

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

PBM - 35
The United Party's
"New" Native Policy

c/o J. M. Pennington
5, Elm Street,
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December 29, 1954

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Dear Mr. Rogers:

"Alice never could quite make out, in thinking it over afterwards, how it was that they began: all she remembers is, that they were running hand in hand, and the Queen went so fast that it was all she could do to keep up with her: and still the Queen kept crying 'Faster! Faster!' but Alice felt she could not go faster, though she had no breath left to say so.

"The most curious part of the thing was, that the trees and the other things round them never changed their places at all: however fast they went, they never seemed to pass anything. 'I wonder if all the things move along with us?' thought poor puzzled Alice. And the Queen seemed to guess her thoughts, for she cried 'Faster! Don't try to talk!'

". . . 'Now! Now!' cried the Queen. 'Faster! Faster!' And they went so fast that at last they seemed to skim through the air, hardly touching the ground with their feet, till suddenly, just as Alice was getting quite exhausted, they stopped, and she found herself sitting on the ground, breathless and giddy.

"The Queen propped her up against a tree, and said kindly, 'You may rest a little, now.'

"Alice looked round her in great surprise. 'Why, I do believe we've been under this tree the whole time! Everything's just as it was!'

"Of course it is,' said the Queen. 'What would you have it?'

"Well, in our country,' said Alice, still panting a little, 'you'd generally get to somewhere else--if you ran very fast for a long time as we've been doing.'

"A slow sort of country!' said the Queen. 'Now, here, you see, it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that!'"¹

South African politicians who like to think of themselves as moderates or liberals must lead the harried life of Carroll's Red Queen. They must do an exhausting amount of running merely to stay in the same place. South Africa, as it is moved towards steel-hard apartheid by the Nationalists, slips beneath their feet and if they are not to be swept along with it they must run "Faster! Faster!"

The United Party has not proved particularly good at running since Smuts has gone. It is like a loosely-jointed centipede with Liberals at one end, Moderates in the middle and Nationalist-like Conservatives at the rear. Ever since 1948, when the Nationalists took over, the liberal end of the centipede has been shouting "Faster!" and attempting to move its set of feet. The moderate center, afraid of losing support, has done nothing and the Conservatives, at the other end, have flatly refused to run, digging in their feet and cheering on the Nationalists. As a result, the United Party has drifted. It has been accused, with some justice, of being no different from the Nationalists.

Until recently, the tugging and shouting of the liberals has been to no avail. After the 1953 election, however, in which the Nationalists gained and a few

1. Carroll, Lewis; Through the Looking Glass, The Modern Library, New York; pp. 190-1.

Parliamentary seats went to United Party liberals, some of the moderates began to think it might be a good idea to heed the liberals' call. They began to run. The combined efforts of the moderates and liberals were enough to start the centipede moving, although not without damage.

The tail end conservatives were so firmly entrenched it was impossible to move them. So they simply broke off, forming a new party,¹ leaving the rest of the United Party comparatively compact and mobile. A tremendous amount of ground had slipped past since 1948, however.

This was especially obvious in the U.P. Native policy. United Party candidates, seeing the success of apartheid as a vote-getter, had abandoned the flexible 1948 policy advocated by Smuts and had become champions of absolute white supremacy in their frantic attempts to jump aboard the apartheid bandwagon. Their theory seemed to be, "if it will win votes for the Nats, it'll win votes for us."

Abandoned it, that is, until Bailey Bekker and his boys resigned from the United Party and Professor I. S. Fourie made his unexpected speech on economic integration. The stir caused by the economic integration speech (PBM-19) jolted the United Party. Even Fourie, who made the speech as an elementary explanation of the country's economic problems, was amazed. And when Party-leader Strauss backed up Fourie it was apparent that the liberals and moderates had shaken off their lethargy and were starting to run.

All eyes turned to the United Party Congress at Bloemfontein on November 16, 17 and 18, at which Strauss promised to produce a new Native policy. Perhaps a new Native policy is not quite the right phrase. The U.P. had included a form of Native policy in its Program of Principles laid down at its inaugural congress in 1934. Section Six of the Program read as follows:

"(a) An earnest endeavor will be made to arrive at a satisfactory solution of the Native question along lines which, without depriving the Native of his right of development, will recognize as paramount the essentials of European civilization.

