeks ago, during his Vote in Parliament, he offered no denial when Sam Kahn suggested that the "Guardian" would be allowed to continue. On the 23rd of May the Government Gazette carried the announcement that the "Guardian" was officially banned. The date of the proclamation was the 8th of April, more than six weeks earlier. Why was the publication of the proclamation delayed? Obviously it was held back in order to be one scene in a drama. The wide, despotic powers conferred upon the Government in the so-called Suppression of Communism Act made such an arrangement easy.

● The Expulsion of Kahn and Carneson

THE debate upon the Select Committee's Report on Kahn and Carneson came up unexpectedly on Monday, the 19th May, catching most members of the House unawares. Within forty hours the debate was over and the Government rejected the Opposition's proposal that no action be taken.

The Opposition, itself strongly anti-Communist, demanded trial and punishment by the Courts of the land; it objected to anyone being sentenced for an act that was lawful at the time when it was committed. As all members of Parliament are sent there by the electorate, only an electorate should have the power to remove any member. For members, themselves to expel one of their number because of his political opinions was a travesty of democratic government; it exposed every member to similar treatment at the hands of his political opponents; it was the open-sesame to the one-party State.

It was generally expected that the Government would allow Kahn to continue in Parliament for the few remaining weeks of the Session. Members were surprised to see, on opening their newspapers on the Friday (while Parliament was in recess) that Kahn had been kicked out. He was not even given the courtesy of saying good-bye.

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● Smashing the Trade Unions

AN early feature of the week of intimidation and terror was the serving of notices upon prominent trade union leaders, ordering them to resign from their offices and their unions. Here again, the convenient, so-called Suppression of Communism Act was the machinery used by the Government.

The Nationalists have failed lamentably in dealing with the serious problem of rising living costs and wage-earners everywhere are sorely dissatisfied. To divert attention from their failure to protect the people from the threat of debt and poverty, the Nats. resort to the bright red herrings of Communism and racialism. Their official policy aims at State-controlled, purified, disciplined, Christian-National trade unions.

For nearly twenty years they have tried every possible means to seize control of the unions, but with steadfast consistency the workers have rejected them. They hope now, having assumed the reigns of office through a narrow victory in the Parliamentary elections of 1948, to do by decree what they were prevented from doing by democracy. Free, democratic trade unions are in grave danger. Trade unionists are to be intimidated by threats of State intervention and by the removal of their leaders.

● Police Terror

THE police attack upon the mass meeting of workers on the Johannesburg City Hall steps was quite unnecessary. There was no reason why the police could not have allowed the meeting to proceed. They could have arrested Sachs any time subsequently because of his violation of the order not to address meetings. Done as it was, the baton charges and the injuries to the audience reveal what is fast becoming a common practice in South Africa.

This is the type of terror which is abhorrent to civilised nations. The fact that some civilian hooligans joined in to help the police emphasises the growth of a new lawlessness in our midst.

● A Lawless Government

THE Government's refusal to accept the decision of the highest Court in the land has encouraged those who want to be a law unto themselves. Alarm, intimidation, brutality and terror are the devices of Fascism. We can expect roving bands of thugs, and hooligans to create disorders and to break up meetings, frightening people away from their lawful democratic forums of public meetings and leaving the way open to the Government to ban all assemblies of persons. In this manner free speech will disappear.

The rule of law has been outlawed in South Africa by the Nationalist Government. By its tyrannical acts the Nationalist Government is creating hate, suspicion, terror and fear throughout the land.

The people of South Africa are facing days of great crisis. Only by standing firmly courageous in face of terror and fear can they hope to survive.

Alex Hepple's Column:

GOVERNMENT ADDS TO ITS ALARMING ARMY OF ENEMIES



Mr. Alex. Hepple

I WRITE this on Union Day. A stirring week has ended and the month of May closes in mocking celebration of the 42nd anniversary of the Union of the four provinces of South Africa, in a land more widely and bitterly divided than before Union. Today fear, hate and terror are the ruling emotions of the people. Even the privileged minority are in a state of nervous tension and constant worry.

The Government daily adds to its alarming array of enemies; it has developed a mood of bitter animosity towards the Courts, the trade unions and all groups which refuse to endorse its policies. Not only does it abuse and condemn its opponents within the Union, but also attacks the overseas Press, the United Nations and others beyond our borders. The latest to be added to the blacklist of the Nationalist Government is the British Labour Party.

To his ire, the Prime Minister finds himself constantly facing disagreeable situations, all created in the course of his "step by step" policy to building his "Christian-Nationalist State."

Parliament opened the week in a full day's debate on the police baton charges upon the workers' meeting on the Johannesburg City Hall steps the previous Saturday. Eye-witness accounts of the affair were given by Davidoff and Tighy. Dr. Malan took part in the debate, delivering a lecture on Communism in best high school style, abusing the Opposition in the manner of a back bencher and refusing an inquiry with a contemptuous sweep of his arms.

Garment Workers' Deputation

LISTENING intently in the galleries above were nine women who had been victims of the assault. They were the deputation from the Garment Workers' Union, who had arrived in Cape Town early that morning to appeal to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet to leave their union alone and to allow Solly Sachs to remain their general secretary. It was their first visit to Parliament and a memorable one. Afterwards in the Lobby they expressed their indignation at what had been said in the House. They regretted that they were not members, because they wanted "to tell Dr. Malan and his friends a thing or two." Having heard the Prime Minister's tirade, they asked: "Does he think it right that we should be hit over the head?"

These honest, simple women had expected to hear a sympathetic, statesmanlike debate over the City Hall steps incident. Instead, they had listened to harsh, cruel and hostile political arguments.

Warning For South African Mothers

NEXT afternoon they had a long interview with Mr. C. R. Swart, Minister of Justice, and Mr. Ben Schoeman, Minister of Labour. Once again they had to listen to a long lecture on the evils of Communism and involved explanations of how the Government was "not interfering in the domestic affairs of the trade unions." The women pleaded and argued without avail. When they left they guessed the answer they would receive later—the Government was determined to pursue its chosen course, and the trade unions were to be purged.

One fact stood out crystal clear: it had taken a Nationalist Government to hit working South African mothers over the head.

The Nationalists were thinking the same way as Mussolini had done 21 years earlier, when he declared:

"However much violence may be deplored, it is evident that, in order to make our ideals understood, we must beat refractory skulls with resounding blows . . . but this necessary violence must have a character and style of its own, definitely aristocratic."

Workers Rally

ON Wednesday night the workers of Cape Town held a meeting in the Drill Hall. Over 2,000 people crammed the hall to overflowing. The meeting began in darkness, owing to power cut.

There was something symbolic in the flickering candles, waving torches and swinging hand lamps darting through the darkness as the audience hurried to their seats.

It reminded me of something I had heard in the dark days of 1940, that there is not so much darkness in all the world that can dim the light of one small candle.

Shortly after the meeting began the lights came on, and there was a loud cheer. The enthusiasm of the crowd swelled as speaker after speaker followed one another in short, stirring speeches. Mr. F. A. Wright, chairman of the Cape Trades and Labour Council, opened the proceedings and was followed by Mrs. Margaret Ballinger, myself, Harry Boyder, secretary of the Trades and Labour Council, those courageous garment workers, Johanna Cornelius, Rosie de Freitas, Mrs. Begg and Katie Gelvan, and then Solly Sachs's student son and, finally, Brian Bunting, editor of the recently suppressed "Guardian."

On the platform were the members of the Garment Workers' deputation, Senator Ballinger, Hymie Davidoff, M.P., Leo Lovell, M.P., and Sarel Tighy, M.P. Prominently displayed were the banners of the unions: "Leave the trade union leaders alone," "Fight now to be free," "Geen Polisieknuppels — Vryheid" and other slogans.

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Dangerous Paths

IF they had failed to realise it before, the Government would have noticed from the mood of the meeting that by interfering with the trade unions they had stirred up a hornet's nest. In the years to come the Nationalists would have good cause to remember this meeting. In the coming years of defeat and disgrace they would regret hitting peaceful workers over the head. By interfering in the trade unions, Mr Schoeman had made the blunder of his career and had dragged his party into dangerous paths.

British Labour Party Blacklisted

BUT Dr. Malan blundered blindly on. He turned on Mr. Attlee and the British Labour Party with fury and accused them of "agitation and incitement against the Government," because they had declared that they "viewed with alarm the policies of the Malan Government, which are embittering racial relations, threatening the activities of free trade unions, destroying the rights of free speech and undermining the Constitution . . . and constitute a violation of the principles on which the United Nations was founded."

The French and British trade union congresses had also sent messages of support to the South African trade unions. Inside and outside the country the Nationalists were making enemies. Few were being deceived by the label "Suppression of Communism." What they saw was the suppression of democracy.

The Mineworkers

SHORTLY after the Nationalists came into power, the Executive of the Mineworkers' Union elected nine Nationalist members of Parliament to honorary membership. They have repeatedly pledged loyalty to the Government. This week they publicly declared their support of the action against trade union officials. This time, however, the voice of the rank and file rose in protest. Sections within the union, opposed to the Executive, united to contest this declaration. From the least expected quarters the Government was finding opposition.

Trade Union Unity

DESPITE other disagreements, most unions recognise the Government's action against some union officials as a sinister threat to all of them. A conference is to be held on June 9 and 10 "to consider the application of the Suppression of Communism Act to the trade union movement."

Once the trade unions accept the principle that any Government can interfere in their affairs on any pretext whatsoever, they would be abandoning a basic right to free trade unionism and exposing themselves to unlimited interference in the future.

This is the thin end of the wedge. It must be resisted by every trade unionist. The issue must not be clouded by the Communist bogey.

Every trade union member must refuse to be intimidated. He must see that his own union stands resolutely on its free and unfettered right to elect its own officials.

Cost Of Living, Defence And Detention



Mr. Alex. Hepple

AS I walked through the grounds of Parliament this morning, on my way to another of those unpredictable days in the House, a friendly squirrel halted in my path and made me suddenly aware of the world outside my thoughts. The bright yellow of winter's first calendulas, the pleasing green of the freshly cut lawns, and all the flowers were now cheerfully alive.

It was warm and becoming hot. Summer was making a brief visit to Cape Town. The squirrel darted through the green iron railings into the Avenue, surprising the pigeons feeding there, and raced up the thick trunk of a gaunt old oak.

The warmth and clear blue skies carried my thoughts back to such warm days of February and March, which had faded from memory already, in the eventful days of May. How bitterly I remembered those days of February and March! It was then that some members were saying: "Isn't Parliament dead this year?" or complaining, "This is the dulllest session I have ever known."

Of course, Parliament wasn't so dead or dull for a few of us. We were busy fighting a losing battle against such Bills as the Criminal Sentences Amendment Bill and the Native Laws Amendment Bill. We felt very lonely sometimes.

These Bills were also threats to liberty, to democracy and to civilisation. They were also part of that frightening pattern that is being woven for the new South Africa in the "step by step" policy of the Nationalist Government.

● The Casualties of Sensations

THOSE who thought that Parliament lacked excitement and interest probably have had their fill of such diversions by now. The events of recent weeks should have satisfied the hunger of the most demanding sensation-seekers and perhaps they will spare some of their dull moments to think of those who are the victims of these events.

I watched the squirrel leaping in the warm sunshine where the last brown leaves were clinging weakly to the naked boughs, then turned up the steps into Parliament, wishing I could stay outside and enjoy the lovely weather.

The week had been occupied in debating the Electoral Laws Amendment Bill, a few minor measures and in Committee of Supply on the Votes of the Ministers of Economic Affairs and Defence.

This mixed grill provided some good debates and some distinctly bad. One of the commonest features of any debate is the "red herring" tactic. A high level debate can suddenly descend into an abusive brawl without warning and a quiet discussion can end in a political mud-slinging contest most unexpectedly.

Usually these changes can be traced to someone's desire to avoid having a matter discussed on its merits, or to prevent it being discussed at all.

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The Opposition raised many objections to some of the proposed changes in the existing law. These objections are contained in amendments set down for the Committee stage of the Bill, to be debated next week.

● Cost of Living

AFTER Mr. Henderson, the Member for Parktown, had set the ball rolling on the Vote of the Minister of Economic Affairs, by accusing the Government of establishing an "Economic Fascist State" in South Africa, the House settled down to argue the vexed question of rising living costs. We raise this matter at every opportunity, although we cannot say that we meet with any success.

Mr. Eric Louw, the Minister of Economic Affairs, has two weapons. The first is an array of Press cuttings and the second is a tittering sneer. Mr. Louw operates a remarkable filing system in the House. Concealed in one small corner of his desk are enough newspaper cuttings to fill a couple of large filing cabinets. At the slightest pretext, he will utter a long drawn out "Ahhhhh!!!" and draw out some cuttings, as if from his sleeve.

His quotations are usually what some nonentity has said on some obscure occasion, but always guaranteed to raise loud cheers from the Government benches.

● The Depression Cure

OUR attempt this year to ascertain the Government's plans to protect the public against rising prices failed as dismally as usual.

The fact that the Retail Price Index has risen from 146.7 in May, 1948 (when the Nats. came into power) to 182.9 in April this year, leaves Mr. Louw quite cold. He assures us that this rise of 36.2 points since he became Minister is due to the evil actions of everyone except himself.

As I understand it, if there were no countries overseas, if there was no war in Korea, if there was no economic sabotage, and if workers worked harder and if everyone backed the Nationalist Party, we would all be living like kings. But Mr. Louw has a quick cure, too.

He told the Senate that "a small recession would do no harm—as a matter of fact it is long overdue. . . ." When the slump comes, I suppose Mr. Louw will take the credit for it, as he does for everything else.

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● Defence, Parry and Thrust

THE Defence Vote consisted mainly of charges and counter-charges, attacks and counter-attacks, which might seem to be fitting to such a Vote, if one didn't have to listen to them.

The Minister of Defence is the finest political organiser the Nationalist Party have ever had. He is a specialist in that field. Perhaps that is the reason why Parliament is never able to get beyond politics when Defence matters are discussed.

Usually the House ends its week's work on Friday afternoons at about six o'clock. This week, however, the Leader of the House, Mr. Havenga, decided to carry on until the Reports of the Select Committees on Crown Lands and Pensions had been adopted.

It was a form of guillotine and caught members unawares. The Opposition benches were depleted because the Natal members had left to attend the Defend the Constitution rally in Durban that night and other members were in Johannesburg for a United Democratic Front demonstration. However, the Opposition felt obliged to meet the challenge. They had a duty to perform.

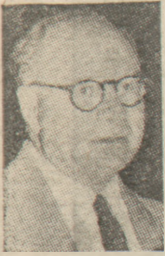
In spite of jeers from the Nats., who were anxious to go home, they would not be deterred. Amidst the constant interjections from impatient and angry members, Opposition members maintained their arguments on behalf of deserving petitioners for relief.

At about quarter past seven the Reports were adopted and the bells rang. The day and the Parliamentary week were over. Outside, summer had ended its short, unexpected visit and a cold rain was falling.

From further afield had come the news of persons arrested under the so-called Suppression of Communism Act and disturbances in Bechuanaland. Against a background of riots, arrests, demonstrations, disturbances, processions and rallies, Parliament was entering its final stages of the 1952 Session.

