

day, January 23, 1984

# Knowing the kaffir...

The story of a South African farm town is told with laconic waspishness by a certain A M Daniels, in a copy of *The Spectator* that has wandered my idle way. I must, in parenthesis, say I was somewhat taken aback by the tone of the article, appearing as it did in the conservative pages of a British magazine that has ultra right-wing scribes like Richard West.

The tongue-in-cheek story with the arresting head, *Black and White and Mad*, ends on a memorable note that is as typically South African as biltong. Thus: "And if you can't call a kaffir a kaffir," she said, "who can you call a kaffir?"

Who indeed?

## Ignorance

In South Africa a question like that is almost rhetorical. There are an inordinate number of whites who display the same kind of callous disregard for the times and the manner in which people's attitudes have changed. The extraordinary thing, as is detailed in the same story by Mr Daniels, is that whites believe, nay they swear, that they know the black man.

In the meantime, their ignorance about us blacks is only surpassed by an obnoxious racist arrogance that comes straight out of the Middle Ages. Whites in rural areas fondly wish to delude themselves that they know their "kaffirs" or rather "the kaffir". Many in the urban areas also believe this unscientific madness. A few lines could blow this misconception right through the roof, for many of them hardly know our first names, let alone our last.

## Marvellous

But about Mr Daniels. It would have been my greatest pleasure to reproduce his piece in entirety, word for word. It is a marvellous job, done with the easy flow of British irony and acerbic wit. It also has style.

In brief, he says he was once in South Africa, and because of uncertain financial standing, he did a locum (standing in for a doctor who is on leave or away) for a white doctor in a small town in Natal. He mercifully does not mention the town's name, but gives the game away by his description of a black university near the town and what happened there. The facts are not completely correct, but the job is excellently done.

"I acted for a time as locum general practitioner in a small town in Natal, which — before its grateful alumni burnt it down in 1976 — boasted a university for blacks." If he is speaking about Ngoye University, then we are afraid the place was not exactly burnt down. What the students did was to burn part of its chapel. But with the goings-on at the same



## ON THE LINE

Aggrey Klaaste

campus these days, they would have done us proud by burning the place to the ground. Less problems for us all, including some parties in very high places.

At the airport he was met by the doctor's wife in the family Mercedes Benz — a typical South African fat-cat bourgeois touch that. The doctor was an Afrikaner who had bouts of drinking two bottles of Scotch a day, which is why he heeded a locum, Mr Daniels says, with another rasping dig at this country.

"I was met at Durban airport by the wife of the doctor for whom I was standing in. She drove us the hundred miles or so to the town in the family Mercedes. Sitting in the back were her two young children and their black nanny. The two children began to fight and, without looking back, their mother took a swipe at them. She hit the nanny instead of the children, and the nanny started to cry.

## 'Ja Kaffir'

"What are you snivelling for?" the doctor's wife asked irritably.

"The Madam hit me."

"Well, you should've kept those children quiet then, hey, shouldn't you?"

That's beautiful stuff, not only because it rings true, it also has that authentic "hey" so wonderously beloved of white South African matrons and women generally. The article goes on in this strain, giving deft vignettes of South African life that only a perceptive and intelligent outsider can spot.

Among other refreshingly lucid touches, he tells of violence, of how South African whites delight to say they know "their blacks", or "kaffirs" or "Bantu" as the case may be. The bit that springs out rather neatly is the swipe taken at the nanny, which shows what white "madams" think of their nannies and what

murder their little brats, who despise and maltreat the same nannies, get away with.

He says their reference to their "knowledge" of blacks is couched in such a fashion that you would think they were speaking of some "exotic species".

"They were anxious to co-opt me into their world view, but only once did I slip an indication of what I really thought when a patient tried to explain apartheid on biological principles.

"After all," he said, "the blackbird and the sparrow, they don't mate."

"Well, there's no need to make laws about it then, is there?" I replied.

