

# These are the Things the African WANTS

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By : Professor Z. K. Matthews

**S**PEAKING at the Annual Conference of the Institute of Race Relations recently, Professor Z. K. Matthews made valuable contributions to the current discussion of South Africa's Colour Problems. The Daily Press reported him very scantily. We are, however, indebted to the Johannesburg "Forum" for reporting the address as a whole—from which the following excerpts are made.

The problem of devising a political system for South Africa which takes due account of the legitimate hopes and aspirations of all sections of our population is receiving more and more attention from leaders of thought both among Europeans and among Non-Europeans. This is because it is being increasingly realised that unless a satisfactory solution for this problem is found and put into practice as far as the future of the country is concerned our ship of state will be set upon troubled, if not turbulent waters.

### INCREASING AWARENESS

Let me say in passing that our increasing awareness of the importance of this search for a satisfactory political structure for South Africa is not something derived from the notice taken of South African Affairs in organisations such as the United Nations or from the change of government which took place in South Africa on May 26th, 1948. A careful study of South African history will show that this country has never lacked men and women with the vision and the courage to see and proclaim that until our race relations are placed upon a sound basis South Africa will look in vain for the peace security and

black and white. He goes on to expound the policy of apartheid which he believes to be best calculated to enable us to escape this sad fate.

Later, I shall endeavour to show why the policy of apartheid is itself not acceptable to the African. The point I am trying to make at the moment is that in working out a policy for South Africa under which all sections of the population can move forward together we must scrutinise closely the principles by which our policies are inspired. Where our policies, whatever the expression by which they are described, are based on open or disguised exploitation or domination, they are bound ultimately to rouse the resentment and opposition of the exploited and the dominated.

### CONDITION OF SUCCESS

There is another condition of success in our search for the correct policy for South Africa which in my opinion, has hitherto received inadequate attention. As a rule, in dealing with the question, emphasis tends to be laid almost exclusively on the views of the White section of our population. Among the whites neither those who may be

are consonant with the wants and wishes of the Bantu themselves. In neither case are the Bantu allowed to have any say in determining their future. If it is our intention to achieve success we shall have to be prepared to give more and more serious consideration to what the African people themselves think and say. Like all other people the Bantu claim the right of self-determination. They are no longer satisfied with conditions under which things are done not

ced that there is no genuine desire on the part of its advocates to create an area or areas of liberty for Africans but only an intention on their part to convert South Africa into a single area of liberty for Europeans. This conviction is based upon past experience which counts a great deal more in this connection than facile speculations about the future.

### BLACK-WHITE RELATIONS

For many years, both before and since Union relations between black and white in South Africa have in a large measure been inspired by the spirit of the policy of apartheid called by a different name. Although other policies such as assimilation and trusteeship, have had their adherents in South Africa and have in varying degrees exercised a moderating influence upon it, the policy of apartheid has been in the ascendancy all the time and its practical effect has been to depress the status of the African in all aspects of our national life.

This policy is based on the assumption that the African differs so radically from the European in his cultural background and in his needs and aspirations that it must forever remain impossible to find common ground upon which black and white can work together in a common political structure. An attempt is then made to justify the policy

exercise of his capabilities and the realisation of his hopes and aspirations. At the same time giving lip service to the philosophy of apartheid has not prevented its advocates from acquiescing in the organisation of our national life in such a way as to make the realisation of their ideal impracticable. Thus we have adopted a land policy which makes impossible the living of the African apart from the European on a permanent basis. The result is that a far

To the credit of South Africans, both black and white, it must be stated that they have been among the most informed and among the most severest critics of those schemes which did not do justice to one or other section of the population. It is in this sense alone that we can call our colour problem our own. It is only to the extent that South Africans on both sides of the colour line themselves make a determined effort to find the answer to this problem that they may presume to express re-



# Wants

the whole set-up is managed, controlled and dominated by Europeans who show little or no readiness to allow the African to manage his own affairs in his own sphere. In Post Offices, Booking Offices and other public institutions where apartheid dictates that differential arrangements should be made for Africans the policy does not, as might be supposed, apply behind as well as in front of the counter. Throughout the Union both inside and outside the so-called Native areas or in any institution specially intended for Africans apartheid guarantees the "boss-ship" of the European without according the African any real rights.