There were other things than cold winter rain that made me shudder.

STARTLING STORIES OF DEEP-LAID PLOTS



Mr. Alex. Hepple

We have been debating a mixed grill which includes the Native Services Levy Bill, Unemployment Insurance Amendment Bill, Finance Bill, Wool Profits, Electoral Laws Amendment, Companies Act Amendment, Merchandise Marks, Public Health Amendment, and the Judges Salaries Bill. The latter does not include the learned gentlemen of the High Court of Parliament.

In addition, we have spent many hours discussing the Votes of the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Native Affairs.

While there may be something to be said about all these things, I would prefer this week to review the latest "Thrillers" or "Whodunits."

● Mystery and Adventure

SPOOK stories have always been a feature of South African politics. The Nationalists are experts in this field. In recent months they have issued enough spine-chilling "revelations" of sinister plots and deep-laid schemes to put the most successful writer of "thrillers" out of business. The cleverest mystery, adventure and detective stories are dull beside the startling tales that are told by Nationalist leaders and splashed in the Nationalist Press.

According to the Nationalists, South Africa has a vast concentration of astute revolutionaries, anarchists, well-poisoners, assassins and such like. These nefarious plotters seem to occupy most of their time printing secret pamphlets and circulars and distributing them at public meetings, or writing sinister letters to each other.

This preoccupation in publicity leaves them no time to carry out their wicked plans. That is why, dear friends and listeners in Africa, no revolutions take place, no wells are poisoned and nobody is overthrown anywhere—excepting the anti-Nationalist trade union leaders, who have been overthrown by the so-called Suppression of Communism Act.

● The Phantom Strikes Again!

LAST week the phantom plotters struck again. Another pernicious pamphlet was uncovered. You could read the exposure on the front pages of two Nationalist morning papers. The Prime Minister himself made the dramatic announcement to the nation.

He gravely told how "... The Springbok Legion ... a component part of ... the United Front, has even more frankly revealed its

character and plans of action. ... Recently it issued a secret pamphlet, 'Action Stations — A Crisis Call' ...

NEXT week Parliament will be over. As I write, the Assembly is exhausting itself in long days of desperate rush, trying to dispose of the many measures that the Government insists upon passing this year.

Alex Hepple's Column

But the sleuths had slipped. The "secret pamphlet" was a secret only to the badly-informed Cabinet. Everyone had known about it weeks before. Like most other Members of Parliament I had received a copy through the post nearly three weeks earlier.

It came to me under cover of a duplicated letter dated May 13. The secret still to be solved was: Who had removed the names of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet from the mailing list of the Springbok Legion? Why had they, and they alone of the whole nation, been kept in the dark?

● The Frightening Fifteen

THERE was another hair-raising story released that day. It came from Dr. Donges, who told a Nationalist meeting at George that he had a list of 15 important Communists in South Africa.

The Press report said: "Dr. Donges, Minister of the Interior, told a Nationalist Party meeting here on Saturday night that of a list drawn up by UNO on important Communists outside Russia, 15 were in South Africa."

Once again the sleuths had slipped. This sensational story was not only well known. It was also dog-eared. It was not a UNO report, but one submitted by the United States Foreign Relations Committee to the United States Senate. It had been reported in the Johannesburg "Sunday Express" on December 5, 1948.

● Exciting as a Time-table

TWO days later in the Assembly, in reply to my comments, the Minister of the Interior explained that he had obtained a copy of the report in 1949 when he was attending a session of the United Nations, and he agreed that it was not a UNO report.

The mystery for the sleuths to solve was: Why had Dr. Donges found it necessary to alarm the country with a dog-eared story? Why had he allowed the impression to remain that it was highly authoritative and up-to-date?

In the cold light of the facts, this story, which chilled so many spines in the night lights where the Nationalist audience was gathered in George, now becomes as exciting as a time-table.

OPINIONS expressed in this column are those of the writer and not necessarily those of "Forward." That applies to all signed articles, unless it is specifically stated that they are the opinions of the journal.

● "Off With Their Permits"

WITH grand and regal authority, two other Ministers were also on the job. While they had no blood-curdling stories to tell, they were issuing stern warnings to employers who might condone strikes or employees. This sounds funny to a Socialist. But the Nationalist Ministers believe that workers and employers are conspiring together. They suspect that everyone is against them. Perhaps they are right.

Mr. Eric Louw, Minister of Economic Affairs, speaking at Delarey, warned employers who closed their factories in cases of strikes, "not to come knocking at my door when they want import permits." With pompous authority he declared: "Foreign currency is scarce, and I have no currency for such manufacturers."

Is this an admission that import permits are granted as personal favours to those who please the Government? If Mr. Louw means what he says, here is another case for the sleuths: How good must an importer be to get a great, big, whacking import permit?

● The Scabs Reward

IN Pretoria, the Minister of Labour, Mr. B. J. Schoeman, was offering to protect workers who supported the Government's policy, if they decided to scab on their fellow-workers.

He promised Government protection to all workers who remained at work during a strike.

Workers all over the world look upon scabs as mean and despicable creatures. Yet South Africa's Government had proudly announced itself as a defender of scabs and strike-breakers.

Using the well-known Fascist technique, the Government declares that it believes in strong trade unions and at the same time uses every trick to destroy their rights and freedoms. They say that the trade unions must be "purified." By that they really mean that the unions must become willing tools of the Nationalist Party. Their strength will be measured by their loyalty to the Nationalists.

● Watch For The Next Instalment

WHEN Parliament adjourned late on Saturday afternoon and jaded Members trudged wearily out of the House, it was apparent that not even the Nationalists were in the mood for more thrillers.

Yet who knows? With the Wakkerstroom bye-election in the offing and the country aroused against the despotism of the Government, the Prime Minister and his Cabinet must dish up generous helpings of "sensations" and "exposures."

Will the phantom plotters strike again? Watch the Nationalist dailies for the next exciting instalment!

This Session Was Government By Exhaustion



Mr. Alex. Hepple

LIFE during the dying days of any Parliamentary session is wretched. Pressure of work is aggravated by the uncertainty of when Parliament will end. Sitting hours are lengthened and Bills come forward when least expected. Members must be alert and on constant guard to avoid missing long-awaited opportunities for necessary criticism of new and amending measures.

Concentration is difficult with the nagging thought of piles of books, papers and files to be sorted, of luggage waiting to be packed, of a car to be taken and loaded at the distant railway siding, of train reservations to be made and the thousand and one details demanding last-minute attention.

One's whole existence depends upon knowing the exact day, even the exact hour, when Parliament will be adjourned.

Nobody knows. Everyone guesses. Rumours circulate like certainties for the "July." Messengers, officials and members run around in circles, looking questioningly at each other, eagerly believing any new rumour, that sounds favourable.

The House Sits On

The Government usually knows—but never tells. This year it seemed as though not even the Government knew. On Saturday, Mr. Havenga, the Leader of the House and the man who normally controls these things, threw in his hand and left for home.

But the House sat on. The Prime Minister had promised that he would adjourn the House that day, and so end the Session. He did adjourn the House, but only until the following Monday.

Disappointed members rushed to cancel arrangements already made and to fight for new reservations. The Zoo Train would have to stand by a little longer.

The tired faces of exhausted messengers, officials, Hansard writers, clerks, pressmen and members told the story of overwork, late nights and long confinement indoors.

The Taming Hand of Time

All Governments delight in keeping members in suspense for days, and sometimes weeks, before closing down. They maintain a long agenda to the very end. Suddenly they make their announcement. A couple of Bills are quickly despatched, the rest dropped and the Session is over.

Shrewd speculation has enabled most members to be ready to catch waiting trains, where their families and luggage are already on board.

This year has been different. Twice the Prime Minister has read out from the long Order Paper those Bills which must be disposed of. After his first statement, a few new Bills were added. After his second (when he declared that the Session would definitely end on the 21st June) it was obvious that the target could never be reached within the time stated.

Either the Prime Minister was bluffing or the Cabinet was unable to assess the amount of time required to complete their schedule. Perhaps they were relying upon the taming hand of time and expecting members to line up like "yes-men" just for the reward of going home.

Putting on the Heat

No worthy Opposition could do that. It is in the dying hours of Parliament that they must be most vigilant; that is the time when bad laws are made; it is the time of carelessness and cunning.

Alex Hepple's Column

On the Prime Minister's list were the Taxation Bills, the Appropriation Bills, the Supplementary Estimates, the Native Laws Amendment Bill, Native Passes Bill, Native Services Levy Bill, Silicosis Amendment Bill, Group Areas Amendment Bill and several other Bills. They added up to weeks of work, not days.

The Government hoped to fulfil their mammoth task by driving Parliament harder. On Wednesday, the Prime Minister moved that instead of finishing at 10.30 p.m.

every night, the House would carry on until the Government decided to adjourn. He also moved that Bills be taken through more than one stage at a time.

As a result, the House sat until 2 a.m. twice during the week. It also sat until 8 p.m. on Saturday. The Parliamentary machine battled through an eighty-hour week to cope with this high-pressure law-making.

Resentment

As far as the Nationalists were concerned the Opposition was behaving abominably. If this was Parliamentary democracy they hated it. They showed their feelings by maintaining a constant stream of interjections, limited to such profound observations as "Shut up!" "Sit down!" and "Stop wasting time!" Further than that they took no part in the debates.

The Opposition had no plan to delay proceedings purposely. There were no dilatory speeches. There was no time wasting.

Fair and Reasonable Opposition

An example of this was the Report Stage on the Native Laws Amendment Bill. There were more than a dozen amendments and members could have made forty-minute speeches on each of the amendments. The debate was confined to a few Labour members, two Native Representatives and a couple of United Party members. None of them at any time took advantage of the full forty minutes. Instead, they made short, concise and thorough speeches, offering competent and serious arguments in support of their case.

Nevertheless, they kept the debate going until 2 a.m. when the Government capitulated and asked for the adjournment, even though only half the amendments were disposed of.

This incident alone showed the futility of the steamroller tactics which were being used.

Obstinacy and Anger

As the week wore on the obstinate determination of the Government changed to blind anger. They abandoned reason and resorted to bullying. They wanted the Opposition to neglect its duty and abandon all serious criticism so that the over-ambitious programme could be completed in a ridiculously short space of time.

But even the Closure and the Guillotine hadn't helped.

At the week's end only half the Prime Minister's priority list had been completed. The end of the Session was as far off as ever.

Disappointed and desperate, Nationalist back benchers trudged wearily out of the House, to spend another frustrating week-end in Cape Town. As loyal followers of their leaders, they naturally blame the Opposition for their plight. Yet, secretly, most of them fume at the selfishness of those Cabinet Ministers responsible for this sorry state of affairs.

These Are No Statesmen

The events of the week have thrown into sharp perspective the major weakness of the Government. They are unable to approach any problem like statesmen.

They resent criticism and are suspicious of everyone and everything. Having cried "Wolf" so often, they see packs of wolves wherever they look. They have become nervous and irritable, petty and intolerant. In this state their thinking has become confused with turbulent emotions and they cannot behave rationally.

This is the reason why they have kept Parliament going beyond its time. They are behaving like arrested adolescents. Their idea of statesmanship is to run Parliament like the old-fashioned schoolmaster used to run the village school.

While Parliament is being kept in for its naughtiness, the nation moves rapidly towards disaster. No wonder Klasie Havenga went home.

Most of the Nat. leaders are still boisterous politicians. Many are bigoted believers in Afrikaner oligarchy. All of them have a ruthless determination to remain in office.

WAKKERSTROOM CAN BE TURNING POINT FOR OPPOSITION

Alex Hepple's Column

FORWARD
4/7/52



Mr. Alex. Hepple

THE Nationalists are gloating over their increased majorities at Wakkerstroom. That is quite natural. On the other hand, supporters of the Opposition are seeking self-consolation in easy explanations. After all elections, the victors always read extraordinary virtues into the reasons for their successes. The defeated are forced to find excuses to minimise their defeat and to reassure their disappointed followers. In addition, they are swamped by advice from critical friends who are boastfully wise after the event. Before long, both victor and vanquished turn to new interests and excitements.

Where Wakkerstroom Leads

HOWEVER, Wakkerstroom cannot lightly be forgotten. It has happened too near the General Election. It has happened too soon after the Government has committed its worst political crimes. The man in the street is puzzled at the large increase in the Nationalist majority. He is upset that the United Party candidates polled less votes than in 1948. He is worried about the future.

In order to have a fair chance of defeating the Nats. at the coming General Election, the supporters of the United Democratic Front must have a clear understanding of the issues facing the nation; they must also have an honest assessment of their ability to win a majority of seats; above all, they must know what part they must play in the fight for victory.

To this end we must examine certain aspects of the contest at Wakkerstroom.

False Hopes

THERE is first of all the folly of self-deception. This was a tragic feature of the by-election. For some obscure reason Opposition supporters throughout the country were kept in a state of undue optimism. I was surprised, on returning from Cape Town to find an air of extreme confidence on the Reef. Not only were people talking in terms of reducing the Nationalist majority, but some were even talking of a "close finish." Press reports from field reporters, in the constituency painted a constant picture of improving chances.

It may be good strategy to keep your opponents guessing, but it is bad tactics to deceive your own supporters with false hopes. While Opposition workers in Wakkerstroom struggled to hold the line, their supporters throughout the country were being built up with glowing reports.

No wonder there was consternation when the result became known. When high hopes were dashed to the ground the folly of self-deception was proved by the damage to morale everywhere.

The O.B. Blunder

ANOTHER thing which has created alarm and despondency was the introduction of an Ossewabrandwag leader into the fight as a champion of the United Party candidates. The stories of his successes among the O.B. voters in Wakkerstroom were ludicrous even to the worst-informed people in the country.

For a long time the O.B. has been nothing more than a museum piece. The trouble is to find its supporters, not to convert them.

The results show this to be a fact. There is, however, another aspect of this matter. Where does this ex-Assistant Commandant-General of the Ossewabrandwag fit into the U.P. and its struggle for the maintenance of democracy?

Convert or Deserter?

ON joining the U.P., this ex-member of the O.B., Mr. J. D. Jerling, declared:

"I now feel that the principles to which I adhere are definitely safer with the United Party than with the Government."

What are these principles? Are they those set out in the programme of the O.B. and described in 1942 by O.B. Chief General J. Vorster as follows?:

"You can call the anti-democratic system dictatorship if you like. In Italy it is called Fascism, in Germany National-Socialism, and in South Africa Christian-Nationalism."

Surely it is no achievement to claim the support of someone who still stands for the Fascist doctrine of the O.B., especially when many of them are being absorbed into the policies of the Nats.?

To be of any value to the United Democratic Front, Mr. Jerling must not cling to his old principles, but renounce them in favour of the principles of the anti-Nationalist forces.

Wakkerstroom's Warning

WAKKERSTROOM has told a sorry story. It reminds us that prejudice and intolerance are not abating. It warns us that democracy is assuming a new and dangerous meaning in South Africa.

