Dear Advocate Buchanan,

Thank you for your letter of the 26th inst. in which you enclosed a copy of a letter you have written to the officers of the Institute of Race Relations in which you express your views regarding the policy of the Institute. In response to your request for my comments on the same subject, I should like to make the following observations:

1. I am in full agreement with your view that it is absolutely essential for the Institute to define its policy clearly and unambiguously if it is to command the confidence of those interested in Race Relations in South Africa in general and of non-Europeans in particular. I do not think I am revealing any secret when I say that in non-European circles, certainly among Africans, the Institute of Race Relations does not arouse the enthusiasm nor the confidence which it enjoys with avowed intentions and its wide activities must, in their behalf, ought to. Rightly or wrongly, while the Institute is much appreciated among Africans as a body pursuing the objective indicated in (a) in your letter, its activities under (a) of your letter are either privately or publicly resented or suspected of being pro-European, if not anti-African. In other words the Institute has come to be looked upon as a body which exists to persuade Africans to accept half-measures in matters affecting their welfare and to persuade the Government to apply its repressive Native policy with less harshness without working for any fundamental alteration or abandonment of that policy. Now as I say, this may represent a complete misunderstanding of the policy, i.e., the action policy of the Institute on the part of Africans, but this view certainly obtains among the intelligentsia in African circles. The question arises as to who is responsible for this attitude. In my opinion there are two reasons for this.

Firstly, the so-called "non-political" character of the Institute. Secondly, the lack of contact with Africans and all non-European groups" to quote your phrasing of the matter.

2. I take it that by declaring itself to be a "non-political" body which the Institute desired to attract men and women of goodwill of all shades of political i.e., party political opinion to tackle the problems of Race Relations in South Africa. This was an entirely worthy objective. But there are at least two sections of our population in South Africa for whom the term "non-political" is meaningless, namely, the Afrikaners and the Africans. Consequently the Afrikaners have taken the view that whatever its representations to the contrary the Institute is a political body which espouses the Native cause while the Africans have taken the view that it is yet a political body which stands for a kind of enlightened democracy of which over black in South Africa. I am quite sure that the Institute regards both these views as erroneous, but serious attention will have to be given to how they can be combated. How this can be done is not easy to say off-hand but I think that the withdrawal of the Institute from its present activities in the sphere of practical affairs and its concentration on research would do much to remove this misunderstanding. In the sphere of practical affairs I think what is required is the encouragement of non-European organisations themselves to take action to bring about changes in their status and situation. Neither the Institute nor any other European body can ever take the place of non-European organisations in this regard. I am aware that most of these organisations at the present time are weak and ineffective and it is not surprising that those Europeans who have the welfare of the non-Europeans at heart should address to the "formalising" of the non-Europeans what they are apparently unable to do for themselves, but I feel that in the long run it would be better for such Europeans to do all they can to encourage and strengthen these organisations rather than to work for a situation in which they might have to do all that should otherwise be done by them rather than to encourage them, as you yourself, to do this job.

I hope that the discussion of this subject at Cape Town will result in the Institute acting as a public service body with a policy which will command the equal approval of all sections of our population.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,