Whatever is said about past policy in theory, "in practise the Native finds his freedom of movement and action severely curtailed that in his efforts to rise to a higher level he finds his progress in the economic, the social and political fields barred by the White man, who claims permanent superiority by virtue of his colour. He finds to his dismay that many of the Europeans who appear to champion the cause of equal opportunity for all, resent close contact and familiarity with the Native that they are not prepared to go beyond distant friendship." (Eiselen "Race Relations," Vol. XV No. 3, p. 74)

All these factors have combined to lead the African quite understandably to look upon the policy of separation or apartheid as but a thinly veiled form of exploitation and domination and to regard the name by which it is known. However long he may be compelled to endure it, physically, he is determined not to give his assent to a policy which is designed to place every European permanently in a position of artificial superiority over every Black man in every sphere of his life.

## PAST POLICIES

But while the modern advocate of separation are prepared to admit that our

desire to make sure that the permanent "baaskap" of the White man is safeguarded.

## FEDERAL STATE

It may be asked, whether African would agree to a type of apartheid under which the Reserves were turned into African states and not merely into African "areas of liberty" under ultimate European control. This seems to be the suggestion put forward by Dr Keppel-Jones in his scheme for the conversion of the Union into a federal state consisting of European and African states. The African would object to such a scheme not only on the ground of the inadequacy of the present Reserves to provide the material substratum for the African society of the future, but also because such a scheme calls upon him to admit claims on the part of the Europeans which he is not prepared to recognise. The African rejects the idea that there are certain areas of this country to which he has less claims than others. He maintains that the form of western civilisation which has been planted on this sub-continent is the result of the joint efforts of Black and White. However humble the contribution of the African may have been in certain directions, there can to his mind be no doubt that his contribution was indispensable, and he regards it not only as political dishonesty but as base ingratitude on the part of the White man to seek at this stage to deprive him of the fruits of the long history of collaboration between Black and White in this land.

## NON-CO-OPERATION

In other words the African looks upon the policy of apartheid as one of non co-operation between Black and White which flies in the face of the facts of South African history. The African already the increasing influence of non-co-operationists among Europeans is giving rise, as it was bound to do, to the emergence of a group of non co-operationists among Africans. Once the policy of non-co-operation becomes endemic on both sides of the colour line the resultant friction and antagonism will prove disastrous to the country as a whole, and there will be no "areas of liberty" for any one. Non-co-operation on one side begets non-co-operation on the



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## MERIT OR COLOUR?

Unfortunately the high-sounding moral principle on which this policy is based comes into conflict with the self-interest of the European who is not sure that it will safeguard his present supremacy for all time. The advocates of trusteeship assure their more timid brethren that the European had such a long start over the African in the arts of civilisation that he need have no fear of ever being overtaken by the Black man. In other words, the policy of trusteeship is designed to achieve the same objective as apartheid, namely, to assure the European of the paramountcy of his interests in the country. The fact that it purports to be based upon merit rather than upon colour does not disguise the facts that it tends to degenerate into a policy of White leadership.

While the African would be prepared to accept a policy under which leadership is based upon the merit rather than the colour of the individual, it is obvious that he could not countenance the idea that merit is necessarily associated with being white. A further objection to the policy of trusteeship is that it implies that all Africans whatever their level of development require the tutelage of the White man. In point of fact the number of Africans is growing, who are entitled to claim that they have reached a stage where they can take care of their own affairs or can participate on terms of equality with the White man in acting as trustees of their more backward

the policy of non-co-operation is not compatible with the living together and interdependence of Black and White to which the two groups have become accustomed over many generations. Carried to its conclusion the European policy of apartheid would result in the partition of the country in the same way as the division of India into Hindustan and Pakistan or the division of Palestine into an Arab and Jewish State. The advocates of apartheid quite naturally maintain that such a division of South Africa into separate states is not contemplated by them but there can be no doubt that if the African did consider accepting apartheid it would be in this sense of an absolute partition of the country into two politically independent units with contacts between the subjects of the two states reduced to absolute minimum.