"According to 'Die Transvaler,' the people voted for Apartheid, the Sovereignty of Parliament, the Separation of Voters and the Government's Economic policy. If that were truly so, the result would not be so bad. However, despite the fancy dress, there is no doubt that the people went to the polls filled with all the old prejudices and fears, captivated by all the old slogans which are winners in South African elections.

The illogical cry of "A White South Africa" still holds its magic to obscure the real problems and confuse the electorate.

Good for the Government

WAKKERSTROOM was the ideal place for a by-election as far as the Government is concerned. Although they claim that it comprises a fair cross-section of the country, having both rural and urban voters, farmers and workers, they know that it is far from representative. There is a world of difference between lives of the railway workers of Volksrust and

the lives of the harassed workers in the large industrial cities. This makes a world of difference to their thinking, too.

Life is much simpler in Volksrust than it is in Johannesburg. To the workers of Volksrust the vicious baton charges against the garment workers on the Johannesburg City Hall steps were something far away in the wicked city and easily misunderstood. To the workers on the Reef it was a brutal attack upon wives, sisters and the girl-across-the street, who were bravely defending hard-won rights as loyal trade unionists.

The semi-rural atmosphere of Volksrust and the other towns in the constituency was good for the Government, for this has been a good Government as far as the platteland is concerned.

Bad For South Africa

THE evil effects of the Nationalist policies have not yet penetrated to the rural areas. The urban population bears the immediate brunt of this bad Government. The costly ideological legislation, the repudiation of the Act of Union, the interference with the trade unions, the contempt for the rule of law, the removal of democratically elected representatives from their offices, and the ruthless "step by step" advance to the Christian-Nationalist authoritarian State have not upset the lives of the people of the platteland.

On the contrary, these deeds are seen as praiseworthy attempts to defend the ideals and fulfil the aspirations of all right-thinking Afrikaners. Everything else, including the struggle for existence, faded before the bright mirage of so-called "Afrikaner Unity." It is not easy to show the electorate how rapidly South Africa is slipping downhill.

It seems that our people will only realise this truth when the bitter days of suffering are upon them.

The Road Back

THE task of the Opposition is difficult. Yet it is not as difficult as some people imagine. Despite the results at Wakkerstroom, there is a rising demand for the defeat of the Nats. at the next General Election. Hostility towards the Government is particularly evident in the urban and peri-urban areas.

There has been talk of abandoning the platteland to the Nats. That would be extreme cowardice and stupidity. Wherever it may be, the Opposition must offer itself as the alternative to the Nats. What is essential, however, is to stop pandering to base prejudices.

There must be an end to competing with the Nats. for the support of voters who insist upon reactionary policies and something to the right of the Nationalist Party.

The road back to sanity in South Africa lies in the direction of sound, progressive policies, compatible with modern society. The Nats. are trying to establish a medieval society.

With time on our side there should be no great difficulty in defeating this object.

Solid Hard Work

TOO many people merely wish for the defeat of the Nats. Not enough are prepared to work and fight for it. Victory for the United Democratic Front can be won next year by solid hard work.

Despite the quick response to the Nationalist appeal to prejudice and emotion, they can be beaten by sound reasoning and an honest economic policy which will offer a better life for all the people.

But this is not enough. Everyone must get out and work. The result at Wakkerstroom should shock everyone into action.

If it does that, it will turn defeat into victory.

Drift From Democracy Becoming Headlong Rush To Fascism

To give the Labour Party an opportunity of putting its views before the public "The Natal Mercury" places this space at its disposal once a month. "The Natal Mercury" does not necessarily associate itself with the views expressed. This is the 28th article.

By ALEX. HEPPLE, M.P.

THE Tenth Parliament of the Union ended its Fifth Session on June 25, having placed 67 laws on the Statute Book.

This brings the total number of laws passed since the Nationalist Government assumed power in 1948 to 267.

Some of these laws have been forced through Parliament by liberal use of the Closure and the Guillotine and too many of them were rushed through during the dying days of long and arduous Sessions. In this formidable list of laws are a number which aim at furthering the political ambitions of the Nationalist Party. There are others that seek to win favour with the less enlightened section of the voting community; they appease the irrational demands of the emotional and the prejudiced.

No one can blame the Nats. for passing laws to further their political objectives. However, there is a world of difference between abstract election promises and legislative facts. When such promises are translated into the laws of the land they often produce unexpected results with distressing effect upon the daily lives of decent citizens.

Permanent Political Power

AFTER winning the 1948 elections, the Nats. set about entrenching their position. They took steps to ensure victory at the next election.

Their first step was to stop the flow of British immigrants; their second was to extend the voting qualification for British immigrants from two to five years; their third was to create six Members of Parliament from South-West Africa; their fourth was to remove the Coloured voters from the common roll. In addition to these steps they have embarked upon a form of psychological campaign to create uncertainty and confusion amongst their opponents. Such laws as the Immorality Act, the Mixed Marriages Act, the Suppression of Communism Act and the Group Areas Act formed part of that psychological campaign.

These and many other things were considered necessary by the Nationalists. They do not seem to care that they are creating many new problems.

Immigration

ONE example of this is their immigration policy. In the belief—perhaps erroneous—that all immigrants from Britain would vote against them, the Nats. promptly abolished the State-aided immigration scheme, to reduce the number of immigrants from Britain.

The result was that while South Africa received 30,645 British immigrants in 1948, she received a mere 6,800 in 1951.

From other sources there was a steady trickle, excepting from Germany, the figures for which were 272 in 1948, rising to 2,406 in 1951.

While this was happening experienced South African workers were departing for the Rhodesias at the rate of almost 12,000 a year. Suddenly, in 1951, the Government admitted that the Union was in desperate need of at least 25,000 skilled immigrants, and despatched Mr. Schoeman, the Minister of Labour, overseas to search for them.

Coloured Vote

ANOTHER example is the removal of the Coloured Voters of the Cape from the common roll. As a result of this Act we have seen the repudiation of the Act of Union, the refusal of the Government to accept the decision of our highest Court, and the setting up of the High Court of Parliament. The end of this matter, now before the Courts, remains to be seen.

A third example is the creation of six additional Members of Parliament to represent South-West Africa. On the grounds that South-West is vast and sparsely populated, its electoral constituencies comprise from 3,500 to 4,000 voters each. This makes these new votes worth almost three times as much as those of the urban votes in the Union. In other words, three votes cast in Durban are about equal to one cast in Omaruru.

State Of The Nation

THE greatness of any Government is reflected in the happiness and wellbeing of the people it rules. In South Africa, despite full employment, and good trade conditions, the people are unhappy and worried. Europeans and non-Europeans alike are anxious about the future.

The determination of the Nationalists to pursue the path of reaction which they have so recklessly chosen, frightens all but the minority which supports them. In place of consultation, co-operation and friendly understanding, they have created conditions of hostility, suspicion and fear.

Everywhere there are protesting groups, agitating against the Government. Besides the political Parties, there are the War Veterans' Torch Commando, the Native Indian Unity Movement, and in Natal, the Defenders of the Constitution.

The Government commits the folly of pretending that these protesting organisations are political stunts engineered by the Opposition for political purposes. By this contemptuous attitude the Government reveals its inability to understand the feelings or to win the confidence of the broad masses of the people.

There are grave warnings in such demonstrations as the "Voice of Natal" Rally held on June 6, and the Trade Union Conference held on June 9 and 10. Even graver is the warning in the Passive Resistance campaign of "Defiance of Unjust Laws" being conducted on a wide scale by the non-Europeans.

Rising Tyranny

AS resistance to its despotism grows, the Government finds itself unable to meet opposition and criticism except by the display of force and the further curtailment of the liberties of the people.

A history of these times will tell of police baton charges against demonstrators outside Parliament in 1950 and 1951 and against protesting Garment Workers on the Johannesburg City Hall steps in 1952.

Such ugly events are nothing of which any Government could be proud. Mutual trust and democratic mediation are crumbling before the harsh tyranny of oppressive laws and the denial of access to the Courts of Law.

Under these conditions it has been possible for the Government to remove a democratically elected Member from Parliament and another from the Cape Provincial Council; it has enabled them to suppress a newspaper; and it has empowered them to remove popular and prominent trade union leaders from their unions. In all of these cases the victims are denied the right of trial by our Courts.

Naked Fascism

THESE are the methods of totalitarianism. The Nationalists seem to believe that by protesting their adherence to democracy they are democrats. Labels are not enough. It is by their actions that they must be judged. What they are doing in South Africa today is naked Fascism. There is no other name for it.

Two years ago, writing in this column, I said:—

"The Parliamentary Session which has just ended . . . will be remembered as a turning point in South African history because it revealed positive signs of a movement away from traditional democratic practice towards autocracy and authoritarianism."

And last year I expressed the view that there was a continuation of this drift from democracy and that there was an unhealthy resemblance between some of our laws and those of the socially regimented Fascist Corporate State.

The events inside and outside Parliament this year show that the application of the ideological legislation of the Nationalists is affecting the lives of wider sections of the community. The tentacles of despotism are beginning to squeeze people who believed that they were safe in the peaceful conduct of their orderly lives.

But none of us can escape. The new laws and administrative acts which seemed so remote two years ago have now become direct blows upon the rights and liberties of the people.

The Way Out

THE drift from democracy is becoming a headlong rush to Fascism. Despite the assurances, the denials and the abuse of the Nationalists, democracy in South Africa is in serious danger.

Patriotism cries out for action before it is too late. Next year there will be a general election. The time to win that election is now.

Every member and supporter of the United Democratic Front must get into the fight. They must guard against the mischievous schemes of the Nats. to divide them. An attack upon any one section of the United Democratic Front must be taken as an attack upon the Front itself. There may have to be sacrifices. But loyalty in Opposition to the Nats. must override all minor considerations.

At the head of our forces must be only men of determination and courage, unswerving in the objective to remove the Nats. from power at the next election.

TRADE UNIONS' FIGHT AGAINST THE NATIONALISTS



Mr. Alex. Hepple

A WORKER'S greatest possession is his membership of his trade union. Very few workers realise this. They often resent the shop steward who runs after them; they sometimes complain that they are always paying dues and getting nothing in return. That attitude changes when the employers become difficult and the workers have to fight for their rights. But even then there are many workers who are con-

fused and uncertain about the strength and the ability of united effort to bring victory to their cause.

It is many years since South Africa saw the organised might of united workers, standing loyally together to defend their rights. During the past 30 years collective bargaining has isolated the rank and file workers from the major activities of their unions, which they have been happy to leave to their leaders.

● Bargaining From Strength

A WORKER is well protected if he belongs to a strong and independent trade union. If that union belongs to a federation of all other trade unions, the worker has gilt-edged insurance to protect him against exploitation and other evils of capitalist society.

A strong trade union can bargain successfully with the toughest employers. A strong federation of trade unions can resist the most powerful combinations of employers who may seek to drive the hardest of bargains. When reason fails, a strong federation of trade unions can present a united front, organise a general strike and defend its members against the power and money of the employers.

South Africa has had its share of strikes and those who remember 1913, 1914 and 1922 are glad that there have been no major strikes in recent years. Yet they have not forgotten that it was the employers and not the workers who were responsible for those strikes.

● Growth of Trade Unionism in South Africa

SOUTH AFRICA'S trade unions, like those in most parts of the world, owe their origin and inspiration to the British trade union movement. The struggles of the workers of Britain in the 18th and 19th Centuries gave birth to the finest traditions of working-class organisations. The lessons that were learned by the workers of Britain in their bitter struggles against the most wicked and inhuman exploitation of the new industrialists, have served as a guide for modern times.

Industrial development in South Africa is comparatively recent. Just as this development has been sporadic, so has there been an irregular development of trade unionism.

The skilled workers who arrived here at the turn of the century, brought their trade unionism, with all its background and tradition, with them. The engineers and the miners found little real difficulty in establishing themselves here. But the unions which emerged with the development of secondary industry had to blaze new trails.

In the course of their growth, they ran up against not only the problems of industry in its infancy, but also the problems of semi-feudal society with a white minority ruling millions of non-whites.

In addition, the whites themselves were divided; on the one hand there were the Afrikaans-speaking section, recently conquered by the British, and on the other hand the English-speaking section, tragically ignorant of the real outlook of the other white section.

● Into the Melting Pot

INDUSTRY absorbed white and non-white. The lure of the cities had the same appeal to the white bywoner as to the Native peasant. These newly arrived factory workers suffered hardship in living as well as working conditions. It was natural that they eventually realised the need for organising themselves into trade unions.

In the field of these first industrial unions there were many brave pioneers. There is no room in this column to deal with their struggles and achievements; nor is there room to deal with the many other important aspects of trade unionism.

I want to deal with one aspect only. That is the vicious role played by the Nationalist Party.

● Christian-National Unions

FOR many years there have been groups in South Africa which have believed that the trade unions should have a Christian and National basis. These groups range from the secret Broederbond to the Reddingsdaadbond and its subsidiaries; it includes the F.A.K., the Blankewerkersbeskermingsbond and even sections of the Afrikaans churches.

On the political front, the Nationalist Party has declared itself in favour of this basis for trade unions. In its Manifesto in 1943 the Nationalist Party declared that "Trade unionism on National foundations has love and respect for its own culture, language and church." It asserted that a cornerstone of sound trade unionism is idealism.

The Pact between the Labour Party and the Nationalist Party from 1924 to 1929 weakened the influence of these groups for a long time, because the Nationalist Government did not want to antagonise the workers who gave them valuable support.

With the ending of the Pact, these "Christian-National" groups got busy once more. In 1933 they succeeded in hiving off a section of Afrikaans-speaking railway workers to form the Spoorbond. In 1938 they established the Reform Group in the Mineworkers' Union. Later they succeeded in forming the Blankewerkersbeskermingsbond and finally the Ko-Ordineerde Raad came into being.

Alex Hepple's Column

➤ Full Steam Ahead

AFTER winning the 1948 General Elections, the Nationalists saw their chance to capture the trade unions. They have tried every possible means to intimidate the workers to abandon traditional trade union practice and join up with their reactionary substitutes.

Even then they failed in their purpose. Their next step was to pass the so-called Suppression of Communism Act. This Fascist law has enabled them to remove veteran and able trade union leaders from their unions. That is not all. As soon as the Government had removed these leaders, the pro-Nat. "Christian-National" groups were given the green light to go ahead and seize control of the affected unions.

In the case of the Garment Workers' Union, the oft-defeated Nationalist intriguers have organised their Action Committee once again and are throwing renewed efforts into their campaign to intimidate and coerce garment workers into deserting their union.

The Nationalist morning newspaper makes a feature of regular reports of this body's activities, painting glowing pictures of its growing strength.

So far they have been held at bay. But the longer the Government holds the whip hand, the greater is their chance of success.

● A Threat To All

THIS is not a threat to the Garment Workers' Union alone. It is a challenge to every democratic trade union in South Africa.

For that reason alone every trade union and every trade unionist must support the struggle of the Garment Workers' Union, and any other union which becomes the prey of the Nationalists.

The policy of the Nationalist Party in regard to trade unions is well known. It is set out in their Manifesto. It is contained in their "Road to a New South Africa." It has been explained by the present Minister of Labour, Mr. Ben Schoeman, in his speech in Parliament in 1942.