"(b) It is recognized that a solution of the political aspect of this question on the basis of separate representation of Europeans and Natives, or otherwise, being fundamental in character and not having hitherto been a matter of party division, should, as far as possible, be sought through agreement, and should be left to the free exercise of the discretion of the individual members representing the Party in Parliament.²

"(c) The recognition of the Natives as a permanent portion of the population of South Africa under the Christian trusteeship of the European race is accepted as a fundamental principle of Native policy, together with the definite avoidance of race intermixture, and the promotion of a spirit of goodwill and mutual confidence between the two races as being in the best interest of South Africa."

1. The new Party, the Conservative Party, is led by Bailey Bekker (elected to Parliament as United Party candidate from Johannesburg North). It consists of six Members of Parliament, all formerly members of the U.P. The Conservatives claim that the United Party has "drifted irretrievably" from its traditional principles into a "leftist, liberal direction." The Conservatives have not yet contested an election.

2. Italics mine.

In other words, the policy was based on preservation of European civilization, according to the ideas of the individual Party members in an attempt to foster racial harmony. Pretty vague, it seems to me, but it must be remembered that Smuts was trying to build a political party out of the bits and pieces of a lot of other parties of widely differing viewpoints. He had to make it vague to fit everyone in.

The 1934 policy was augmented slightly in 1948 when Smuts found that the Nationalist Party's slogan, apartheid, was gaining considerable ground in the general election campaign that year. He published a small pamphlet, "The Native and Coloured Peoples Policy of the United Party," which expanded the Native policy to the following:

"The policy of the United Party in respect of the Natives is based on five fundamental principles:--

(a) It recognizes racial and cultural differences between Europeans and Natives. It therefore stands for social and residential separation in their common interest.

(b) It recognizes that the majority of Natives reside outside the Reserves. Most of them are detribalized and know no environment other than that of the towns and European farms. Adequate provision for their housing and other living conditions should therefore be provided where necessary, as well as for their individual training in the service of their people.

(c) It recognizes that it is in the interest of the Natives that Reserves should, as far as possible, remain the national and cultural base of the Native community, and should be increased in area and developed in carrying capacity.

(d) It recognizes that Natives as tax payers should be represented as at present in the House of Assembly and in the Senate by Europeans elected by them.

(e) It recognizes the need of regulation, through registration and labor exchanges, the free flow of Native labor to the mines, the farms, the industries and other forms of employment."

In practice, the United Party Native policy under Smuts was whatever Smuts wanted it to be. If he felt that it was time to give way on the question of Native representation, he gave way. If he thought it was time to be tough, he was tough. It was a good enough policy for the days when the U.P. was in power with Smuts as its leader, but now that both power and Smuts are gone, it is not particularly successful.

It was not hard for an observer to gather, in the weeks before the Congress at Bloemfontein, that the new policy would be based on economic integration-- recognition of the fact that Africans had become a permanent part of the South African economy and were in "European" cities to stay as a labor force. Fourie based his parliamentary speech on it. Strauss mentioned it in every public appearance. Other United Party M.P.'s made it plain that they were in favor of it.

The questions that remained were not easily answered. Would the U.P. come out in favor of increased political rights for Natives? For recognition of Native trade unions? For extension of the franchise? For a crumbling of the color bar? For relaxation of the pass laws? These were questions that no one, except perhaps Strauss himself, could answer--and Strauss wasn't talking.

The Congress came off according to schedule on what must have been the three hottest days of the year in the Orange Free State. The countryside was caught in a drought--grass was brown, cattle were thirsty and wheat was a ripe, golden color but only four or five inches high. The meeting was closed to all outsiders,

and the only impressions I could get of the meeting were second-hand, from delegates who were friends of mine.

The Congress, they said, ran smoothly. The entire "new" policy had been drawn up in advance, mimeographed and distributed. It was merely a matter of going over the sheaf of 30 pages section by section, day by day, making minor changes. There were no significant changes in the content of the draft policy--an amazing fact, considering that the Congress consisted of delegates from every Parliamentary constituency in the Union, including the illiberal, super-conservative rural ones.

In the final version, as approved by the entire United Party, several important statements were made under the heading "General Principles. These were:

"The Party believes that Natives cannot permanently be held suspended in an ideological vacuum between a discarded tribalism on the one hand, and Western Civilization or Communism on the other hand. It is in the interests of Western Civilization and the white man that the Natives should gradually be given a more definite and secure place within the orbit of our Western way of life. Any policy which denies this to the Native, will leave him no choice but to turn his back on Western Civilization in a spirit of animosity and with the urge to fight and destroy it . . .