The idea that there would be free movement of people between the two "areas of liberty," with Africans in particular coming over into the European "area of liberty" to provide labour on a migratory basis would obviously not be counter-acted by the African state which would be as rapidly as circumstances permitted debar its subjects from leaving its borders for the purpose of going to contribute to the development of what would then be a foreign state. Such an African state would also strive to reach as rapidly as possible a stage in which it was in no way dependent upon Europeans for any service whatsoever. In every sphere of life—economic, political, educational, technical, etc—its aim would be to dispense with the services of Europeans in order to build up a self-reliant independent African state.

with its African nationals. The 21 million Europeans who talk so glibly

## FREE CO-OPERATION

In short, the point I am trying to make is that the policy of non-co-operation, considered from either the short range or the long range point of view, is not compatible with the maintenance of the South African state as an integral whole, and is bound in the long run to unleash passions that would be difficult to canalise within prescribed limits once they were given free rein. For that reason it seems to me that men and women of goodwill on both sides of the colour line should set their faces steadfastly against the policy of separation or apartheid and embrace and work with might and main for the policy of free and genuine co-operation between all sections of our population.

I use the word "co-operation" advisedly because it patently emphasises the fact of working together as the essential basis of national life. In too many of the catchwords we employ to describe our policies, the active principle or element of rational policy is not brought out. Nor is it clear that joint action and not unilateral action is the only satisfactory basis for the policy of any society, but more especially for a multi-racial society. Thus the word assimilation which carries the connotation of becoming alike at once gives me to conceptions of intermixture and dull uniformity which cannot command the ready assent of either White and Black. Similarly integration to the average person implies a kind of passive becoming in which things happen to the individual, instead of the individual consciously striving or participating in shaping his own destiny.

The word co-operation best describes the real facts of the situation. South Africa has become what it is as the result of the working together of its people in varying spheres of life and in different capacities. Some people in considering the achievements of the country tend to emphasise the peculiar contributions of the European to its development; others lay stress on the contribution of the African. But the fact of the matter is that all we are and hope to be is a compound of the efforts of all sections of our population. It is our co-operation which is



opportunity for an intense close contact and familiarity with the Native that they are not prepared to go beyond distant friendship." (Eiselen "Race Relations," Vol. XV No. 3, p. 74)

All these factors have combined to lead the African quite understandably to look upon the policy of separation or apartheid as but a thinly veiled form of exploitation and domination and to regard the name by which it is known. However long he may be compelled to endure it physically, he is determined not to give his assent to a policy which is designed to place every European permanently in a position of artificial superiority over every Black man in every sphere of his life.

### PAST POLICIES

But while the modern advocates of separation are prepared to admit that our past policies have had the effect of domination of the white over the black, they would like us to believe that dressed in the new look of apartheid their policy has more positive merits than the negative demerits of past practice. According to them "the first requirement is that the ultimate goal should be seen clearly namely, the separation of White and Native into separate self-sufficient socio-economic units, a process which will spread over many years. The aim once in view, both parties will be able to adapt themselves gradually to the new circumstances envisaged by separation, and they will bear with greater equanimity and less bitterness the many hardships which they will meet with in the transition period" (Eiselen: op. cit. p. 82).

The obvious flaw in this conception of the "ultimate goal" is that it contemplates the setting up "separate self-sufficient socio-economic units" under the final control of a government in which Africans will not be directly represented. Unfortunately the ingenuity of man, including apartheid-man has not yet devised a political system under which the legitimate interests of any people or a section of a people can be safeguarded by an institution or institutions in which they are not directly represented. By vesting in the white Union Government the ultimate political control of these "separate self-sufficient socio-economic units" the advocates of apartheid

between Black and White in this land.

