

VARIOUS bodies are discussing means of improving communications between White and Blacks in Pietermaritzburg and its environs. How should this be achieved?

To help the discussions along, The Natal Witness has invited a series of prominent people, Black and White, to set out their views.

Today's contributor is Mr Das Bundhoo, the vice president of the South African Federation of Leather Trade Unions and chairman of the Northdale Municipal Tenants and Ratepayers' Association. He recently attended the World Assembly for Moral Re-armament in Geneva.

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• Mr Das Bundhoo

# Council of Citizens

IT has taken a long time for one to realise that the forces of evil breed favourably where the climate and conditions are rife. In a world that is rapidly shrinking the antagonism and suspicion between nations, races, systems and ideologies are growing threats to mankind. No nation or group seems free from unrest, insecurity and social disorder. The recent events in our own country prove that changes in the structure of our society are certainly necessary.

To bring about such a change great care and restraint is needed. Men of goodwill and understanding have to collectively put their heads together and pool their resources so that the basic causes of unrest and violence and the youthful frustration that flow from them could be removed.

### Youth

The young are in revolt. Youth accuse their elders of having come to terms with the status quo. Aimless grown-ups have no authority, and have to establish order by force or give in. Many young people see violence as the only way to shake the established order.

The piling of nuclear weapons and building military forces may help ward off infiltrators but what of the explosive situation at home when the basic causes are not put right?

The South African situation has to be seen as a complete whole if it is South Africa that we are concerned with. No single group could live in complete isolation. However under the present set-up one could only tackle the matter starting with one's own neighbourhood.

### Changes

Here in Pietermaritzburg there are many people of all races who are trying to build bridges across racial barriers but because of some drawback they have not been able to come together.

Though time is running

out it is never too late to realise. Let us see what changes we here in Pietermaritzburg could bring about to create a better atmosphere of change and goodwill.

The Indian people have played no small a part in the building of South Africa together with the other racial groups and it will continue to do so. They are noted for their charitable disposition and as law abiding citizens.

### Family

The Indian has always looked to the family unit as something sacred and the joint family system was a boon as it provided security in times of need. But due to the moving of people into separate group areas and laws governing housing schemes, this combined family system withered and today you see stray leaves scattered about. The social system today is not what one would have desired and the economic plight of many, far too many, of the small wage-earner is sad and pitiful. Social welfare organisations have a tremendous task ahead of them and they are inundated with calls of help and relief of some sort or other.

An immediate approach to remedy the sick state of affairs is to meet some of the urgent needs of the community.

### Houses

More houses are needed urgently and consideration has to be given in improving council built houses. Our planners must think in terms of human dignity. Prior to their removal, the majority of our people lived on large plots of land and in more spacious buildings.

Indians love the soil and it is the ambition of practically everyone of them to some day own his own home. But ever since the passing of the Group Areas Act this dream has become a thing of the past. There seems no incentive for home-ownership. The limit of land apportioned to Indians makes it impossible for the ordinary wage earner to acquire land, leave alone building a house. Then what aspiration for the individual is left? Is

it just work, earn some livelihood and be perpetual tenants?

Therefore immediate consideration must be given to make more land available at reasonable prices for building homes; and those who wish to go back to agriculture to be given farm lands according to their requirements.

Secondly, commerce and industry to work faster toward closing the salary gap between White and Black. This cannot be successful without the public sector playing its part. The rate for the job should become the maxim for all.

A minimum wage above the Poverty Datum Line should not be overlooked, especially by our local authorities.

Our areas are so congested that it is difficult for our children to play freely without running the risk of endangering their lives.

### Sport

More playing lots and sporting fields should be made available in the developing areas.

The Indian areas are fast growing and the pace of building additional schools is not sufficient to meet the demand. School planners would have to take a lot of points into consideration and primarily that schools be sited within walking reach of the pupils.

Shopping facilities for a growing population particularly in the Northdale area are too few and some sites that are earmarked are not developed.

Transport is the life blood of commerce and industry and if better results are envisaged then improvements in this direction have become urgent. The subsidising of bus fares is another matter that needs urgent attention.

### Fears

Hundreds of our youth are leaving school every year. Many enrol for higher education and others seek employment. Some may be fortunate to be absorbed. Others are beginning to get despondent in not being suit-

ably employed. This breeds frustration and the outcome is open confrontation.

Where do we go from here? Unfortunately the finger keeps pointing to the man in authority. And because of fear he holds on to the traditional way of protecting his own rights. But the time has come to allay such fears because no man could live in isolation. The one cannot do without the other. It is like the stripes on a zebra. If you strip the white it will bleed to death and similarly if you strip the black stripes the zebra will bleed to death. Both Black and White must work together for a better South Africa.

There is enough goodwill on both sides, so why not try? The start could be made here in Pietermaritzburg with a "Council of Citizens" drawn from the various groups which could meet regularly to share thoughts and experiences. Any decision reached could be then passed for the benefit of the local authorities.

### Peace

In this way Pietermaritzburg could lead the way to racial peace and goodwill in our country. If our concern is people, we can be hurt by them. But it is when we care for people and are genuinely interested in them that things happen. Indifference produces no results. Love is rare, but it is the answer and we must see that it is going to have a comeback.

We need a change of hearts and attitudes. Change means new motives and a new direction in life. We need a change of such dimensions that it will mean a new epoch in history. This is a human task in which we must all be engaged. If we fail, it may end the reservoir of goodwill in this country. If we succeed, it will open an era of unparalleled prosperity and dignity for all men.