

CRIME AND THE AFRICAN IN SOUTH AFRICA. [No date]

The African people who constitute the bulk of the population of the Union are essentially a law-abiding people. They have a great respect for constituted authority and are firm believers in ~~the~~ constitutional methods in seeking the redress of their legitimate grievances. Anyone who has lived in close contact with them would be able to confirm this from his own experience.

In the rural areas where the ~~xxx~~ majority of the African people live, there is on the whole very little crime, serious or otherwise. The safety of person and property stands at such a high level that those who sojourn there make relatively little use of the bolts and bars, the Police and the Courts which Mr Paton recommends so ~~thoroughly~~ ^{fervently} to his European fellow-citizens. Even in the urban areas where, as I desire to emphasise, only a small proportion of the Native population is to be found, the majority of the African people have not yet lost their sense of respect for law and order. In most South African towns, big and small, on most days of every year it would be impossible to find something to include in a Native Crime List, and if such a reporter confined himself to mala in se and excluded purely technical offences which pervade our laws affecting Natives, he would be hard put to ^{it to} justify his job to his employers. In fact considering the raw deal which the Africans get from constituted authority in this country in regard to most aspects of their social life, and the callous attitude of the average Europeans to their reasonable wants and wishes, to my mind the surprising thing is that the average African still maintains his balance. I suppose we must agree with the South African statesman who described the patience of the African as asinine. But experience shows that it is dangerous to presume too much upon the docility and the powers of endurance of even an ass.

The pathological social conditions under which Africans have to live in the industrial centres such as the Reef are becoming untenable, and ~~they~~ Africans are beginning to ~~render~~ question whether their pristine respect for law and order is going to win for them the protection and the concern for their welfare which they have a right to expect from constituted authority in this land. There was a time when a European could push around or slap an African for no reason

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whatever, and yet almost expect the African concerned to thank him for it. The African took such incidents lying down in the hope that other Europeans observing such conduct would condemn it. Today it is becoming more and more risky to try such stunts. I suppose the remedy that might be suggested by some is that Europeans must go about armed so that they should the better be able to defend themselves against "cheeky" Natives. The African has a saying that those who expect to be respected must show respect to those from whom they expect such conduct. An African minister of religion, ~~xxxxxxx~~ a chaplain in the Native Military Corps, was recently assaulted by a European because the African had dared to make use of a public vehicle which he is by law allowed to use. The European concerned was brought before Court; a light sentence was imposed upon him and the greater part of that light sentence was suspended, but it was reported that the European concerned declared publicly that he would do the same thing in similar circumstances. How can Africans continue to look to the law for protection when such things are allowed to happen?

But African respect for law and order is not only undermined by this indifference to his personal rights, but also by the social and economic conditions under which he is compelled to live in South Africa. For an increasing proportion of Africans in this country there is no such a thing as a decent home life. Decent, law-abiding citizens can only be bred in decent homes where decent family life is possible. In drawing the African into our economic system we have paid no regard to the necessity for the maintenance of his family life. ~~xxxxxxx~~ We have not paused to consider what would be the consequences of the separation ~~xxxx~~ for ever lengthening periods of time of husband and wife or parent and child. We have regarded as not part of our business to do so. What we want from the African is his labour; for that we are prepared to pay some sort of price. We have not remembered that in the long run labour, however skilful, is valueless unless the labourer in addition possesses character, and that unless we take steps to see that our future labourers are brought under influences that they will not only acquire skill but also develop character, we shall in the last analysis have to pay for their lack of moral and spiritual qualities as well as for such labour as they perform. It is that price which we are now being called upon to pay in the form of larger prisons, bigger police forces, extra bolts on outside, alarms and other safety devices.

As long as we maintain our present attitude ~~towards the African~~ in which we regard the African as little more than an economic commodity or convenience or at best just a beast of burden which must be fed, housed and attended to medically as long as it is of economic value, we shall have to foot the bill of the deterioration of moral and social values in African society. I am aware that we have appointed a Commission on Prison and Penal Reform. We have just appointed another Commission to investigate and report, among other things, upon our migratory labour policy. Much is hoped for from the results of the work of these Commissions, but until there is a radical change in the whole of our Native Policy, far from decreasing crime among Natives will increase as time goes on, and that white civilisation which some people think they have been brought into this world to protect will not survive in this sub-continent or indeed anywhere ~~else~~ elsewhere. The maintenance of white civilisation at the expense of the way of life of other sections of the population will prove a suicidal policy. We can only maintain civilisation, white or any other colour, in any country by recognising the fact that the interests of the nationals of that country are inextricably interwoven, and that what is good for one section is good for the whole. Such a policy will naturally take time to bring into full operation, but we must move in that direction. Nothing else will satisfy the African

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Dr. Dybbel L.