### NON-CO-OPERATION

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What of trusteeship? This policy purports to be based upon the principle that in every society a moral obligation rests upon their own feet to exercise guardianship over those who cannot until the latter are able to take their place alongside them on more equal terms. In the South African context this means that the European who is admittedly in a better position to do so should undertake this tutelage of the more backward African. Properly understood and applied this policy implies that the European should regard it as his duty to assist the African to advance politically, economically, socially and otherwise as rapidly as possible to the stage where he can take care of his own affairs or play his part in taking care of the affairs of the country as a whole.

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jection to the policy of trusteeship is that it implies that all Africans whatever their level of development require the tutelage of the White man. In point of fact the number of Africans is growing, who are entitled to claim that they have reached a stage where they can take care of their own affairs or can participate on terms of equality with the White man in acting as trustees of their more backward fellow countryman, White as well as Black. In other words, the policy of trusteeship is not applicable to the African as a group but can only be applied with justice to certain sections of the African population as well as certain sections of the White population, such as the poor White. For these reasons Africans are not in favour of the policy of trusteeship as a general policy of the country because under it, it would appear that the trustee is given greater protection than his ward and it is taken for granted that the trustee will always be white. This policy also violates the principle of co-operation which the African regards as the only sound policy for South Africa.

It has been pointed out that there is a growing feeling among Africans that the policy to which they should lend their support in the future is that of non-co-operation. Certain sections among them look upon this as the most suitable answer to the European policy of non-co-operation.

#### IDEA OF PARTITION

But whether it is espoused by Europeans or by Africans

what would there be a foreign state. Such an African state would also strive to reach as rapidly as possible a stage in which it was in no way dependent upon Europeans for any service whatsoever. In every sphere of life—economic, political, educational, technical, etc—its aim would be to dispense with the services of Europeans in order to build up a self-reliant independent African state. Far from seeking to co-operate with the neighbouring state the African state would undoubtedly enter into treaties of mutual assistance and co-operation in trade and other matters with other foreign states such as Russia, India, China, America, Great Britain, etc. Just as the Union of South Africa often seems to-day to emphasise her sovereign independent status by strengthening her relations with countries other than Great Britain with which she was most closely associated in the past similarly the African state would seek to build up its connections with states other than the Union

#### AFRICAN NATIONALISM

There is the further point that when Africans speak about non-co-operation with the European, the logical outcome of such a policy of "Africa for the Africans" The ultimate aim of such a movement would be eventual capture of the whole country for the 8 million Africans and the removal from it of those Europeans who are not prepared to live here on terms of equality

describes the real facts of the situation. South Africa has become what it is as the result of the working together of its people in varying spheres of life and in different capacities. Some people in considering the achievements of the country tend to emphasise the peculiar contributions of the European to its development; others lay stress on the contribution of the African. But the fact of the matter is that all we are and hope to be is a compound of the efforts of all sections of our population. It is our co-operation which is responsible for our progress.

A possible objection to this policy would be that one or other group might seek to reserve for itself the "operating" while confining the other to "co-ing". The African has no desire to become a mere rubber-stamp of European decisions; nor does he want merely to be consulted about his affairs, as happens today in differential institutions which have been established especially for him such as the Representative Council, the Buryas, the Native Advisory Boards, etc. He demands the right to work with the White man at all levels of our national life. It is for the reason that he stresses the right of direct representation in all Governmental institutions, national, provincial or local.

#### WESTERNISED AFRICANS

It may be argued that even if the European were prepared to accept and put into practice the policy of co-operation, the African in the present state of his development would not be in a position to co-operate with the European on terms of equality. Admittedly not every African is ready for this co-operation but the same thing can be said about the European. There are Africans in the country today—and their number is increasing rapidly—who are more Westernised in the real sense of the term than many a European just as there are thousands of Africans about whom it can be said that it will be many generations before they are able to participate intelligently in the business of modern government. But is there any



...and reason why all Europeans should be lumped together as politically wise and all Africans as politically unintelligent." It is well to remember that in every institution the unit of co-operation is not the group but the individual and consequently emphasis should be placed upon individual merit rather than upon group lack of merit.