". . . the tribal organization of the Native peoples is rapidly breaking down and the whole question of White-Black relationships has changed in recent years as the result of rapid industrialization in which the Natives are playing an essential role. This has led to a large and permanently detribalized Native urban population becoming an integral part of the South African economy. From this it is inevitable that new situations will emerge from time to time, and provision will have to be made for the better co-ordination of European and Native interests in the social, economic and political life of the country . . .

"The Party accepts economic integration not only as a fact, but also as a necessary dynamic process which will continue. In doing so it clearly defines economic integration as a term used to denote the evolutionary economic process of combining the four factors of production--land, labor, capital and management--into balanced, efficient and economically productive wholes or units . . . In stating this the Party clearly realizes that uncontrolled economic integration would be dangerous . . . It must be regulated, guided and controlled."

From there, the policy went on to say, for 20 pages in the final edition, just how economic integration is to be regulated, guided and controlled. It went, compressed and edited for the sake of space and clarity, as follows:

ECONOMIC POLICY

The practice of residential segregation and establishment of locations is advocated "for the purpose of checking both exploitation from the one side and undesirable intrusion from the other."*

The Party upholds the discriminatory aspects of urban control, stating, "Discrimination or differentiation, in itself, is not necessarily an evil. The all-important question is the basis on which it is done and the motive behind it."** Native housing will remain in the hands of local authorities, subject to governmental regulation.***

All Natives may be required to live in a location, except for domestic servants.***
The present law which requires a Native to find work within 72 hours of his

*Lifted from the report of the Native Laws (Fagan) Commission, 1948.

**Expressed in the same or similar words by Smuts before 1948.

***Taken from pre-1948 laws and policy statements.

arrival in an urban area will be made less stringent.*
 Natives must visit labor bureaux to obtain permits to seek work and must register the jobs they have found with labor bureaux.***
 Magistrates may remove "idle, dissolute or disorderly" Natives from an urban area to their homes or to a "labor colony."***
 The admission of the families of Native workers to urban areas should be investigated.*
 The pass laws must be simplified and applied with greater fairness and justice. An efficient system of identification should be instituted.*
 Prison sentences for technical offenses should be avoided, but the police may still call upon a Native to produce his passes and registration book--and if no satisfactory explanation for their absence is forthcoming he may be charged and held until his trial.*
 The 9 p.m. curfew must be reviewed from time to time.*
 Exemptions from "irksome restrictions" will be extended to educated Africans. Natives should be encouraged to make voluntary use of labor bureaux.*
 The traditional color bar in industry is to be preserved as is the principle of the "rate for the job;" i.e., setting such low rates of pay on certain jobs that they are clearly reserved for non-Europeans and vice versa.
 White workers will be protected from unfair competition by Natives.
 Legal recognition of African trade unions will not be considered. Instead, the formation of works' committees in individual factories will be encouraged.
 Training facilities will be provided for Natives to make them better workers in certain types of work including "domestic duties, cooking, waiting, gardening, farm work, the care of stock, etc."*
 Trading in urban locations should be confined to Native traders under the supervision of local authorities.*

(Reading through this list of ideas of the United Party on its policy towards the economics of Native labor, it is hard to find much difference between it and the present policy being followed by the Nationalists. True, the United Party mentions making the 72-hour seek-work limit "less stringent," advocates less strict application of the pass laws and accepts Natives in the cities as a permanent part of the population, but its attitude towards Natives is no different from that of the Nationalists. The white man is still definitely boss--Natives, on the other hand, are dangerous if not kept under strict, constant surveillance and control.)

SOCIAL POLICY

The United Party accepts the principle of social and residential segregation.**
 The United Party opposes any form of racial miscegenation and will leave the Nationalists' Mixed Marriages and Immorality Acts on the Statute Books.
 The United Party accepts the general principles of the (Nationalists') Group Areas Act. It should be amended to conform with sound town-planning ideas, however. Full compensation (including, presumably, freehold title) will be given to all those forced to move by the Group Areas Act.
 The United Party will create a separate ministry of housing, in order to help provide public housing for Natives and Europeans.***
 Local authorities will be empowered to build Native housing after obtaining the approval of the Minister of Native Affairs. If Native housing is inadequate in a particular area, the Government may take control.

*Lifted from the report of the Native Laws (Fagan) Commission, 1948.

**Expressed in the same or similar words by Smuts before 1948.

***Taken from pre-1948 laws and policy statements.

Only Natives will be permitted to reside in Native Areas. They may lease a dwelling, lease a plot and erect a dwelling thereupon or buy both plot and house with what the U.P. calls "controlled freehold rights."***
Racial separation will remain, as at present, in post offices, railway stations, public transport, etc.