If applied, this policy will place every trade union at the mercy of the bosses; it will abolish the democratic election of officials of the unions; it will make the unions mere instruments of the Christian-Nationalist doctrines that will lead all workers into slavery.

● Enemies of the Workers

THROUGHOUT history capitalist governments, like our Nationalist Government in South Africa to-day, have gone to extreme lengths to smash workers' organisations. What is happening in South Africa to-day has its parallel in Britain in 1799, when the Combination Acts were passed to make trade unions illegal. Then, too, they were dealt with as "seditious conspiracies."

The only difference is that the Nats. are prepared to condone those unions which agree to serve their interests.

In that they are following the pattern set by Mussolini and Hitler.

Recent events should have made it quite clear to every worker that the Nationalists are preparing the way for their destruction. When the time comes, as it surely will, for workers to resist pay cuts, or attempts to worsen their conditions, they will need all the strength and unity they can muster.

If they allow the schemes of the Nats. to succeed to-day they will be easy victims of those who seek to exploit them.

NATS ARE ANNOYED BECAUSE OF CRITICISM BY FREE TRADE UNIONS

FORWARDED
8/7/52



Mr. Alex. Hepple

THE Nationalists are annoyed. In the midst of their rejoicing over Wakkerstroom, a discordant note has been struck by another critic abroad. The boastings of victory have been rudely interrupted by a resolution passed by a conference in West Berlin of the General Council of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. The resolution, which was moved by the Canadian Congress of Labour, was a long and condemnatory one. Its preamble read:

"A frightening spectacle is being enacted in the Union of South Africa, which will lead to tragedy not only for that country and the Continent of Africa, but for the free world as a whole." It is worthy of note that the resolution was proposed by the trade union movement of Canada, a member of the Commonwealth; it is also significant that the proposal was unanimously approved by an International Confederation which represents 53 million workers in 71 countries, and which is strongly anti-Communist.

Nats. In An Uproar

HARD upon the heels of this report came the announcement that one of the resolutions for the British Trades Union Congress expresses "undivided loyalty and support" for the trade union movement in South Africa in its fight against the tyrannical acts of the Nat. Government.

Immediately the Nats. were in an uproar. Their press rushed about in a fighting frenzy, abusing, insulting and condemning all and sundry. They shouted that these opinions of trade unions overseas were inspired by the "wretched Labour Party and its trade union followers, all noisy partners of the United Front, with more noise than followers." In flaming indignation they cried, "These are scandal-mongers against their native land."

The Nats. suffer from a serious aberration. They are unable to distinguish between their own narrow reactionary clique and the Nation as a whole. Any criticism of their bad laws is denounced by them as "besmirching the good name of South Africa."

They have been using this technique for too long. It is time that these political opportunists were made to realise that they speak for a minority group only.

By securing a slender majority in Parliament they have laid claim to the sole right to speak as the only voice in South Africa. Any political opponent who exercises his democratic right to disagree with them and refuses to accept guilt for all their crimes against democracy is labelled a renegade.

As the Nats. see it, love of one's country must mean one thing only — love of the Nationalist Party. That is a lot for anyone to swallow, even the most insecure fence-sitter.

Trade Union Tradition

HAVE overseas trade unions any right to criticise events in South Africa? Of course they have! Intelligent workers know that it is very much their business when attacks are made upon workers in other countries.

More than that, European work-

ers have supported the struggles of the oppressed in other lands on many occasions.

Written into the proud history of the British Labour movement is the fact that they criticised the Chamberlain Government for its attack upon the Transvaal Republic. Not only did they criticise their Government, but they demonstrated against it, holding

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many protest meetings.

According to the reasoning of the Nats., the British workers were "unpatriotic besmirchers of their homeland" because they sided with the Boers.

Trade Union Internationals

FOR almost a century enlightened workers of all lands have believed in the need for international association. In that they were somewhat ahead of their governments. In 1867 the First International Workingmen's Association was formed; in 1889 it was reconstituted as the Second International.

In 1945 a World Trade Union Congress was held and this led to the formation of the World Federation of Trade Unions, the most powerful association of workers ever known. In 1949, there was a breakaway, led by the British and American groups, who then formed the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, as a non-Communist federation. This latter is the body which has now denounced the Labour policy of the Nationalist Government of South Africa. They have done so in the tradition of trade unionism.

S.A. and the I.L.O.

THE Nationalist attitude to criticism from overseas' trade unions is peculiar, in view of the fact that South Africa is a member of the International Labour Organisation.

Every year South Africa sends delegations, comprising employers, employees and Government officials, to attend Sessions of I.L.O. and to participate in discussions on problems affecting workers in all parts of the world. The Government is committed, therefore, to the principle of international Labour collaboration.

Of course, it must be recognised that the Nats. are bitter isolationists when it suits their purpose. Their behaviour to UNO is typical. South Africa is a member of UNO, yet our Nats.

do everything in their power to discredit UNO. They sneer at the non-white member countries; they sulk when they are criticised; they walk out when they don't get their own way; and their press and their political leaders threaten UNO at the slightest pretext.

For Peace and Harmony

A GLANCE at the preamble to the Constitution of the I.L.O. reveals the main purpose of international collaboration. It declares: "... conditions of labour exist involving such injustice, hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled."

Experience has taught the nations of the world that the protection of workers is not a national problem but an international one. Not only for the protection of the worker themselves but for the protection of industry, is an organisation like the I.L.O. essential. The world still remembers the ruinous effect of the dumping of cheap Japanese goods, produced by the sweated labour of exploited Japanese workers.

Where trade unions are free and strong, they are able to resist exploitation of the workers. Where they are curbed and restricted, fair wage and working conditions are in danger.

The Nats. Are Suspect

TRADER unions overseas are not blind to the real threat to trade unions that exists in South Africa. They do not need the appeals and pleas of South Africans to open their eyes.

For a long time they have watched events in South Africa. What they have seen tells them that the Nats. have embarked upon a desperate and ruthless campaign to seize control of the trade unions as quickly as possible.

Trade unionists are not deceived by the glib assurances of the Nats. They will criticise the South African Government as long as the present policy of interference in the affairs of the trade unions continues.

They will not be easily deceived. The declared policy of the Nats. is something they have seen before in Fascist countries. They understand only too well why the Nats. want to make the trade unions instruments of Nationalist policy.

Outcasts of Democracy

THE Nats. are trying to divert the accusing finger of democracy by trailing a bright red banner of "National pride" or "Suppression of Communism." In this way they hope to cloak their real designs. They also hope to confuse the issues so that people will be sidetracked into arguing about the wrong things.

All the while their agents are energetically working to take full advantage of the removal of trade union leaders, by taking over control. This reveals their wicked plans.

No trade unionist worth his salt would stand idly by without attacking these evil schemes. As long as the Nats. persist in trying to make South African trade unions servile branches of the Nationalist Party, so long will they be abused both here and overseas.

Sacred Profits And Sacred Days

Forward 25/7/52



Mr. Alex Hepple

This week there came to mind in this manner the memory of one incident during the recent session. It happened during the debate on the Public Holidays Bill.

FOUR HOLY DAYS

When the Public Holidays Bill was brought forward this year, it provided that Good Friday, Ascension Day, the Day of the Covenant (December 16) and Christmas Day should be holy days observed in the same way as Sundays. On these days there would be no races, theatres, bioscopes, public entertainments, contests or functions. Events such as the Rand Show on Good Friday, sporting competitions and the like would no longer be allowed.

It was argued that for religious and sentimental reasons these four days should be sacrosanct and not violated by the holding of public festivities and entertainments.

In terms of the Bill, this was to be the law as from April 1, 1952. After that date anyone who violated the law would be liable to a fine of £10 or one month's imprisonment. Of course, in addition to that, he would stand condemned as an offender against public sentiment and religious faith.

THE GRAND EXCEPTION

At the Committee stage of the Bill, the Government exhibited a sudden desire to abandon piety and sentiment in favour of private profit. The Minister of the Interior introduced an amendment to allow cinemas to open on the Day of the Covenant and Christmas Day this year. His amendment read:

"Provided that paragraph (b) of sub-section (1) of Section 5, in so far as it relates to the exhibition of any cinematograph film on the Day of the Covenant or Christmas Day, shall come into operation on the first day of January, 1953."

It is worth while quoting the Minister's own words in explaining his reasons for moving this remarkable amendment. He said:—

"The proviso simply means that . . . there are four days in the year on which bioscopes will not be permitted to exhibit films, that is to say, Ascension Day, Good Friday, the Day of the Covenant, and Christmas Day.

ALTHOUGH the Parliamentary session ended a month ago and all its alarms, excitements and agonies are fading from memory, the laws which emerged are a constant reminder of the events of those days. When I have occasion to refer to the Statutes of the Union of South Africa I often remember some of the things which highlighted the debates when the proposed laws were before Parliament.

We have now been approached by the film industry and it has been pointed out that if all four days become prohibited days in one year, it will mean a considerable loss to them . . . I agreed to introduce this amendment."

MORALS ACCORDING TO THE CALENDAR

We on the Cross Benches immediately protested. This was a peculiar way in which to establish four statutory days of prayer and strict observance. The Government appeared too eager to adjust its attitude to these holy days to suit the cinema industry. Why this sudden favouritism for the cinema industry?

What about other public entertainments? If opening the Rand Show on Good Friday was to be an offence, could that be worse than opening the bioscopes on the

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Day of the Covenant and on Christmas Day?

Apparently the Government had decided to apply one standard for 1952 (to defend the profits of the cinema companies) and thereafter a different and holier standard.

"VESTED RIGHTS"

The Minister defended his action by explaining that the cinema companies had a "vested right" which it was not unreasonable to protect. This sounded strange after the many speeches from his own side of the House, recording the deep, sentimental importance of having the Day of the Covenant as a strictly religious day of remembrance, with no frivolous distractions.

Eventually, in face of the persistent opposition from the Labour Party and the Native Representa-

tives, the Minister withdrew his proposal. The attempt to protect the special "vested rights" and the profits of the cinema industry had been foiled.

The amendment which the Minister had proposed clearly revealed the real sympathies of our Nationalist Government. Their anxiety to protect the profits of vested interests could carry them even in the extent of making them waver in their "Christian" and their "National" sentiments.

THE LAW AND THE MAN-IN-THE-STREET

When Parliament is busy passing new laws, the man-in-the-street takes little or no interest. Unless such laws have an immediate and direct impact upon themselves, most people seem to think that it is no business of theirs.

Eventually the day of reckoning comes and the force and effect of new laws is felt by the man-in-the-street. It is then that he regrets that he failed to support those who opposed and fought the Government which introduced the laws.

In spite of this, conscientious and vigilant members of Parliament are always on the look-out for any dangerous curtailment of individual liberties and rights, or for discriminatory favours for one section at the expense of another.

PRESSURE GROUPS

In the set-up of our capitalist economy, the dice is heavily loaded in favour of the rich and powerful groups. They have the money, the organisation and the influence to ensure that their point of view is always given full consideration. They are able to do a great deal of lobbying; they have the men to study every proposed new law; they are able to employ the best brains to prepare their arguments.

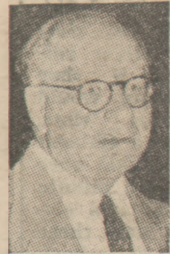
They send deputations to interview not only the Government but also the Opposition; they lobby Members of Parliaments; they write letters and they submit memoranda. All these things place them at a great advantage over the ordinary citizen, who must depend upon the ability and watchfulness of diligent Members to look after his interests.

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

I have related this incident because I believe it is something that should be long remembered. It reveals how a pressure group was able to win its point with the Government even on a matter of great sentiment and in face of public opinion. It also reveals the true capitalistic nature of the Nationalist Party.

Above all, it reveals that a tenacious Opposition group in Parliament can put up a resistance stout enough to make a Government change its mind.

WHAT THE NATS REALLY THINK OF THE WORKERS



EVERY month the Director of Census and Statistics announces the latest Retail Price Index. This Index tells the way prices are moving. Unfortunately for South Africans, it has been saying UP . . . UP . . . UP . . . UP . . . month after month. The latest Index figure just published is for the month of June. It is 185.1, and is the highest ever. It is 1.6 points higher than the May Index and an increase of 38.6 points since the Nationalists came into power in May, 1948.

Mr. Alex Hepple

Many Excuses But No Relief

THIS steady rise in the Retail Price Index has become a matter of course. South Africans have resigned themselves to the fact that the Government can't or won't do anything about it.

By adroit introduction of many diversions, the Nats. have so far succeeded in avoiding the consequences of this serious economic disease which is ruthlessly depressing the people.

The Government quickly explains away its failure to protect the public against ever-rising prices by blaming rearmament, overseas conditions and the laziness of South African workers.

" . . . The vast majority of our people in all occupations could work considerably harder than they are doing to-day without impairing their health . . ." complains our Minister of

Alex Hepple's Column

Finance, Mr. Havenga, in introducing his Budget this year.

Crumbs From The Table

DESPITE all the excuses and explanations, the Retail Price Index hangs like the Sword of Damocles over the head of the Government. As long as employment remains at a high level, the Government is able to evade its responsibilities, because people manage to juggle with their incomes in order to resist the devastations of inflation.

While most people are in employment, the Government is able to decoy them with the mirage of small increases in Cost-of-Living Allowances, slightly higher pensions, and other crumbs from the table. These miserable concessions always come too late and always are too small. Yet they are gratefully received. Almost immediately they are gobbled up by further price rises.

Growing Unemployment

THE Nationalist Government has shown itself more than willing to grant higher prices to farmers, manufacturers and merchants on the slightest excuses. Nowadays it is not so much a question whether applications to increase prices will be granted, but by how much prices should be increased.

What will the Government do when their glib excuses and crafty diversions cease to avail their purpose? South Africa is already entering upon a period of rising unemployment. The official figures prove that.

As unemployment spreads and growing poverty makes it impossible for the people to continue juggling with their income to pay the inflated prices for the necessities of life, will the people be protected by the Government? Will the Government take bold steps to maintain decent living standards for all? If needs be, will the Government favour a levelling of incomes?

What Nats. Really Believe

TO answer these questions, one must look beyond the popular propaganda of the Nationalist Party. Every now and again, some leading Nationalist throws off the mask, and tells us what the Nats. really believe. For instance, there is Dr. Nico Diederichs, M.P. for Randfontein. He is a leading economist of the Nat. Party and has made some remarkable speeches in Parliament.

This year, speaking on the Part Appropriation Bill, he said:

" . . . The second difficulty facing the world and also facing South Africa is that people have the false economic philosophy of 'full employment' no matter what it costs . . . This philosophy of 'full employment' leads to a constant state of inflation in the world and it leads to a continuous lowering of the productivity of labour. The third disease from which we suffer . . . the State is being expected to do more and more and the individual less and less. We notice an increasing tendency among the public to expect more and more services, pensions, allowances, housing, employment and other benefits from the State while people do not want to do anything for the State in return. We in South Africa are also inclined to develop in the direction of a Welfare State, which means the undermining of individual independence and initiative. To meet

the demands of the Welfare State the Government is compelled to place more and more taxes on the shoulders of the higher income groups and as it taxes the higher income groups the productivity of those groups is also curtailed. In South Africa we are also drifting towards the state of affairs where our citizens want to give less and less and where they expect more and more from the State, thereby constantly lowering their own initiative and productivity."

