

The Star

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Moral Re-Armament stories—II

WHEN A NATIONALIST M.P. TALKED

ABOUT—

***“No matter what
the colour of
their skin”***

TO the critical onlooker, Moral Re-Armament's impact on South Africa's politics appears to have made less of a dent than it has achieved in industrial spheres. Admittedly a dent is there, as subsequent evidence will show.

But it has hardly developed into what might be described as a crack in the armour-plate of the party politician, considering the fact that the greater majority of members from all parties have seen “The Forgotten Factor,” and that on the advice of Mr. C. M. van Coller, Speaker in the last Parliament, a joint parliamentary delegation attended the M.R.A. Assembly at Caux (M.R.A.'s European headquarters).

True, M.R.A. records show that M.P.s have, on occasions, reacted favourably to the new ideology. Thus, during the debate on the Citizenship Bill, I am told, four members from opposite sides of the House met together and agreed to keep their discussions on the basis of the four absolute moral standards advocated by M.R.A.

Nor have there lacked members who publicly have stated their approval of M.R.A.'s influence. Testimony to that effect was made at Caux by Mr. J. F. T. Naude when Speaker of the House of Assembly. A party Whip has also declared:—

“If only we had half a dozen men on both sides of the House who would stand for this spirit,

by

Corrie Dreyer

we could change the whole tone of Parliament.”

Assembly

MR. C. A. VAN NIEKERK, as Assembly President of the Senate, has voiced his sympathy with the movement and moral support of it was given at the Heidelberg assembly last month by Mr. H. J. Klopper (H.N.P., Vredefort).

To find the most convincing results of M.R.A.'s impact on politics, in this country, it is perhaps necessary to look outside the House of Assembly. Certain recent happenings in the Transvaal Provincial Council, for example, have been frankly accredited by its members to M.R.A. influence.

Last year, at the instigation of Dr. Nicol, Administrator of the Transvaal, a meeting of the Council

was adjourned in order to enable members to attend a presentation of "The Forgotten Factor," and a reception following it.

At the reception, two members of conflicting political interests informed M.R.A. workers that they had reconciled their differences and had agreed to work in better accord.

During subsequent debates, it is reported, mention of M.R.A. ideology often arose, and at a Council meeting held soon after members had seen the play, a new spirit, it was claimed, emerged in the discussion of the Saturday Shop Closing Bill with the result that, after 13 years of bitter fighting, it was passed by 47 votes to 2.

Colour of skin

QUESTIONING a member of the M.R.A. on how a Nationalist member's ideological reference, on a M.R.A. platform, to the spiritual linking up of all South Africans "no matter what the colour of his skin" could be reconciled with his party's policy of apartheid, I was answered in ideological terms: "Apartheid is not one party's policy."

Looking farther north in Africa for the political evidence that is, as yet, not so very apparent on the domestic scene, South Africans might well consider the story of Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe as being potentially important to this country.

Azikiwe is one of the most powerful figures in West Africa to-day—an area deeply under Communist influence—and is President of the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons. When, just over a year ago, he visited London en route to the "Human Rights" conference at Prague, and thence to Moscow to seek support for his national liberation policy, he was strongly attacked by sections of the British Press and, in one instance, headlined as "Black Mischief."

Cancelled

IN London, Azikiwe came into contact with M.R.A., as a result of which his original plans were cancelled and he visited Caux

instead. Since his return to Nigeria (where, incidentally, he controls a chain of influential newspapers) his chief aim has been to unify the political parties of that country on the basis of M.R.A. ideology.

The superseding of Communism by an alternative ideology based on spiritual and moral standards is the leitmotiv of M.R.A.'s work. In this, Nigeria might well be taken as an outstanding success.

Individual stories of one-time Communist supporters who have adopted the new ideology are not rare in the Union, notable among them being a Johannesburg man who fought with the Republican forces in Spain.

Creeds

IT is possibly this superseding of Communism by a more positive spiritual force that explains much of the support which M.R.A. has received from all races, creeds and interests.

A dominie of the Dutch Reformed Church has admitted that his Church could learn much from the movement. Roman Catholic priests have subscribed to its support and attended its meetings.

On its public platforms Christians, Jews, Mohammedans and other persons of widely differing faiths seem to find a common spiritual approach.

Confused

IT must be pointed out that the unorthodoxy of this religious movement often confuses the orthodox, particularly those who remember its early beginnings as the Oxford Group with their emphasis on the teachings of Christianity. What they consider to be a paradox not easily swallowed still keeps many of them aloof from its activities.

Interestingly enough, it has fallen to the pen of a Roman Catholic priest to put into words what thousands of M.R.A. supporters, in their contrasting faiths, feel about the matter: "It is simply a *supernational* religious movement which seeks to lead each individual back to the sources of his own religion."