The tantalising bit about kaffirs, on which I opened this effort says a great deal of the white South African mind. Why, just the other day a white train conductor dressed in this new horrid brown uniform of theirs called out cheerily: "Ja Kaffir", as we made our way past him. He did not even appear to be malicious. Just came natural to him. After all he needs to call something, somebody, a kaffir at times, if only to re-assert his superiority.

## Desperate

Perhaps I should end on that ineffable Daniels note about kaffirs that seems to appeal so much to me:

You see in this country whether there is movement in the right direction, as those wise political pundits always say, there is, and there will always be this desperate need to call somebody a kaffir.

"I was assured by whites that things were gradually changing in South Africa. These changes did not meet with everyone's approval, however. The doctor's mother-in-law complained to me that nowadays in South Africa you had to call a native a Bantu.

"And if you can't call a kaffir a kaffir," she said, "who can you call a kaffir?"



# COMMENT

## SOWETAN Bop boob

23 Jan 1984  
IF THE industrial relationship between the so-called homelands and South Africa were not so organic, and indeed if these little enclaves of phony independence were not a de facto part of South Africa, then we would perhaps understand Bophuthatswana's banning of the South African Allied Workers' Union in that territory.

The only reasons that the Ciskei banned Saawu was that it was exposing the political fraudulence of that system. There was ample reason to do that too because the country was in shambles and somebody had to do something about it. In any case because of the general state of affairs in the Ciskei there is no necessity in wasting time analysing reasons for acts of omission and commission on its part.

Bophuthatswana is a slightly different kettle of fish. We hold no brief for any of the homelands but Bophuthatswana has shown even in its constitution that it is trying to follow ways of democracy.

Chief Lucas Mangope is showing that when the chips are down all these front states for South Africa's policy of divide and rule, revert to the norm.

If anything, it shows that all homelands, in one way or the other, almost automatically ape what the mother country does.

It is an irrefutable fact that most Bophuthatswana workers are employed in the mainland, something that should have told the leaders from the start that they would find it almost impossible to cut the umbilical cord with South Africa.

We find it instructive that the leaders are unable to take lessons from the examples within their own geopolitical sphere. For instance the inroads into the civil liberties of people have gained a country like the Ciskei bad publicity even from conservative administrations like Ronald Reagan's.

Chief Gatsha Buthelezi is fighting a rearguard battle internationally as a result of the number of boobs perpetrated one after the other by himself and Inkatha. His defiance makes his position particularly defensive and even weak. It will take a long time for KwaZulu to reassert the credibility that people like Chief Buthelezi and other senior members

of Inkatha have striven courageously in fact to build up.

The moral in this should be clear to all those who are espousing to work with the South African Government (working from within the system as it is called) and all those who in any form collaborate with an evil system such as this. They will remain tainted for as long as they exist, and inevitably they will fall into South Africa's diplomatic and political footsteps. It is a curse and an albatross they have tied round their necks, this collaboration with evil.

Mmabatho's urge for international and local respectability and recognition will not be helped by such acts. In the final analysis as long as Mr Mangope and the other homeland leaders are tied to South Africa diplomatically and otherwise, they will always act in this fashion — and thus remain pariahs of the world.



# MASSIVE PENSIONS BACKLOG

SOWETAN  
23 JAN. 1984

KWAZULU's pension budget has dried up — with more than 50 000 old age pension applications waiting for approval and the number is increasing.

The homeland will need a 100 percent increase on its pension allocation in the next financial year, due in April, if it is to cope with the demand.

If the applicants do get their pensions, they will only be effective from April, regardless of when the pensioners applied, as KwaZulu, unlike the central Government, does not backdate pensions to the date of application, a spokesman for the Black Sash says.

KwaZulu's budgetary allocations, like those of other homelands, are the responsibility of the central Government. Although this year's pension allocation is five percent above last year's, KwaZulu, in the eighth month of its current financial year, has more than 50 000 applications that cannot be processed because money has run out.