You will find that in columns 1867/8 of Hansard of the 27th February 1952. It tells us what the Nats. think is wrong with South Africa. It places the blame for all our economic ills upon the workers, those who depend upon a wage or salary for their existence.

Defenders of the Rich

THE Nationalists do not agree that the wage and salary earners of South Africa are being fleeced by inflated prices.

Profits from farming, industry and commerce have never been as high as they are to-day. While the rich are getting richer, and the poor poorer, the Nats. rush to defend the rich.

More arrogantly than the meanest capitalist, they moan that South Africans don't work hard enough; that people demand too much from the State; that they want to tax the rich too heavily.

Dr. Diederichs reveals what the Nats. have tried to conceal. He reveals that the Nats. not only are on the side of the rich but that they are against the poor. They are resentful because the poor also want to live; they grudge the poor man's appeal for social services, for a place to live, for a small pension when old and unwanted. Worst of all, he reveals that the Nats. believe that "full employment" is an evil; that a job is a favour and not a right.

There is nothing new in this philosophy. It has brought about the downfall of many Governments. It has been the cause of riots, revolutions and wars. Being crafty politicians, the Nats. will deny that they believe what Dr. Diederichs clearly says they believe.

Especially from now until the general elections they will be sweet and nice to the workers; they will praise and laud the workers; they will pat them on the back and promise them the moon.

The Road to Fascism

DR. DIERDERICHS has revealed the inevitable fate of South Africa under Nationalist rule. As the stresses and strains of worsening economic conditions force them to reveal their true colours, they will show themselves positively on the side of the rich.

They will then impose their full Fascist economic policy upon the

country, protecting the capitalists against the demands of the people. They will regiment the employee class in the interests of the employer class.

Their present actions to divide, despoil and destroy the trade unions are necessary preliminary steps in their economic plan. Their ultimate scheme will tolerate only State-controlled unions with servile, obedient members. Their plan for an Economic Advisory Council is also part of the plan for a Corporate State.

I could quote other instances of the Nat. attitude towards workers, but space prevents me doing so here. Perhaps in some future article I will tell you about Mr. van den Berg's (Nat. M.P. for Krugersdorp) advice that the poor man should "invest his savings in land rather than in buying gold mining shares"; of Col. Wilkens' (Nat. M.P. for Ventersdorp) exhortation that the Minister of Justice "should see that his spies keep an eye on the trade unions and their activities"; or Mr. M. J. Venter (Nat. M.P. for De Aar) who told Parliament how he had actually "kept an eye on certain people" in a Railway workshop; or Mr. van den Heever (Nat. M.P. for Pretoria Central) who complained that "very few officials will work five minutes longer than their fixed hours demand of them."

Forward 8/8/52

COMING TIME OF DEPRESSION WILL BE A TESTING TIME



SPEAKING in the Senate on May 9, 1952, Mr. Eric Louw (Minister of Economic Affairs) expressed the view that: "A slight recession would do no harm. To tell the truth, as they say in English, it is overdue" Now Mr. de Kock has spoken and he says that Mr. Eric Louw's "overdue" recession is close at hand.

As Governor of the S.A. Reserve Bank, Dr. M. H. de Kock carries the responsibility of submitting the annual accounts of that institution to its annual general meeting.

Mr. Alex Hepple An important function of the Board of the Reserve Bank is to keep its finger on the economic pulse of the Union and the annual address of the Governor of the Reserve Bank is always awaited with great expectation and studied with greater interest.

Dr. de Kock not only reviews the past and examines the present but he also endeavours to predict future economic trends, both at home and abroad.

A Gloomy Forecast

This year he offers a gloomy forecast. He warns—

"After more than a decade of virtually uninterrupted inflation, the world appears to have arrived at a turning-point in the economic situation. There are already signs of an appreciable easing of economic activity in some countries."

He points out that despite the great industrial and commercial activity arising out of the re-armament programmes of most countries, the world has reached a stage where supply is meeting demand. Sellers are now chasing buyers.

Free Enterprise Funks

In spite of all the talk about "healthy competition," this is a state of affairs that sets most businessmen trembling. In the first place, they don't know to what extent they will suffer and in the second place they fear the wild and reckless behaviour of their competitors in the survival-of-the-fittest chase for business.

Those who don't tremble are the powerful combines and the monopolists. They see in a buyers' market the chance to weed out many of their competitors. They welcome a falling-off in trade as an opportunity to strengthen themselves at the expense of their financially weaker rivals.

The "uninterrupted inflation" to which Dr. de Kock refers is that period when traders were spared the agony of price-wars, under-selling and other devices of capitalist competition and devoted their energies to obtaining supplies of goods at any price.

But now, warns Dr. de Kock, private enterprise will have to revert to the good old bad days of full and free competition. Despite all the moans and groans of the past decade, this is not such a bright prospect, after all.

A Minor Slump

This nicely-named "recession in economic activity" means in fact a minor slump. The trouble is that no-one knows how "minor" the slump will be. While it is easy to talk in the fine phrases of "slight recession" and "decline in economic activity," everyone would be happier if they could measure these things in £. s. d.

The Governor of the Reserve Bank tries to soften the blow by saying:

... there would not appear to be much likelihood of any recession developing into a real depression. It is more probable that any general decline in economic activity which may occur will take the form of a gradual and healthy re-adjustment after the inflationary boom conditions which have prevailed for many years."

Healthy For Whom?

What form will this "gradual and healthy re-adjustment" take? The consumer is hoping it will bring lower prices for the necessities of life. The manufacturer is hoping that it will bring increased supplies of essential raw material. The merchant is hoping that it will bring supplies of those goods for which his customers are still clamouring. But the manufacturer, the merchant and other employers are hoping that it will bring other things, too.

They hope it will bring an end to shortages of labour and high wages. For a long time it has been said in industrial and commercial circles that what South Africa needs is "a small degree of unemployment." Many employers believe that if workers were afraid of the sack they would work harder and be satisfied with less pay.

Whenever the question of increased production was raised workers were blamed for not working hard enough. It was said that

A Threat To Workers

The workers of South Africa must be on the alert. All those in employment to-day, whether in office or factory, whether skilled or unskilled, stand in danger of falling victims of this "healthy re-adjustment." Some of them are doomed to become part of that "small degree of unemployment."

All other workers will find themselves threatened by a similar fate. Proposals will be made for short-time and lower wages or a lopping off of Cost-of-Living allowances.

During all the time that the Cost-of-Living was climbing rapidly, Cost-of-Living Allowances dragged far in arrears. When prices begin to fall, there will be a quick demand for reductions in these allowances.

A serious testing time confronts all workers. They must stand firm and resist all attempts to make them pay the price of the coming slump. Rather than see their profits reduced, many employers will ask their employees to make the sacrifices.

The Snowball

This is the old, old story. Human considerations will be of no account in the protection of profits. Unemployment and consequent poverty and suffering mean nothing to those who eagerly await the "slight recession."

Even bitter and recent experience has failed to teach them that the booms and slumps are permanent evils of the profit system. Slumps, or recessions, if you prefer the word, are like snowballs rolling down the hill. As they gain momentum they increase in size and sweep up everything in their path.

There is no sphere of human activity which can escape any future slump. Even the monopolists and the very rich will find themselves overwhelmed.

But the worker is the first to stand in the path of danger. He must see to it that he is not an easy victim.

The coming time of depression will be a testing time for the Nationalists. It will then be seen whether they are on the side of the threatened worker or on the side of the profit makers.

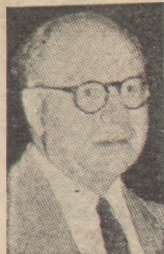
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full employment had made workers lazy and independent.

Now we are to have this "small degree of unemployment" as part of a period of "gradual and healthy re-adjustment," if Dr. de Kock is right.

NATS ARE PREPARING BETRAYAL

OF THE WORKERS



Mr. Alex Hepple

ALL political parties are intensifying their preparations for the coming General Election. They recognise that whatever decisions are taken by the Delimitation Commission, the key to victory lies in the urban areas. The Nationalists have already exposed their fear that the urban workers will vote against them, by proposing that there should be maximum loading of the town vote. There is desperation in this attempt to steal democratic power from the workers in the cities in order to give

increased strength to the plattelanders.

But the Nats. know that even loading the vote is not enough. They know that they must also win greater support from the workers.

So far they have failed to secure the backing they want, despite many years of intrigue and effort. They have failed mainly because they are unable to offer the workers a reasonable economic policy. They base their appeal upon sentiment and abstract theories and therefore they can attract only the ardent Afrikaner Nationalist who has yet to suffer the experience of exploitation.

However, by playing skilfully upon the black bogey, Afrikaner unity, Christian-Nationalism and patriotism they have been able to deceive some workers. This has happened especially where the influence of Labour was allowed to become weak.

The Nationalist plans to capture the trade unions brought them many disappointments. But they had victories, too. Many of these were made possible by stupid people who considered the Labour movement to be the main enemy. They thought it clever to encourage disruptive elements in the trade unions and the Labour Party. Having seen the great successes of the Labour movement overseas, they were determined that Labour would be halted in South Africa at all costs.

With this fixation, they almost ignored the Nationalist Party. The result was that as the Labour movement weakened, the Nationalist movement strengthened. The results of the 1948 general election came as a shock to those who had been busy for years undermining the Labour movement. The violent Labour campaign had ended in Nationalist victory.

Division and Defeat

Not only had it ended in a Nationalist victory. It had ended in serious divisions in the trade union movement; it had exposed trade unions to opportunists, self-seekers and disrupters; it had weakened the solidarity of the workers and left them prey to their enemies.

Their worst enemy proved to be the Nationalist Government. Under the pretext of curbing the spread of Communism, the Nationalists enacted the so-called Suppression of Communism Act, which enabled them to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Trade unions and to remove those trade union leaders who had foiled Nat. plans for decades.

New Campaign Begins

This wicked law enables the Nationalists to pursue their schemes to seize control of important trade unions. Not only are militant trade union leaders removed but members of those unions are intimidated into passivity. Law-abiding workers do not want to fall foul of the law and they fear the consequences of being in opposition to the Government.

This new situation gives hopes to the Nats. Under the pretence of sympathy, they are now out to get the vote of the workers.

Their method of approach is exemplified in a speech of a Reef Nationalist M.P. who recently called a meeting of factory workers, railway workers and mineworkers.

Peculiar Ideas

This Nationalist M.P. revealed the usual attitude of his Party towards trades unionism. After severely criticising and slandering the present leadership of the trade unions he declared that only when the unions have the right leaders will they have a chance to progress. He did not explain what he meant by "right leaders."

Judging from his long oration, it would seem that the perfect leader would be himself, or some other orthodox Nationalist.

Among other things, he urged that the workers "should stand firm with the farmers of the Platteland to ensure the safety of South Africa and the supremacy of a white Afrikanerdom."

He omitted to explain how he reconciled this with his strong opposition to "those trade union leaders who used their powers to pursue all kinds of activities and were too concerned with political motives."

Nor did he explain on what basis the struggling urban workers were to stand firmly with the farmers of the Platteland. Was it to be on the fixing of food prices, or the freedom of workers to elect their own officials? Was it to be on the question of a minimum wage for farm workers or the sharing of wool profits?

Undermining Activities

This Nationalist expert on trade unionism dealt at great length with "leading trade union officials who misuse their positions to undermine the pillars upon which the structure of the South African nation traditionally rests."

He neglected to quote examples of this "undermining activity."

He omitted to explain exactly what he meant. But, of course, that is the technique of Nationalist distortion.

They seek every trick and device in order to confuse and mislead the people. Too often they succeed.

First of all they invent some threat or danger with which to frighten the people; then they accuse their political opponents of inspiring or fostering danger; then they declare themselves to be the saviours of the nation against its wicked enemies.

No Bread and Butter

The Nats. are adept at using this kind of technique. They find that it absolves them from the responsibility of putting forward a real plan for the betterment of the living conditions of the people. I have yet to meet a Nationalist leader who can give a clear statement of what the Nationalists will do to improve the standards of the workers.

They are always expounding upon the responsibilities of the workers and the need for harder work and more patriotism; they are fond of wild talk about "white supremacy" and the "Afrikaner volk"; but they never do anything to get higher wages or better working conditions for the people.

Ignorance Or Cunning?

Either the Nats. lack elementary understanding of the purpose and functions of trade unionism or they are engaged in a cunning plot to mould South African trade unions into part of the Nationalist Party.

If one reads the official policy of the Nationalist Party in relation to trade unions, one cannot escape the fact that it is pattering upon fascist lines. Their proposed Central Economic Council and its subsidiary, the Labour Council, are all too familiar.

Workers must not be lulled by the billing and cooing of Nationalist spokesmen who are seeking their votes. The fine phrases and appeals to National sentiment are a snare and a delusion.

The fact is that the Nats. want to use the trade unions for their own political advantage. The economic well-being of the mass of the workers is not as important to the Nats. as the votes of the workers.

For that reason all workers should ask the Nationalist Party to declare its economic policy and

to state what practical benefits the workers will receive if the Nats. are re-elected.

When Will Our Legislators Count THE HIGH COST OF BAD LAWS?



Mr. Alex Hepple

The Minister of Justice, Mr. C. R. Swart, introduced this Bill in Parliament at the beginning of the 1952 Session.

Its purpose was to make it obligatory upon the Courts to impose flogging upon those convicted of rape, robbery, housebreaking and assault with intent, and to declare as habitual criminals all those convicted of these crimes for the third time.

As early as the Second Reading the Minister was forced to admit that there were several flaws in his Bill. In his haste to

WHEN Parliament makes bad laws, the cost to the nation is never counted. If it were possible to calculate the cost in time and money to the public, the Courts and the Government Departments in interpreting, understanding and complying with ill-conceived laws, even blundering politicians would be shocked. If full publicity were given to all cases of hardship, injustice and human suffering resulting from such laws, the nation would face perpetual shame. Current examples of the consequences of a bad law are revealed almost daily in reports of the operation of the Criminal Sentences Amendment Act.

satisfy his desire for more corporal punishment, he had rushed to Parliament with a bad Bill.

In an effort to knock it into some sort of shape, the Minister offered several amendments and an additional clause. Even these were subsequently altered. But all the patchwork in the world could

must be declared an habitual criminal in terms of the new Act. This is the tragedy which this young man must suffer. This shows the absurdity which results when the legislative body limits the discretion of the judges."

Automatons

The practical effect of Mr. Swart's Criminal Sentences Amendment Act is to make automatons of our judges. Instead of punishment being made to fit the criminal as well as the degree of the crime, it has been made to fit the wishes of the Minister.

It is well known that the man who wields the whip is eventually degraded by his inhuman task. Yet this law has increased the number of lashes to be administered in our gaols many fold. Warders who inflict the floggings get a tickey a stroke, and they are not allowed to administer more than ten in one day. Nowadays many warders must be kept busy wielding the cane or the "cat."