(Here again, the situation seems to remain unchanged from that which exists under the Nationalists except that the Natives will be regarded as a permanent labor force in the European areas and will be granted "controlled freehold" rights. Controlled freehold means that land will be available to permanently urbanized Natives in special Native villages and locations which have been set aside for permanent Native occupation.)

POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

The United Party points out the "fallacy of regarding political power as only dependent on the vote."

The Party also points out that "a long period of training in the ways of democracy lies ahead of the Native people and only when they have learnt these lessons can claims to greater rights be entertained . . ."

Greater responsibilities will be granted the Natives in their own areas. Bodies will be established at various levels through which the Native peoples can maintain liaison with the Government.

The United Party stands by the 1936 agreement under which the number of European senators representing Natives will be increased from four to six. Re-establishment of the Natives Representative Council will be considered. The powers of local government bodies consisting of Natives will be enlarged.

(Here we have the biggest differences between the United Party's new Native policy and the present situation in South Africa. The Natives Representative Council, abolished in 1951 by the Nationalists' Bantu Authorities Act, never was more than a debating society, at least in the results it achieved. It was established in 1936 when Natives were removed from the Parliamentary voters' roll in the Cape Province (PBM-31) but became increasingly unpopular with Natives because its decisions were ignored. Before he was defeated in 1948, Smuts had agreed to make a few concessions in order to give the Council more responsibility and to make it more representative, but he was defeated before he could put them into effect. This section of the policy does not satisfy the demands of Lituli, the president of the African National Congress (PBM - 29), and it seems to echo the Nationalists in offering political responsibility in the Natives' "own areas," but it does at least make a vague promise to watch the political advancement of South African Natives in general.)

NATIVE RESERVES

Better use will be made of labor and natural resources in the Reserves.

Industrial investment in the Reserves will be encouraged.

The system of land tenure in the Reserves will be reviewed.

Rehabilitation projects will be undertaken.

Native villages will be established in order to aid industrial development of the Reserves.

(A few days ago in Pretoria I had a long talk with Dr. Frederick Tomlinson, the University of Pretoria professor in charge of the Socio-Economic Commission

which has been drawing up a plan for the implementation of apartheid in the Native Reserves. An interesting fact is that many of the conclusions reached by Tomlinson and his Commission are included in the U.P. statements on the reserves.)

It is obvious that the United Party Native policy, accepted at Bloemfontein on November 18, is not new at all. Most of it has been drawn from the report of the Fagan Commission, which reported to Smuts in March, 1948. On May 17, 1948, Smuts stated at a mass meeting of the United Party that if he were returned to power he would implement the proposals of the Fagan Commission. That meant, in effect, that he recognized the fact pointed out in the Commission's report, that the urban Native population was permanent and that total territorial separation (apartheid) was impractical. He recognized, in fact, "economic integration."

Many other provisions revert to laws passed when the United Party was in power which have been either scrapped or amended by the Nationalists. Several provisions were listed, in marginal notes on the draft Native policy supplied to delegates at Bloemfontein, as "generally accepted to be United Party policy."

Much of the "new" policy is based on Nationalist-like white supremacy with only nebulous promises to review it, ameliorate it and, in general, make it more democratic. It represents little or no progress towards real liberalism.

Why all this fuss about a policy that is not new? A liberal United Party Member of Parliament gave me two reasons. One: for the first time in U.P. history a concrete Native policy has been drawn up which is binding on all members of the United Party and which states flatly that apartheid cannot work. Two: the new policy carries the United Party back to its 1948 position--and that represents advancement.

Being a liberal, my friend was naturally not pleased with the "new" policy. But it does reject both future apartheid and apartheid measures passed in the past six years. It would have been expecting the impossible to hope that delegates from the Orange Free State and the Transvaal would be willing to recognize Native Trade Unions, for instance, when they have been drifting along with the Nationalists.

Even the Red Queen would have been hard put to return to her starting place if she had stood still in her sliding country for six years. That the United Party has been able to do it bodes well for the future. It is not unreasonable to expect that, once used to the novel idea of being in clear opposition to the Nationalists, the United Party will be able to promise non-Europeans something positive, as well as promising to eliminate the excesses of the Nationalists.

From now on, the issues in South Africa will be much more clearly drawn. The fight should be easier to follow and the outcome more conclusive. With Strydom on one side and a reunited United Party on the other, the next few years in South Africa will be interesting to watch.

Sincerely,



Peter Bird Martin