## KwaZulu's old age budget has dried up

SOWETAN  
Correspondent

The applicants will have to wait and see what negotiations between KwaZulu and the Government yield when the next financial year commences in April this year and by then the number will be much higher.

"It's a very sad situation," comments KwaZulu's Secretary for Health and Welfare, Dr Margaret Chuene. She says they have always had a backlog: "But we now have a terrific backlog. It's a very serious issue because every citizen is entitled to a pension."

Dr Chuene says the number of applicants will be much more than the 50 000 by next April as many people are coming forward to apply for pensions. Presently, 174 000 are drawing old-age pensions in KwaZulu.

The Black Sash has blamed the Government. The plight of the pensioners, the Black Sash says, has resulted from Government policies.

One of the reasons for the poor allocation is that in the past many pensioners used to forego collecting their pensions partly because of ignorance and many people were not aware they had reached pensionable age.

Pretoria worked on those figures to set the budget and budgetary increases and this has

given a distorted picture in the light of the changing situation mainly because of the activities of organisations like the Black Sash and pensioners being made aware of their rights.

Dr Chuene says the situation is exacerbated by the Government's policy of mov-

ing settled communities to KwaZulu with the result that pensioners arriving in KwaZulu with their families are not transferred with their pensions.

"The result is you find many people suddenly flooding the national states and they have to compete for pensions with other applicants," she says.

"Another reason is farm labourers are thrown out when

they're no longer productive and the farmers do not make any provision for their old-age pension. This creates a tremendous burden on our finances."

Dr Chuene says the pension problem resulting from mass removals was not unique to KwaZulu.

"It's a chronic problem with all the national states," she says.

"We're negotiating

with the Republic at the moment and the problem will be solved the day they understand the story behind the backlog.

"We need an increase of about 50 percent so that every pensioner can be paid."

Mrs Jill Nicholson, of the Black Sash, says the problem experienced by pensioners in KwaZulu is the direct consequence of the policies of the Govern-

ment. "The South African Government, whether it likes it or not, is legally bound to pay pensions to every South African. Its policies are resulting in this enormous inflow into KwaZulu and they must pay."

Mrs Nicholson says the KwaZulu authorities, if they want to, can easily demand repayment from the Government for every pension paid out.

"The South African Government is ultimately responsible because KwaZulu is not independent and all those people are South African citizens."

Says Black Sash president Sheena Duncan: "If the homeland governments have no money, then the South African Government must provide it because it is South African law they're operating under."

Early last year, KwaZulu's former secretary for health, Dr

Modercai Gumede, appearing before the Sessional Committee on Public Accounts on his department's unauthorised expenditure, said pensions had always been his department's "lifesaver".

"It was a quick way of saving," he admitted because pensions were not collected and these were subsequently dropped by the computer. If a pension had not been paid after the second pay period, the com-



LIVING by the grace of God ... Gladys Nxele and her granddaughters



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puter would automatically cancel it out. This meant money earmarked for pensions, when not collected, could be used for other purposes such as the purchase of medicines.

## Granny has lost hope

GLADYS Nxele, by her own account, lives by the grace of the Lord. She feeds on despair.

A 64-year-old grandmother and the only supporter of a family which includes herself and three fatherless grandchildren, she has been waiting for her old-age pension for more than 10 months.

"I've lost all hope of ever getting a pension," she says. "I don't care what happens to me now. I'm too old to care, but I'm very concerned for my grandchildren. They're still young, they have to eat, dress and go to school like all other children."

Mrs Nxele applied for her old-age pension in February last year. That itself was not easy. To smooth the way for her application, she got a letter from a white woman involved in community work to say she was old, sickly and the only breadwinner and therefore entitled to an old-age pension.

She said a clerk at a commissioner's office gave it one look, tore it into shreds and deposited the remains into a refuse bin.

"What do you think the white lady can do for you?" she claims the clerk had growled at her.

Then she did what she heard everyone who wanted an application speeded up was doing. She bribed him.