The Acid Test

The Minister of Justice and his party believe that compulsory floggings will reduce crimes of violence. At the Third Reading of his Bill, I asked the Minister if he would repeal this ill-conceived law if it was found that this form of punishment did not deter law-breakers. Let us hope that what is happening in our Courts to-day will convince the Government of the need to repeal this law.

It is useless to try to amend it. It was wrong to have taken the discretion out of the hands of the Courts. It was worse to have ignored the facts of criminal history, human psychology and the civilised approach to penal reform.

Alex Hepple's Column

The well-known Labour M.P. continues his weekly commentary. Opinions expressed are the personal views of the writer, and not necessarily those of "Forward."

not improve this badly conceived legislation.

In the two months since the coming into operation of this law, there have been many comments from the Courts. Judges apologise to criminals and say that their hands are tied; they explain that they are now bound by the law.

One Stroke

One judge, in suspending the application of the lashes, which he had been compelled to impose, observed that "to keep on imposing lashes upon a person with no effect is brutality."

Another judge told a prisoner: "You have already had two whippings, six strokes and eight strokes, but that obviously does not help in your case. Now the law provides that you should get strokes again. I shall comply with the law in my own way. I sentence you to five years hard labour and one stroke."

More recently this same judge found it necessary to make a more outspoken criticism of the Act. He said: "Here we have the case of a 19-year-old youth who

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SHOULD TEACHERS BE BARRED FROM POLITICS?



Mr. Alex Hepple

Section 86—"Misconduct in the Teaching Service," defines the offences which are termed "Misconduct." Paragraph (c) reads:

"(A teacher who) being a teacher in the full-time permanent employment of the Department, takes an active part in political matters (shall be deemed to have been guilty of misconduct)."

There has always been a restriction upon the political activities of teachers. This seems to be based upon the fallacy that teachers might use the classrooms to preach political doctrines.

Denial of Democratic Rights

The Provincial Education Commission which reported in 1939, recommended that it should be a contravention if "a teacher becomes a member of a political organisation, or takes part in political matters."

The Labour man on the Commission disagreed. In his Minority Report, Mr. (now Senator) John Duthie declared this to be a denial of democratic rights and would mean the exclusion from public affairs of those who were well qualified for public work by virtue of their training.

Who Defines Politics?

The full significance of excluding teachers from taking an "active part in political matters," is not immediately seen.

Who will define "political matters"? Who CAN define them? The lives of all the people are governed by the politicians. They make the laws, they impose the taxes. Nowadays they even want to usurp the rights that belong to the people.

Eventually everything is politics. Teachers fighting for better salaries or higher cost-of-living allowances might soon find themselves accused of taking political action. The Nats. always say that all agitation on the question of the cost of living is political.

What Are Politics?

A democratic society soon degenerates to despotism when sections of its people are debarred from political activities.

The dictionary defines politics as "the science and art of government." Where this science and art

THE Draft Education Ordinance of the Transvaal, on which a Select Committee is at present taking evidence, is being widely criticised. As far as the teaching profession is concerned, the Ordinance is loaded with disadvantages. In all matters affecting them, teachers ultimately find themselves at the mercy of the autocratic powers of the Director or the Administrator. Whatever may be said for the Councils, Boards, Committees and Comissions set up in terms of the Ordinance, the Administrator (i.e., the political party in power) has the final decision in all matters. Yet teachers are barred from politics!

is studied and intelligently shared by the majority, democracy works most successfully. If people take a healthy interest in political affairs their society has the best

If people continue to be deceived by the delusion that this is a good cry, they will soon be at the mercy of the despots.

No Politics In Schools

Of course, it would be wrong if teachers used the classrooms to preach the doctrines of the political parties which they support.

Teachers should be prohibited from abusing their positions as teachers to drum particular political beliefs into the heads of the children.

But once a teacher leaves school premises, he should be absolutely free to take part in political activities, just as any other citizen.

In that way we might begin to gain an intelligent appreciation of the virtues and needs of democracy.

Teachers should insist upon their right to full civil liberties. They should have the right to participate in political matters outside the schools, even if they prefer not to exploit that right to the full.

If teachers can be entrusted with the education of our children, they should be entrusted with the same political rights as the rest of us.

Alex Hepple's Column

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chance of being just. If people shun politics, they abandon their society to tyrants, opportunists, self-seekers and rogues.

Too often we hear the cry, "No politics!" Perhaps this cry was born with the desire to escape the disadvantages of party politics. Yet it has brought danger to democracy.

SIGNPOSTS AT THE CROSS-ROADS



Mr. Alex Hepple

Having stated the obvious, the Prime Minister proceeded to complain at the manner in which everyone disagreed with his party and opposed its policies.

"We have not acted irresponsibly," he said. "Place yourselves in the hands of the Government... I ask you to trust the Government." This plea was followed by the usual illogical Nationalist arguments in an effort to justify the unhappy record of the past four years.

"Besmirchers"

A favourite description of those who attack them, as used by the Nationalists, is "besmirchers of the good name of South Africa." Dr. Malan and his Party have a convenient way of mixing up South Africa with the Nationalist Party. In this way they confuse many simple issues.

Now it is Dr. Malan himself who is guilty of bringing discredit to South Africa. In his Bethal speech he has complained that the legislation passed to remove the Coloured voters from the common roll "is being obstructed by the Courts."

This is an accusation that South African courts are not acting in a judicial manner but using the tactic of obstruction to defeat the legislature. Such a suggestion will come as a shock to those who believe in the impartiality and prestige of our Courts.

Food For Criticism

The expression "obstructed by the Courts" is either ill-chosen or a calculated rebuke. It savours of resentment and even hostility. Coming from the Prime Minister, a remark of this kind is a serious reflection upon our judiciary. It provides food for further adverse criticism, both here and abroad.

Such provocative language is another reason why the Nationalists make new enemies every day.

"SOUTH AFRICA stands at the crossroads today," declared Dr. Malan at a public meeting at Bethal last week-end. He was commenting upon the serious complications which have arisen as a result of the Government's attempt to remove the Coloured voters from the common roll, without the Constitutional two-thirds majority.

Slur On Ancestors

Not only are the Nationalists quarreling with the present generation. They are also leading a crusade against the dead.

When they first assumed power, they referred to precedent and custom as the "dead hand of the past." Later, they applied this same description to the Constitution.

Now Dr. Malan casts a slur upon the ancestors of present-day South Africans. He accuses them indirectly of double-dealing and political dishonesty.

This accusation is contained in his statement at Bethal that none of the Provinces at the time of Union wanted to protect the voting rights of the Non-Europeans by a two-thirds majority of both houses of Parliament sitting together. "It was compulsion from outside," he asserted.

Convention or Puppet Show?

If this is true, Dr. Malan should place the facts before the nation. If the National Convention was not a solemn assembly of statesmen, honestly seeking to frame a Constitution upon which the four Provinces could join together, but merely a puppet show of the British Government, Dr. Malan should disclose its secret history.

What he now says is a repudiation of the historical records of the National Convention and the events that preceded it. It is an accusation that many of those who took part were cheap deceivers, ready and willing to do the bidding of others. The speeches of leading South Africans of those days, who argued at length for the entrenched clauses, are now made to appear the insincere mouthings of demagogues.

Must even the great names of South African history be brought into disrepute in order to justify the political ambitions of the Nationalists? We are at the crossroads indeed!

Alex Hepple's Column

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Smash 5/9/52

Parliamentary Parade

By
ALEX HEPPLE, M.P.

Unfortunately for themselves and for South Africa, very few workers can afford to visit Cape Town when Parliament is in Session, or, for that matter, at any other time.

Because they are denied an opportunity to watch Parliament at work, most people have only vague ideas of what goes on there. I remember the rude shock I got the first time I listened to a debate. It was on economic affairs.

I waited in vain for someone to speak up for those who make the real wealth of South Africa — the people who sweat and toil in the factories, the workshops, the stores and the offices. Only passing reference was made to the people who struggle to make ends meet on low wages and inadequate salaries.

Eventually, a Labour member rose to speak. What he had to say was like a breath of fresh air. But none of the other members were interested.

Too Busy

This year there were many things I would have liked workers to have seen for themselves.

First of all, I would have liked them to have seen why the whole Session brought so little to brighten their lives. The Government was too busy looking after its own political security to worry about the bread and butter of the man in the street. It was too busy creating its High Court of Parliament to find time to reduce the ever-rising Cost-of-Living. It was too busy putting through harsh and discriminatory laws to spare a thought for the struggling workers.

Taxing the Poor

Then I would have liked workers to have followed the debate on the Budget. What a smack in the eye that was for the people! Directly and indirectly they are being soaked for the extra money the Government needs.

Many workers who were previously exempted will now have to pay Income Tax. On top of that, they will have to pay more for sweets, cold drinks, cigarettes and beer because of the new taxes. Only a Government completely unsympathetic towards the struggling family man could have introduced a mean Budget like this.

Yet not one Nationalist member said a word against it. As a matter of fact, not a single Nationalist member spoke on the Budget. They preferred to talk about the Constitution, Communism, Apartheid and wool profits.

Smash 12/9/52

Parliamentary Parade

By
ALEX HEPPLE, M.P.

LAST WEEK we discussed the way in which Parliament deals with workers' problems. We also discussed the Government's taxes placed on the people for the current year and showed how the burden was placed on the workers' shoulders.

CANDY FROM KIDS

It seemed as though the Nationalists thought it right to take candy from the workers' kids, as long as the rich were left alone.

They jeered when I demanded a purchase tax on luxuries instead of these mean taxes on the few pleasures of the poor.

This was the Budget of a

party which boasted that it was "neither capitalist nor communist". How quick they are to baton charge women workers! How quick they are to tax the poor! How slow they are to interfere with the rich!

LABOUR AFFAIRS

Another thing I would have liked workers to have seen were debates on Labour matters. They would have observed that the Minister of Labour is a very lonely man on the Nat. benches. Whether he is piloting a Bill, or dealing with the affairs of the Department of Labour, he gets no help from his own side. They sit in silent ignorance. They offer no criticism. What is worse, they give no intelligent support.

I have yet to see a Nat. member who represents a working class constituency take up the cudgels on behalf of organised labour.

On the other hand, they support interference in trade unions and the removal of workers' leaders. They never defend the rights and freedoms of our trade unions and workers' organisations.

TIME FOR CHANGE

These are only a few things that I wish the workers of South Africa could see for themselves. These are facts, not political propaganda.

At present there are only half a dozen members who are watchdogs for the workers. Trade unionists can increase that number considerably. Parliament needs more workers' representatives.

It can do with fewer of those who speak for the rich farmers, landowners and capitalists. It can well do without those political opportunists who get elected by confusing voters with racialism and all sorts of bogeys. The time for a change is long overdue.

THE NATIONALIST ATTITUDE TO THE WORKER



Mr. Alex Hepple

ON many occasions I have remarked upon the attitude of the Nationalists towards trade unionism. Most of them haven't the foggiest notion of the aims and objects of trade unionism. Their own Labour policy is clear enough. If it were put into operation, there would be no more free trade unions in South Africa. There would come into being a "Labour Council," with all workers becoming slaves of the so-called "State."

Every now and then, one of the so-called Labour "experts" of the Nationalist Party rushes into the limelight and strikes a blow for his party. On such occasions the public is assailed with so much hysteria and fancy that it is not easy to separate policy from pipe dreams. In the muddle of slogans, such as "Stem Wit" and "Keep South Africa White," the workers are unable to come to grips with the real policy of the Nats.

For this reason we must be grateful to Mr. J. du Pisanie, M.P., who has written to a local newspaper, clarifying the speech he made at a recent meeting. Mr. du Pisanie states that he warned the workers that dangerous leaders in important positions, while ostensibly fighting for higher wages, were misleading them, and he told them to act against such leaders in their own interests.

"Robbery"

Having thus made his opening thrust, by asking workers to smash their own solidarity, Mr. du Pisanie proceeded to say:

"I asked them what they could possibly gain by only concentrating on money and so-called other benefits in the meantime, while at a given moment they are robbed

of their whole nationhood, their national pride, their white skin and their Christian religion."

This Labour expert does not explain how a trade union, by fighting for higher wages and better conditions, can rob a worker of all the things he mentions.

Mr. Ben Schoeman, the Minister of Labour, once said that collective bargaining was a thing of the past. Perhaps his colleague persuaded him by the use of this same argument that he used on his audience in Germiston. Does Mr. du Pisanie want the trade unions to bargain with the employers for their "Nationhood," "National pride" and "White skins"? Does he want the trade unions to compete with the churches for the spiritual betterment of the people?

Like all good Nationalists, Mr. du Pisanie believes that workers do not live by bread alone, but principally by catchwords.

Hari-Kiri

He asks the trade unionists to destroy themselves if they want to live. He tells them to destroy their leaders who have served them well. He tells them to

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abandon the normal functions of workers' associations — the fight for better wages and working conditions, and the protection of the rights and freedoms of their members — in order to blindly follow the willow-of-the-wisp theories of the Nationalist Party.

Nowhere does he explain how the workers are to be saved from exploitation; nowhere does he say what steps will be taken to preserve the rights of the workers; nowhere does he propose a policy to raise the living standards of the workers.

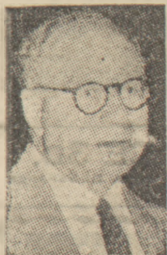
Attitude To Workers

The whole Nat. approach to the problems of the workers is that of a benign master to an inferior servant. They treat the workers as though they were simple or backward children. They do not believe that the workers should be entrusted to run their own affairs.

They want the votes of the workers, and for that reason behave tolerantly towards them. Otherwise they would deal with workers and their organisations very harshly and very quickly.

For the present they are using the technique of slogans and spooks. A few workers who have escaped the experience of capitalist exploitation may be deceived for a while. But the mass of the workers will not be misled into following those who would lead them to destruction.

The Judges And The 'Whipping' Act



Mr. Alex Hepple

judges.

He did quote one. At least, a delegate quoted it. He complained that a Transvaal judge had been criticising the Criminal Sentences Amendment Act, better known as the "Whipping" Act.

I am sure that the Minister wishes that he had never started with this law. He has been in trouble ever since the first day he proposed it. Naturally, he is annoyed. Not a day passes but someone pulls this law to pieces:

Ill-Conceived Law

Mr. Swart is especially annoyed when the judges expose its flaws. "It is their duty to carry out the laws, not to criticise them," he complains.

As a judge of a different calibre (H.C. of P.), I would now like to say to the Minister of Justice, "I told you so!"

As one of the few members who fought the "Whipping" Act all along the line, I would remind him of the many warnings which he was given in Parliament when he was piloting the Bill.

We told him that it was ill-conceived, mediaeval and full of flaws. We warned him that it would stir up a lot of new trouble and create many difficulties.

But the more we argued, the more stubborn he became. He had made up his mind.

The Test

At the Third Reading, I made a proposition to the Minister. I said:

"It is quite apparent that the Minister is determined to go

THE Minister of Justice, Mr. C. R. Swart, is annoyed with the judges. I mean the judges of our Supreme Courts, not of the High Court of Parliament. Mr. Swart says he is surprised at the number of judges who are criticising the laws passed by Parliament. This is a wide and general statement which sounds fine in the fury of a Congress of the Nationalist Party in the Free State. As a responsible member of the Cabinet, the Minister should have quoted the laws which were being criticised by the

ahead with this legislation despite the appeals we have made from these benches. His interference with the discretion of the Courts is unwarranted and most objectionable. It is going to lead to further conflicts.

