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IDENTITY CARD BILL BEING PREPARED.

"MUST BE PASSED BEFORE 1951".

Pretoria News.

27th October '49

A Bill empowering the Government to set up a national register and issue identity cards to all citizens of all races was drafted last week and has now gone to the law advisers for scrutiny.

The Government insists that the measure must be ready for presentation to Parliament next session so as to be passed before the next national census which will be in 1951.

The personal details which will be recorded on the national register and reflected on the identity cards are not at present finally decided upon and proposals are not being disclosed. All that can be said is that they will be kept to a minimum for purely mechanical reasons.

The Director of Census, Mr. J. I. Raats, the Workmen's Compensation Commissioner, Mr. J. H. Lewis, toured Italy, Holland, Belgium, France, Denmark, Sweden, England, Canada and the United States this year to study the registration systems in those lands.

In Italy, Holland and Belgium they found registration done on a municipal basis and used to control the movement of workers from city to city. In Sweden registration was done by the State Church, in Britain it was a war-time security register which has continued in use principally for the rationing of food.

In Denmark it was communal; in France, regional; in Canada it was a birth register now used mainly in connection with the payment of family allowances.

Out of all these varied systems Mr. Raats and Mr. Lewis are evolving as simple and efficient a system as possible adapted to the multi-racial structure of the Union on a unial basis and working through the magisterial offices.

They are recommending that the central register should be built up on the Hollerith or punched card system. Details about the kind of cards which citizens will have to carry are still under discussion.

NATIONAL REGISTER BILL NOW BEFORE LAW ADVISERS

By Our Political Correspondent

A BILL EMPOWERING THE GOVERNMENT to set up a national register and issue identity cards to all citizens of all races, was drafted last week and has now gone to the law advisers for scrutiny.

The Government insists that the measure must be ready for presentation to Parliament next session so that it can be passed before the next national census in 1951.

The personal details, which will be recorded on the national register and reflected on the identity cards have not yet been finally decided on and proposals are not being disclosed. All that can be said is that they will be kept to a minimum for purely mechanical reasons. The more details recorded the more cumbersome the mechanics of the register will become. It is assumed that the register will at least reflect the few details which will enable easy identification—name, age, race and registration number.

PURPOSE STILL CONFIDENTIAL

The purpose of the register is also being kept confidential. Dr. Malan told me some time ago that the register would not be used purely for drawing racial distinctions or for applying apartheid, though it would be useful for those purposes. It would assist in matters of residential domicile and in preventing mixed marriages. But it would also supersede some of the present forms of registration.

He said on that occasion that, for purposes of the national register, a person was to be classed as non-European if he had at least one non-European grandparent. There is no final decision about this as yet, but I believe an attempt will be made to simplify the formula.

The proposal to set up a national register on these lines has been repeatedly attacked, notably by Senator Edgar Brookes,

a leading spokesman for the Native people, as introducing a caste system in South Africa.

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COMPILING "PASSES" FOR ALL

UNION CITIZENS MAY BE 10-YEAR TASK *Doubts if Country Can Afford Register Luxury.*

"SUNDAY TIMES" POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT

Sunday Times
5/2/50

Cape Town, Saturday.

RECENT investigations into the Government's scheme to introduce a national register have indicated that the work involved will be an even more severe burden on the already over-worked public service than was anticipated, and that the cost will be considerable.

High Government circles admit freely that the register cannot be compiled and "passes," or identity cards, issued within, at the earliest, five years, even if the register is timed to coincide with a general census. "It may be nearer 10 years before the scheme comes into operation," I was told.

"A tremendous amount of detailed work is involved, and at this stage not all the basic features of the scheme have been worked out and approved by the Cabinet. Actually a special staff is needed to co-ordinate and direct the work."

Nevertheless the Government is expected to introduce the Bill this session.

Some members of Parliament believe that if the country's economic position does not improve, a national register will be a luxury which the Union will hardly be able to afford.

The debate on the Bill is likely to be a controversial one.

World Procedure

Information obtained by the South African Institute of Race Relations shows that there is no national registration in the United States, Canada, India, Sweden or Norway; that Switzerland and Denmark register all citizens, but do not issue identity cards; and that citizens are registered and identity cards are issued in the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Portugal, Brazil, Costa Rica and other Latin American countries.

In the United Kingdom the following information is recorded on the register and on the identity card of every citizen; name, sex, age, occupation, residence, marital state, and membership of armed or auxiliary or civil defence services or reserves.

The identity card bears a photograph of the holder.

Finger Prints

In some countries information such as the place of birth, height and weight, names and nationality of parents, etc., is required.

In Portugal, France, Costa Rica and other Latin American countries, finger prints also appear on the cards.

The Union Government has denied that the proposed national register is to be compiled on racial lines, but antagonists of the scheme insist that this is the case.

There is no national registration in Canada, but the Province of Alberta registers its population and issues identity cards.

It was stated some time ago that the card to be used in the Union would correspond most closely to the one issued in Alberta. Whether this is still the intention is not known.

M.H. For your file

Mr. White

A.V.W.

write to
or advise

Star 17/3/50

The Institute of Race Relations had said that they favoured the extension of identification certificates to all races, but as soon as the present Government came forward with a population registration Bill, the institute had experienced qualms and doubts and had changed its mind.

This showed that the cancer in the mind of the institute was suspicion engendered by members of the Opposition. They wanted one set of laws when they were in power and another set of laws when the Nationalists were in power.

"The sooner we get away from that childish attitude the better for the country."

Extract ~~from~~ from reply by the Minister of the Interior to the 2nd reading debate, Population Registration Bill.

Do you think a letter to the Press (English & Afrikaans) might be advisable, clarifying our attitude?

M.H.
18/3/50.

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