It may be objected that this policy might lead to a situation under which individual Africans might be put in positions of authority over Europeans which would be a violation of the South African tradition according to which positions of authority are the special monopoly of the White man. As long as that attitude of mind prevails we shall of course march in vain for peaceful and harmonious relations between Black and White in South Africa.

It may be asked whether this policy would not result in the abolition of all the separate institutions which have already been established in the country such as separate residential areas, separate schools, separate churches, etc. That would not necessarily follow; such separate institutions might continue to exist, but they would do so on a voluntary rather than on a compulsory basis, on an agreed, not imposed basis. They would be the result of a bilateral, not a unilateral decision.

The African is not alone in feeling that separation has outlived its usefulness as a guiding principle for the regulation of the relations between Black and White in the country. As Field-Marshal Smuts put the matter in his famous interview with members of the Natives' Representative Council in 1947: "When the late General Pertzog got his opinion through Parliament ten years ago he thought he had settled our whole Native Policy. He thought that the laws that he had passed for Native segregation and for the Native Representation Council would

kill the bill. But what has happened in those last ten years since then? We have seen, in spite of his legislation, a great migration of the Native population to the urban centres. Quite new problems, a new situation, have arisen. It has not been possible to segregate the Native Reserves. The Native Reserves have proved only a partial solution of the problem and one of the most pressing problems to-day before us is how to deal with this immense influx of Native people into the urban and industrial centres of the Union."

Later the then Prime Minister went on to say: "Providence has put us both here. Bantu and European came to this country at the same time. That wonderful century in history—the 17th century brought both of us here. You from the North by land and we came from the South by sea, and here we both are and here we both shall remain. It is our country; it is your country. We must try and build up a human society that will be as happy as far as human beings can be happy."

## BOUND TOGETHER

These are the words not of the politician but of the great and far-seeing statesmen who recognises that by their common labour, their common sacrifices and other common experiences throughout many generations, Black and White have become inextricably bound together, not in any superficial physical sense but in a much more fundamental spiritual sense. The clear implication of these words is that any policy based on the assumption that we belong not to one country, but to two entirely different worlds is fundamentally wrong for South Africa on both historical and practical grounds. Co-operation alone can rightly constitute a suitable watchword for a strong, prosperous and United South Africa.



those who elected them. Incidentally the utter failure of the Convention in these, as in 1937 elections, was a proximate cause of the so-called boycott road which they decided to follow in 1943. By this time the AAC had degenerated into a "disgruntled clique" of Trotskyite doctrinaires.

After four or five sessions the members of the NRC decided to adjourn following the passing of this resolution:—

This Council having since its inception, brought to the notice of the Government the reactionary character of the Union Native Policy of segregation in all its ramifications, deprecates the Government's post-war continuation of a policy of fascism which is the antithesis and negation of the letter and the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and the United Nations Charter."

"The Council therefore in protest against this breach of faith towards the African people in particular and the cause of world freedom in general resolves to adjourn this session and calls upon the Government to abolish all discriminatory legislation affecting non-Europeans in this country."

This resolution was clear and explicit and allowed of no dishonourable compromise with the Government.

Dr. Xuma called an emergency conference attended by over 400 delegates from all over the country. This meeting was attended by members of the NRC who explained to the assembled delegates what their object was in adjourning, namely to destroy the Council. The congress at this emergency conference and also at its annual conference endorsed completely the actions of the NRC. They saw that if the council kept its attitude the Government would have no option but to get rid of these embarrassing "collaborators

lull, and then the people who are working day and night for the Africans by writing articles to the press under pseudonyms came out with a new story. Now, it was said, the Nationalists did not want this set of collaborators but wanted another so they were sacking this group. It was not

what it wants and is going to get it. The fact that it is called names ("tribalist, fascist etc.) will not alter the role of African Nationalism which is to lead the children of a despoiled and tattered continent to freedom and the building of a new world.

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