"I want to put to him the acid test of this law. If his more stringent measures, his more severe and compulsory floggings do not reduce crime, will he admit it was ill-advised and agree to its repeal?"

Of course, the Minister did not take up that offer. We are now seeing the results of his stubbornness in this matter.

Not Political

It was just a month ago that I wrote in "Forward" on some of the effects of this vicious law. I quoted some examples of how it was failing to stand up to the normal processes of justice and creating many ridiculous situations. Since then there have been dozens more cases exposing its unsatisfactory character.

Now we have another, and more serious, result. We have the Minister of Justice attacking our judges because they refer to the difficulties in applying this bad law. It is quite obvious to everyone that the comments of the judges are not of a political nature. They are based upon practical experience in dealing with the crimes covered by the "Whipping" Act.

But Mr. Swart wants our judges to act unintelligently and in a mechanical way, as if they were

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turning the handle of a sausage machine.

It seems as though he expects them to abandon their legal training and their judicial ability in favour of doing the bidding of emotional and irrational politicians.

Scamler
24/9/52

Parliamentary Parade

By
ALEX HEPPLE, M.P.

★
AT election time politicians use all kinds of tricks and hogeys to win votes. To avoid being judged on their records or their economic policies, they take good care to divert people along the path of confusion, strewn with talk of apartheid, communism, white South Africa, national unity, and other red herrings.

And they get away with it time after time. No wonder the lot of the worker never gets better. This is the way the big-money boys want it. It's the finest protection they could wish for.

How many workers who voted Nationalist at the last election knew that they were in fact voting for a capitalist economic policy? How many of them suspected that they were helping to make South Africa safer for the profit-makers? They didn't have a chance to find out, because they were being lugged by all sorts of side-issues.

WORKERS' CRIMES

However, the Government M.P.'s have now declared themselves. Speaking in Parliament this year, Dr. Diederichs (Nat., Randfontein) complained:—

"... Here in South Africa we notice an increasing tendency among the public to expect more and more services, pensions, allowances, housing, employment and other benefits from the State while people do not want to do anything for the State in return." That means you. And says,

Dr. Diederichs, because you want employment, housing and other things, you are "undermining the individual independence and initiative of the rich."

Your demands force the Government "to place more and more taxes on the shoulders of the higher income groups . . . and the productivity of those groups is . . . curtailed."

OFFICIAL POLICY

Dr. Diederichs is the leading economist of the Government Party outside the Cabinet. He is their financial expert. He has expressed these views many times.

Not one Nationalist has differed with him. In Parliament they all sat in silent agreement and when we attacked his policy they rushed to his defence.

If you have a Government M.P. in your area, ask him to explain why it is wrong to want a job, or a roof over your head, or a pension when you are old and worked-out.

Ask him why it is wrong to tax the rich to help the poor. Ask him why he was so silent when Dr. Diederichs sneered.

Parliamentary Parade

SAAM TREK

19/9/52

By
ALEX HEPPLE, M.P.

★
EVERY year the Government presents a Budget to Parliament, stating how much money it wants, how it will get that money and how it will spend it.

This year the Government asked for £205,000,000.

In the weeks before Budget Day, when new taxes are announced, the rich get jittery in their fear that they might have to cough up a little more. They try to guess what the new taxes will be.

When Budget Day comes, the galleries of Parliament are crowded out with the rich and their friends. There are no workers there; they are toiling at their jobs.

This year it was on March 26 that the Minister of Finance, Mr. Klasic Havenga, presented his 1952-53 Budget. Following the usual custom, he wore formal dress (striped pants to you)—something that gives the rich a nice feeling of confidence in the Government.

HIGH WAGES FOR THE LAZY

In explaining that higher prices are caused by "the constant scramble for higher wages, higher salaries and higher profits," Mr. Havenga complained that "the vast majority of our people in all occupations could work considerably harder than

they are doing today without impairing their health."

Those are his very words.

He then told of his taxes on sweets, cold drinks, beer and cigarettes. The big-money boys had got off scot-free. They were delighted. There was no need for them to raise the usual howl that "Industry will be ruined!" or "Business can't stand it!"

Wherever rich men gathered there was joy.

PITY THE POOR RICH

As a result of this Budget, the rich will get richer and the poor poorer. As the months go by, we will feel the pinch more and more.

But the Minister of Finance has the answer. On June 17, replying to my criticisms of the new taxes, he said:

"It is no longer possible to obtain all the means needed by the State from what are called the wealthy groups . . .

If we are always to hear the plea that we are now taxing people who are rather poor, where will it lead to?"

Well, there you have it. Shame on you, Klasic!

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Civil Servants Or Slaves?



Alex Hepple

For some years there has been a serious shortage of staff in all Government Departments. In consequence, routine has been upset and efficiency impaired. Work has fallen in arrear and tremendous piles of work have accumulated. In a frantic effort to bring work up-to-date, conscientious Public Servants put in extra hours of labour almost every day.

What The Record Shows

In these days when the worker is coming into his own, what is happening in the Civil Service? Let me quote something from the Special Report of the Select Committee on Public Accounts (On Accounts of the National Road Fund), dated May 1951:

Mr. Van den Heever: "I should like to ask a question in connection with the difficulty of getting staff. We know that in many cases officials work very hard, but we also know that very few will work five minutes longer than their fixer hours demand of them. . . I think that the Departments should complain less about the Staff shortage and see to it that their clerks work a bit longer."

(Mr. Van den Heever is the Nationalist Party M.P. for Pretoria Central).

Mr. Gibson (Secretary for Transport): "I expect the Staff, if they have any interest in their job, to put in at least a couple of hours gratis in the public interest . . ."

Mr. Hepple: "Mr. Gibson, you spoke of a couple of hours gratis work. Do you mean a couple of hours per week or a couple of hours per day?"

Mr. Gibson: "I had in mind about two hours per day."

Mr. Hepple: ". . . do I understand that these Public Servants do not get paid overtime if they work extra hours?"

Mr. Gibson: "If the importance of the work justifies overtime, it will be paid."

LET me tell you the story of Civil Servants who burn the midnight oil to save the country money. Believe it or not, there are many Government employees who work long hours of overtime every week. Many of them don't get paid a penny extra.

They are mainly clerical workers. "Pen-pushers," whether employed in commerce or by the State, have not yet succeeded in freeing themselves from the respectability of white-collar slavery. There are, of course, exceptions. But most clerical workers put in overtime without pay.

Alex Hepple's Column

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Mr. Hepple: "The overtime is not paid as a matter of course?"
Mr. Gibson: "No."

Rights, Not Favours

I have quoted this evidence because it reveals many things. It reveals one of the reasons why the Civil Service is losing its attrac-

tion for capable people; it reveals the thoroughly bad basis upon which workers are employed. They may, or may not, be paid overtime, at the whim or mood of a senior official.

Such conditions create the possibility of favours and injustices and must be the cause of general resentment, especially when different standards are applied in different Departments.

An employee is entitled to a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. It is hardly credible that the Government struggles along with servants who are not only lazy and inefficient, but stupid enough to punish themselves by doing extra hours of labour without pay.

If the circumstances make it necessary for State employees to work overtime, they should be paid at specified overtime rates. That is an accepted practice in all trades.

Who Is Right?

In their own interests, Public Servants should see that this matter is put right. It would help to protect them against charges of being work-dodgers. The evidence I have quoted reveals the frank attitude of Mr. Van den Heever, a Nationalist M.P., towards Civil Servants in his constituency. There are many Civil Servants in his constituency. When he says "very few will work five minutes longer than their fixed hours demand of them," does he mean that they should work for nothing?

Promises Change To Threats

A COMMENT ON THE TRANSVAAL NATIONALIST CONGRESS



Alex Hepple

WHEN the Nationalists first came into power, they promised that they would lead the way to a new and happier South Africa. However, as they apply each phase of their policy, sadness and fear creep over the nation.

If the Nationalists would seek the causes of this sorry state of affairs, they need look no further than themselves. The recent Congress of their party in Pretoria revealed an overwhelming emphasis upon intoler-

ance, prejudice and autocracy, and a complete absence of good cheer and hope for the people of South Africa.

The civilised world must have held up its hand in horror at some of the resolutions and many of the speeches. Democrats could only shudder apprehensively at this contribution to progress.

Threat To Peace

The Prime Minister set the ball rolling, in a speech lasting nearly two and a half hours. He threatened the United Nations. He warned them not to interfere in the domestic affairs of South Africa, otherwise South Africa would withdraw from UNO.

After this blustering challenge to world co-operation, Dr. Malan proceeded to deal with the Natal Provincial Council. He challenged them to pass a motion asking the Government to exclude Natal from the application of Apartheid legislation.

What this had to do with Natal's grievance that the Government had violated the Constitution and defied the Courts, Dr. Malan omitted to say. He seemed to believe that the easiest solution to all complicated problems is to reduce them to a simple formula — White or Black, Take it or Leave it.

Threat To Speech

The next contribution came from Adv. J. G. Strydom, leader of the Nationalist Party in the Transvaal. He threatened the nation that if

the Deiance Campaign continued, the Government would have to curtail the liberties of the people, especially the press. He warned that the Government might have to take wide and extraordinary powers unto itself.

This is the path of despotism, which always find excuses to endow itself with autocratic powers. Instead of tackling a grave problem in a wise and statesmanlike manner, the Nationalists are itching to find an excuse to black out democracy.

Threat To Liberty

This was well illustrated by the Minister of Justice. He assured the Nationalist Congress that the Government meant to apply its Suppression of Communism Act very strictly.

He delighted delegates by promising, "Leave it to the Government, we will not disappoint you." In other words, harsher measures would be a fulfilment of Nationalist hopes. The Minister's promise of new internment camps for South Africa was a matter of rejoicing among delegates.

Threat To Trade Unions

In case the target of the Nationalist offensive should be thought to be too small, the Minister of Justice reminded the Congress, "We intend to weed out the Communists in the trade unions, such as some of the secre-

Alex Hepple's Column

The well-known Labour M.P. this week devotes his column to the recent Transvaal Nationalist Party Congress. As on previous occasions, the views expressed are the writer's personal opinions, not those of "Forward."

taries and others who hold key positions." For a definition of these "Communists," read Mr. Swart's Suppression of Communism Act. In case you don't understand it, let me say it can mean anyone who is not a good and well-behaved Nationalist.

Threat To Progress

Finally, there were some of the resolutions discussed at the Congress. There was one which demanded "That all Natives who slept with their wives in kios in back yards of European homes, should be arrested." Another objected strongly against Indian traders getting large sugar quotas.

One resolution asked that all Native Reserves should be fenced, while another demanded a belt at least 1,000 yards wide between Natives in Reserves or Native townships and the nearest Europeans.

There were other requests for "stricter control" and "stronger measures" over the lives of the people.

As I see it, these are the thoughts of fascism. They belong to people who are intolerant of everyone but themselves. They are the elite, and the rest of the world must conform to their rules.

Is it any wonder that sadness and fear are creeping over the lives of the majority of South Africans?

3/10/52
Summer

Parliamentary Parade

By
ALEX HEPPLÉ, M.P.

ON THE LAST DAY of the recent Parliamentary Session a motion was passed, increasing the benefits payable under the Unemployment Insurance Act.

This was a good thing to do, in view of the large amount of money in the Unemployment Insurance Fund. Its growing size is worrying a lot of people. They think it is getting too big. So they want to get their hands on that money and use it for other purposes, rather than keep it for the workless.

Workers should be careful not to agree to the bright schemes of those who want to get at the Fund. It has grown to about £50,000,000 only because trade has been good for many years and jobs have been fairly easy to get. There are over half a million employees paying into the Fund, while the average number of persons drawing benefits has been 10,000.

BEWARE OF A STUMP

But the number of unemployed is growing. As more people fall out of work, payments increase and contributions drop. Experts who have examined the financial position say that the Fund is in a healthy state, provided there is no large scale unemployment.

Who can predict the future?

If things go wrong, as they did in 1930, the drain on the

Fund can become enormous. The money must be there when it is needed. It must not be used for other purposes.

It must not be forgotten that this money belongs to the workers. It does not belong to the employers or to the State.

LEAVE THE FUND ALONE

The United Party has suggested that the Unemployment Insurance Fund should be absorbed into a consolidated pension and unemployment scheme for all workers. A pension scheme for everyone is very necessary and long overdue. But it must not be established at the expense of the unemployed.

The Unemployment Insurance Fund must first be made strong enough to guarantee long-term protection for the jobless.

Any changes in the Fund must be in the direction of reduced contributions from workers and increased benefits for the unemployed.

In addition, the Act should be extended to embrace all workers, with no exemptions.

Meanwhile workers should say: "Leave our Fund alone!"

3/10/52
Summer

Parliamentary Parade

By
Alex Hepple, M.P.

ARE YOU WORRIED about your job, or the high cost-of-living or the future of your children? Or are you worried about the future of the Protectorates?

Dr. Malan has said that the future of the Protectorates will be a major issue at the next election. So far, we have not heard a word about the future of the workers of South Africa.

It is high time that more attention is paid to the needs of the mass of the people who work and slave to make the wealth of the country.

Living Costs

There is, for instance, the need for drastic action regarding the ever-rising cost-of-living. Soaring prices are stealing workers' wages.

Yet the Government stubbornly follows the unfair practice of increasing Cost-of-Living allowances long after prices have risen.

Housing

Then there is the scandal of housing. The acute shortage of accommodation continues, yet there is no bold plan to provide houses for the people. No new houses for letting purposes are being built. Plenty of flats are going up — all described as "luxury" and let at luxury prices.

Pensions

Although there have been some improvements, pensions are still too small. Pensions, plus bonuses, do not cover the 85% increase in the cost of living.

Those workers who have lived carefully all their working years and who have saved for a rainy day, are penalised by the wicked Means Test. They haven't been able to save enough to live on decently, yet the Government punishes them by denying them the pension they are entitled to.

Real Issues

These are only three of the real issues on which the political parties should be tested at the next election. But watch how the politicians will dodge behind bright red headings, just to avoid these issues!

THE LABOUR VIEW

Marketing Of Perishable Foodstuffs Must Be Planned

To give the Labour Party an opportunity of putting its views before the public "The Natal Mercury" places this space at its disposal once a month. "The Natal Mercury" does not necessarily associate itself with the views expressed. This is the 31st article.

By ALEX HEPPLÉ, M.P.

THE Labour Party has always agitated for a sound and properly planned system of marketing farm products.

The present wasteful methods of bringing foodstuffs from the producer to the consumer are responsible for losses to the farmer and high prices to the housewife.

Only on rare occasions is the consumer able to buy essential foodstuffs at reasonable prices. Yet, on the other hand, the farmer is never sure of receiving a fair return for his produce. In recent years the various Regulatory Boards set up under the Marketing Act have afforded the farmer some protection in so far as maize, wheat and other major crops are concerned. Unfortunately, nothing has been done to improve the outmoded methods of marketing perishable foodstuffs.

