

1/9

TEXT OF STATEMENT BY MR. P. R. B. LEWIS TO THE "SUNDAY
TIMES" ON THE MESSAGE DELIVERED TO PARLIAMENT BY THE
HON. DR. H. F. VERWOERD, PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNION
OF SOUTH AFRICA, ON THE 20TH MAY, 1960.

I am glad that the Prime Minister's health is sufficiently restored to enable him to again take his place as head of the State. I am glad, too, that he has been able to give consideration to the grave events of the last two months.

In my opinion, during this period, people of all shades of opinion have become aware of the dire necessity for all South Africans to apply themselves to seeking a solution to our problem of utilising our human resources to their maximum capacity, failing which the outlook for this country is more than bleak. I am disappointed that the Prime Minister has not, in my opinion, correctly interpreted many of the recommendations and representations made to him, and I sincerely trust that in the days ahead the Prime Minister will make use of the large body of men who, realising the difficulty of the tasks still to be done, and who, while not subscribing to all aspects of Government policy, are nevertheless striving to assist South Africa in finding a modus operandi for resolving our difficulties. I also feel that while the events of the past few months have made people more acutely aware of the problems, the recommendations made are not new, or made in a state of panic. I cannot follow the Prime Minister's argument that these occurrences have proved that the Government policy of self development has been proved as the correct policy.

I welcome the recognition that human dignity must be protected and that no racial group must be the oppressor of the other.

I also cannot follow the suggestion that the disturbances did not take place in the areas which support Government policy.

I welcome the decision to establish liaison with Urban Bantu through the agency of the Municipalities. In Johannesburg we have found the Advisory Board system most valuable, but we are mindful of the frustration of these Boards, and their feeling that they lack contact with the Government. We feel that there is a responsible class of Urban dweller whose goodwill is available to the authorities, if given the opportunity.

I recognise the difficulty of the Police in administering laws, some of which are unenforceable and unacceptable to the people. I believe that until the relationship between the Police and the Urban African is right there can be no improvement in race relations. I welcome the courage of the Prime Minister in agreeing to an alteration in the liquor laws, as I know the opposition he will get from people who will not recognise that under the present system the illicit liquor traffic is a canker in our Society.

I welcome the news that the Government intends speeding up the advantages of the Reference Book system, as in the past the disadvantages, through unnecessary arrests, have tended to identify the Reference Books with the negative and restrictive aspects. I had hoped the Prime Minister would have recognised the different strata amongst the Urban native. Under the present system the educated professional man is subject to the same restrictions as the backward tribal labourer. While the old exemption system may have been abused by the odd agitator, I feel that there are a vast number of responsible men who would cherish the exemption pass, and that its retention could be subject to satisfactory behaviour.

I am glad the Prime Minister has recognised the poverty of a large section of Urban Bantu, and that he supports measures to increase wages, and I feel the Government could assist in speeding up Wage Board investigations.

While recognising the difficulties of the clash of interests between the Coloured and the Bantu in certain areas, if one area is closed to the Bantu it will be necessary for them to find employment elsewhere as they, and their families, must live. It appears to me that certain work is more suitable to the Bantu than to the Coloured, and that is the reason for their being employed.

I recognise the difficulties in developing the reserves owing to the conservative habits of the population. I feel there is support for speeding up this development, but feel this is going to be too slow if European capital is not employed. The reserves should be regarded as undeveloped areas of South Africa.

I hope that a truly representative commission will be appointed, and can assure the Prime Minister that there is a vast body of South Africans who are anxious to help in a constructive way, and hope that the Prime Minister will not interpret the many recommendations made as a device to embarrass the Government, but as an awareness of the problems with which South Africa is faced. I hope the Prime Minister will give an opportunity to those who, while not always supporting the Government policy, have through their experience in various fields of activity a contribution to make in helping to solve South African problems.

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