

organisations and by the politically-powerful Platte-land. (The Afrikaans Farmers Organization).

Continuing, the article goes on:

The Government also has a major axe to grind in that it has been seriously and repeatedly embarrassed by the frequency with which Publications Control Board decisions have been reversed by the courts (with massive accompanying publicity) and by Board judgments which have reflected badly on the Board—and on the Government itself.

In the present climate of South Africa, there are two very interesting phenomena. One is the relative freedom of the press, particularly the English press. This element of the press is hammering the government critically day after day, and this was a refreshing insight into the fact that there are still a great many freedoms in the country. The second phenomenon of major importance is that the judiciary has remained free and independent, and in many cases they have had the courage to give decisions which were opposed to the wishes of the government and to the wishes of the more conservative Afrikaner population.

In discussions with a number of leaders in the country in trying to assess the political situation in South Africa, where the Nationalist Party has been in power for 25 years and is apparently becoming increasingly conservative and restrictive in its approach to matters of public policy, we inquired as to what was the role of the United Party, which is the official opposition. We were told time and again that while the United Party is the official opposition, there is no difference between it and the Nationalist Party on the question of apartheid. In other words, the two main parties in South Africa are in complete agreement and act in concert on the question of apartheid.

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One illustration of this is the famous Schibusch Commission. A church organization was under censorship for carrying out a program of sensitivity training in one of the church training institutions. This became a major issue in the country, and along with this was the question of the banning of student leaders in the universities from being able to take part in public activities or even from going from one part of the country to the other. Because this was a critical issue, the United Party appointed what was known as the Schibusch Commission from among its own members, and this commission brought in findings unanimously supporting the censorship of the church organization and the banning of students. This decision created a tremendous outcry within the environs of the United Party, and as a consequence the United Party caucus in parliament was called together and they slapped an almost total prohibition on caucus members and other public representatives of the different official United Party bodies from publicly criticizing the party's Schibusch commissioners and their findings. I think the comment of the spokesman for the United Party caucus, Mr. T. Gray Hughes, the chairman of the caucus, is interesting. Speaking of the decision to ban adverse comment on the Schibusch Commission, or similar controversial matters, he said:

The normal rules applicable to policy statements made by public representatives and office bearers of the Party apply in this case. Members of Parliament, other

public representatives and members of the various official bodies of the Party may naturally comment publicly on the Schibusch Commission and its work provided that they do not do so adversely on matters accepted by the Leader in Caucus as set out in the official statements of March 6th and yesterday. If there are dissentient views by office bearers these will be aired through the usual Party channels.

I hope that Senator Martin never reaches the stage where he issues a statement of this kind.

Mr. Hughes' reference to the leader in the caucus is significant because this extends the authority of the caucus decision to cover all other public representatives of the party as well as its office bearers. This stand by the caucus of the United Party speaks for itself, and I think it is an example of the sensitivity of certain elements among the political leadership of the country to any possible dissent.

Another bill at that time before the Parliament of the Republic was the Gatherings and Demonstration Bill, which has the effect of banning gatherings of people and demonstrations within a specified area of the national capital. Mr. M. L. Mitchell, a member of the Assembly, stated that he was supporting the Gatherings and Demonstration Bill which bans protests in a large part of the central city area around the Parliament Buildings. He said that Parliament had the right to protection of its buildings; members had the right not to be disturbed when going to and from the house; officers of Parliament had the right to move freely to and from Parliament; any person had the right to move to and from the house unmolested for any purpose they had in mind.

Mr. Mitchell said, "I don't believe there is anything sinister in this bill." The only surprise he had about this bill was that similar provisions had not been introduced earlier. He accused some newspapers of trying to "prejudice" the issue. One newspaper had said, "M.P.s need to have peaceful protest brought home to them right to their gates." And the *Rand Daily Mail* had commented, "Surely a peaceful demonstration outside the railings cannot detract from the dignity of the proceedings within." "What sort of propagation is this," asked Mr. Mitchell, "that we should have street democracy? The most important way to protest is through the ballot box." Mr. Mitchell emphasized that the ban was only on open-air meetings. Protest meetings could still be held in the City Hall, for example. He added that no one had the right to protest in a public place if their protest interfered with the rights of others. Both Mr. Mitchell and the Deputy Minister of Police, Mr. J. T. Kruger, who introduced the bill, referred to the fact that similar provisions existed in Britain and Belgium. Mr. Kruger said the purpose of the bill was to ensure that the deliberations in Parliament took place without disturbances from outside.

In actuality, the only real opposition in the South African Parliament is a one-woman opposition, in the person of a very able and competent woman, Mrs. Helen Suzman, the Progressive Party M.P. for Houghton. She was the only M.P. to oppose the measure and she moved that the bill be read "this day six months hence"—in other words, give it a six months' hoist. Describing Mr. Mitchell's speech as "the silliest I have heard from him," she said she