Fruit and vegetables play an important part in the diet of the urban worker, who suffers because of irregular supplies and high prices. Even in times of plenty, when farmers complain that they are receiving low prices, retail prices remain at a high level and many families must deny themselves these essential foods.

Producer Must Be Protected

THE chronic faultiness of our present marketing system is a cause of retarding greater production. We are constantly hearing appeals to farmers to produce more, but no proposals to protect them against the evils of our bad marketing methods.

The big farmer is not the sufferer. It is always the small farmer who is the victim. This is particularly true of the market gardener and the small fruit grower.

The farmer has not only the hazards of Nature to overcome. Having a successful crop does not always bring the expected financial reward. There is still a battle to be fought against losses resulting from damage and decay in bad handling, as well as from gluts on the market.

It is upon the smaller farmers that the urban population depends for its daily needs of fruit and vegetables. Therefore it is in the interests of the town dwellers that we have a properly planned system of bringing food from the farm to the table.

Need For Planning

THE Labour Party has always maintained that the profit system, apart from its many other evils, is extremely wasteful. No better example of that can be found than the production and distribution of food. There are either shortages or gluts.

On the municipal markets large quantities of good fruit and vegetables often go to waste because of lack of buyers. At the same time there are thousands going hungry because they have not the money to buy those foods.

Planned production and distribution is no longer a debatable theory. Everyone agrees that something should be done. Yet all Governments fail to act, for fear of interfering with the profits of vested interests.

Labour's Policy

FOR years the Labour Party has been demanding a planned system of marketing of perishable foodstuffs. The policy of the Labour Party in this regard includes:—

- (i) Guaranteed minimum prices to the producer, with fixed maximum prices to the consumers.
- (ii) Schemes to make essential foods available to all sections of the community, by subsidisation or other assistance if necessary.
- (iii) Full utilisation of all farm products and the elimination of waste which results from surpluses and periodical excess supplies arriving on the market. To this end proper use must be made of cold storage, canning and dehydration facilities.
- (iv) The setting up of proper authorities, representing producers, distributors and consumers, to plan, control and administer schemes for the economical marketing of fresh farm produce, particularly vegetables and fruit.

Investigations

THERE have been several investigations into the problems of production and distribution of food. In 1943, the Department of Agriculture submitted a detailed report on the Reconstruction of Agriculture. In 1945, the Social and Economic Planning Council commented upon this report in one of its own, entitled "The Future of Farming in South Africa."

Subsequently these two bodies met "to clear up points of misunderstanding and to narrow down differences reflected in the two reports." On September 27, 1945, they submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister, in which they made the bald statement that "processing and distribution require to be made more efficient."

There is a world of meaning behind those few words, especially when one remembers that the Reconstruction Committee had stated that reform was most urgently needed in respect of the fresh produce normally passing through municipal markets, and declared:—

"The high retail prices and the unorganised distribution of these protective foods are today largely responsible for the malnourishment among the middle-class and the poor population groups. . . . The retail prices of potatoes and vegetables often exceeded the wholesale prices ruling for these articles on the same day and in the same market by as much as 100 to 500 per cent."

Ministry Of Food

IN its motion on economic policy at the opening of the 1951 Session of Parliament, the Labour Party asked the Government to take the necessary steps to establish a Ministry of Food for the purpose of ensuring, among other things, maximum production and efficient distribution of food.

The Nationalists, in opposing this proposal, agreed that all was not well in the distribution of vegetables and fruit, and offered as an amendment that "all possible steps should be taken by means of legislation or otherwise to remedy these conditions."

As a result, in June 1951, the Minister of Agriculture appointed a Committee of 15 to make investigations and report upon the marketing and distribution of perishable farm products in the more densely populated areas of the Union.

This Committee was expected to submit its report by the middle of 1952, but so far has not done so. Let us hope, not only that it will recommend drastic improvements, but that such improvements will be made.

In spite of the Government's persistent refusal at that time to listen to Labour's plea for a Ministry of Food, they did change their mind later. In November 1951, they set up a Department of Nutrition, "to be responsible for all matters pertaining to food."

Its functions are to include nutritional research, consumer education, food distribution and related problems.

This is another step in the right direction. But, unless the Department of Nutrition is allowed to operate to the full extent, its existence will be futile. It must not be hampered by traditional fears of upsetting the established order of things; it must not be hamstrung by those whose only concern is to turn everything to their own advantage.

Other Responsibilities

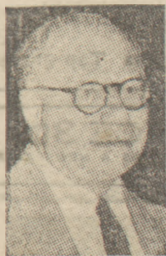
THE Labour Party believes that improved marketing methods alone are not enough. Farming must be made more efficient, too. Producers must face their share of responsibility. If they are to be protected on the markets, the consumers must be protected on the land.

In this, the Government carries a major responsibility. An immediate necessity is the control of land prices. Economic farming is impossible on land that is inflated in price.

Steps should be taken to reduce the present fantastic prices of land, and prices thereafter pegged.

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Trade Unions And Their "Friends"



Alex Hepple

ONE of the greatest threats to workers comes from some of their so-called "friends." These self-styled "friends" are anxious to save the workers, not from exploitation and poverty—but from trade unionism. In a muddle of distortions, exaggerations and wild imaginings, based upon pathetic ignorance, these "friends" often say things that would make a cat laugh. Unfortunately, what they say is not only funny—it is also extremely dangerous. It helps to undermine the loyalty and solidarity of workers and weakens their organisations, much to the delight of those who exploit their labour.

Last week, the Reddingsdaadbond, that great saviour of the Afrikaner worker, met at Bloemfontein. This organisation aims at "saving" the Afrikaner worker by building up Afrikaner capitalism. Some years ago one of their leaders said that an Afrikaner working for an Afrikaner boss "will be a happy worker" because he will not be the victim of conscienceless exploitation." It's amazing what tricks capitalists think of to bluff the workers.

Chairman's Gem

The chairman, in his opening address, dwelt at length on the importance of recruiting the Afrikaner worker. Among other things, he asserted that "the Afrikaner struggle is treated with contempt in the trade unions," and that "the communist ideology reigns supreme in the trade unions."

He declared that "Afrikaner workers are becoming enslaved to un-national ideologies, from which we must save them."

His gem, however, was that trade unions are not always used so that the Afrikaner gets his rights, "but so that he is spiritually wrecked and delivered to the mercy of the foreign boss."

Sugaring the Pill

Even Mr. Ben Schoeman couldn't swallow that.

That night, in the most diplomatic manner he could assume, Mr. Schoeman corrected some of the foolish things that had been said in connection with trade unions.

He told the Congress that trade unionism was no more un-Afrikaans than Rugby.

Unfortunately, in an attempt to sugar the pill, Mr. Schoeman also took a wild swing at the trade unions. He declared: "One reason why the trade unions have fallen into wrong hands is that Afrikaners have not shown sufficient interest in them."

"Wrong Hands"

This was a plea for stronger trade unions, but it was also a sick-

with trade unions. He has his likes and dislikes. He likes those who agree with him and his outlook; he calls them "sound and conservative" and worthy of his co-operation. He dislikes unions which are militant and aggressive in their fight for improved conditions and the protection of hard-won rights; he extravagantly uses the word "communist" about them and agrees to the ruthless application of the undemocratic Suppression of Communism Act to throw out their elected leaders and leave them exposed to greedy employers.

Presumably, the "wrong hands" to which Mr. Schoeman referred are those trade unionists whom he dislikes. But he should be fair. He should say why they are "wrong hands."

Rank and File

As far as the rank and file of the unions is concerned, they only want to know if their leaders have fought honestly, sincerely and courageously on their behalf.

Trade union leaders are responsible only to the workers. They fail in their duty only if they sell out their members to the bosses, or neglect to conduct the affairs of the union in a manner satisfactory to the rank and file.

Can Mr. Schoeman tell us exactly why he believes that the trade unions have fallen into "wrong hands"? That is, apart from the fact that their members may not be good Nationalists?

Alex Hepple's Column

The well-known Labour M.P. this week writes about Nationalist criticism of the trade unions. As on previous occasions the views expressed are the writer's personal opinions, not those of "Forward."

ening blow against them. Are the trade unions in "wrong hands"? What does Mr. Schoeman mean by "wrong hands"? I realised some time ago that the Minister of Labour had a special technique

OUR DISAPPEARING CIVIL LIBERTIES



Alex Hepple

SOUTH AFRICA is slowly losing many important civil rights. The public is not quick to notice this dangerous process, nor is it quick to resist it. Politicians in power find it fairly easy to whittle away fundamental rights. They are able to do so today upon the slightest excuse. When life becomes desperate, and South Africans find the need to use these rights and freedoms, they will awaken to the frightening fact

that they no longer exist. They will discover that the liberties that had been taken from others, have been taken from them, too.

Civil rights of modern society were won in the bitter and bloody struggles of long ago. They have proved to be the bulwarks of free peoples against the tyrannies of power-mad politicians. The maintenance of civil liberties is the maintenance of democracy.

Important civil rights, such as freedom of thought, freedom of association, freedom of movement, the sanctity of the home and the protection of the law, have been circumscribed in recent years in South Africa. Many rights are merely "on parole," continually under shadow of arrest.

Censorship

Political censorship is on the increase. In May this year the "Guardian" was closed down by the Government. This month two UNESCO publications, "Roots of Prejudice" and "Behind the Colour Bar," have been banned. The effect of these shameful acts is to place the minds of South Africans in chains. They are to be denied knowledge; they are to be shut off from other points of view. They will be allowed to read only what their masters allow them to read.

Passports

South Africans are being prevented from leaving their country. Recently, two women leaders of the Garment Workers Union were refused passports. They wanted to

travel to Milan and Paris to attend International congresses of Textile and Garment workers.

These women were carrying out ordinary trade union duties. But the Government objects, and chains them like prisoners to the Union. No reasons are given for Government's refusal to grant passports. The masters have said "No!"

Prohibition of Gatherings

Early in World War II, National Emergency Regulations vested powers in the Government to prohibit gatherings of more than twenty persons.

In 1944, these powers were used to prohibit gatherings on mining ground in the Transvaal. That strict prohibition has continued all these years. During the last session of Parliament, against the opposition of the Labour Party, it was extended for another two years. The Government argued that the perpetuation of this law was necessary "because dangerous conditions continue to exist."

Violation of the Home

In some of our laws, provision is made to violate the privacy of South African homes. Inspectors and officers are empowered, "without previous notice, at any time during the day or night, to enter upon any premises whatsoever and make such examination and enquiry as may be necessary."

Alex Hepple's Column

The well-known Labour M.P. this week about civil liberties. As on previous occasions the views expressed are the writer's personal opinions, not those of "Forward."

It is therefore legal for investigators to enter anyone's home without a warrant. The sanctity of the home is no longer secure. Private households have been made the hunting ground of official snoopers.

Fighting Communism?

The most flagrant attack upon civil rights was the passing of the Suppression of Communism Act. This gives the Government, under the guise of combating Communism, arbitrary powers to take away all rights.

Freedom of thought and opinion can be restricted; freedom of speech denied; freedom of movement limited; freedom of the press curtailed; and freedom of association prohibited.

The Act violates nearly every Article of the Charter of Human Rights of the United Nations.

Frightened People

The world is changing rapidly. Those who resist progress are beset by fear. They use their passing power to frighten everyone else. Frightened people are confused people. They easily agree to surrender rights and liberties for which their forefathers fought and died.

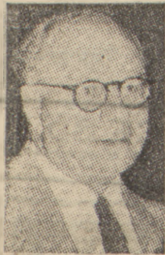
In forfeiting those rights and liberties, they are cringing before politicians who will demand the surrender of one right after another, until all liberty has gone.

Fighting Back

There is no satisfying such bullying demands. Those who make them condemn as "dangerous" all opinions except their own. They want to suppress everything and everyone.

The time has come for freedom-loving people to fight back. We must refuse to be intimidated. We must hold the line against further inroads on our rights and freedoms. We must set about winning back those which have been taken away.

A STRIKE-BREAKING CLAUSE THAT WAS NIPPED IN THE BUD



WORKERS are not well-informed about what happens in Parliament. That is not their fault. Not until they own a daily newspaper will they get all the facts about the things that really matter. For example, how many workers know that during the last session of Parliament, the Unemployment Insurance Act was nearly transformed into a strike-breaking instrument? How many know that, but for the intervention

of the Labour Party, Section 40 of the Act would have contained a vicious penalty against certain unemployed? Let me tell you the story.

Administrative and other difficulties had created the need for certain amendments to the Unemployment Insurance Act. Most of these amendments were improvements.

One of the changes aimed at helping workers who became unemployed as a result of a strike in another industry. There had been a strike of ships officers in Cape Town and as a result, fish-canning factories had been without fish and so laid off their employees.

In terms of the Act as it then was, these factory workers were refused unemployment benefits. That had not been the intention of the law.

"Poisoned Pill"

To rectify the position, the Unemployment Insurance Board recommended that the Act be amended to cover such cases of unemployment.

In bringing forward the necessary amendment, however, the Government added some poison to the pill. This is what the Minister of Labour proposed:

"A contributor shall not be entitled to receive benefits by reason of a stoppage of work due to a trade dispute in any other industry, unless he satisfies the Claims Officer . . . that he is neither directly nor indirectly rendering any assistance of whatever nature in connection with the stoppage of work and has at no time rendered such assistance."

Implications

The wicked implications of this proviso will be seen immediately. It is a smart blow at organised labour. It is a cleverly-conceived strike-breaking instrument.

On the one hand it ensures benefits for a certain class of unemployed. But on the other hand it demands that they shall abandon their decency and loyalty to fellow-workers in order to receive such benefits.

It promises rewards for those who

betray the highest principles of workers' solidarity. It encourages scabbing. Above all, it denies the fact that workers are entitled to a share of their own money — for their contributions are in fact their own savings.

Serious Effects

If the amendment had gone through in the form proposed by the Minister of Labour, workers would have been cruelly penalised.

Their right to stand loyally and solidly together in times of trouble and in face of greedy and unreasonable employers would be punishable by the stoppage of benefits to which they were rightly entitled. The membership of their trade union to a Co-ordinating Council would have become a threat to their bread and butter if that Council gave "direct or indirect assistance of whatever nature" to striking workers in another industry.

In many ways the amendment could provide the means to threaten and divide workers and undermine traditional trade union solidarity.

Labour's Lone Fight

Only the Labour Party protested. Everyone else was satisfied.

When I exposed the vicious nature of the proposed amendment, the Minister of Labour became very angry. He said that my objections were nothing but "obnoxious insinuations" and "abuse."

Nevertheless, he eventually removed the proviso. This was an admission that I was right. Now the law reads as it should have done in the first place. It contains no penalties against decent, loyal workers.

By its vigilance and determination the Labour Party had prevented the inclusion of a vicious form of sanctions in the Unemployment Insurance Act.

(Written by Alex Hepple, M.P., 72 York Street, Kensington, Johannesburg.)

Alex Hepple's Column

The well-known Labour M.P. continues his weekly commentary. Opinions expressed are the personal views of the writer, and not necessarily those of "Forward."

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