THE MAKING OF A LIBERAL PROGRAMME, 1947-1950

by

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Throughout the 1950s the Liberal Party of South Africa suffered severe internal conflict over basic issues of policy and strategy. On one level this stemmed from the internal dynamics of a small party unequally divided between the Cape, Transvaal and Natal, in terms of membership, racial composition and political traditon. This paper and the larger work from which it is taken[1], however, argue inter alia that the conflict stemmed to a greater degree from a more fundamental problem, namely differing interpretations of liberalism and thus of the role of South African liberals held by various elements within the Liberal Party (LP). This paper analyses the political creed of those parliamentary and other liberals who became the early leaders of the LP. Their standpoint developed in specific circumstances during the period 1947-1950, and reflected opposition to increasingly radical black political opinion and activity, and retreat before the unfolding of apartheid after 1948. This particular brand of liberalism was marked by a rejection of extra-parliamentary activity, by a complete rejection of the universal franchise, and by anti-communism - the negative characteristics of the early LP, but also the areas of most conflict within the party.[2]

The liberals under study - including the Ballingers, Donald Molteno, Leo Marquard, and others - were all prominent figures. All became early leaders of the Liberal Party in 1953, but had to be "hijacked" into the LP by having their names published in advance of the party being launched.[3] The strategic prejudices of a small group of parliamentarians, developed in the 1940s, were thus to a large degree grafted on to non-racial opposition politics in the 1950s through an alliance with a younger generation of anti-Nationalists in the LP. The young LP members, while conservative in many respects, did not share the hostility and fear of extra-parliamentary methods of opposition held by the leaders of their party, and revealed a far greater degree of flexibility over both policy and strategy. The net result of this alliance was to retard the emergence of a party unfettered by major ideological and/or strategic dislocations. Such internal unity was speedily achieved following the 1959 launch of the Progressive Party on a platform virtually indistinguishable from that of the LP in 1953, and the rapid efflux of members from the LP into the Progressive Party.

This paper analyses a series of liberal political Programmes which were published during 1948 and 1949, and the actions of the Natives' Representatives, the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), and others, which accompanied these Programmes. The paper also briefly looks at the effects on this activity of Hymie Basner's attempt to relaunch the Socialist Party. Taken together, the Programmes and associated activity to a large degree constituted the ideological and strategic content of that brand of liberalism espoused by the LP in the early 1950s. This type of "extreme" liberalism was in the 1940s most clearly associated with the leading Natives' Representatives, who represented the crunch point of white liberalism, i.e. the point at whcih it was in most direct contact with organised black political opinion. In this paper I am concerned not to describe or define South African liberalism en bloc but to deconstruct the ideology and strategic decisions which informed that strand of liberalism associated with the liberal organisations of the early 1950s (the Civil Right League (CRL), the various liberal groups which formed the Liberal Association, and the early LP). This paper also briefly examines the role of "liberal economics" as adumbrated by writers in The Forum and elsewhere, particularly following the publication of the Fagan Report. After 1949 none of the early leaders of the LP expressed their political creed in

economic terms, and economic liberalism did not play a major role in Liberal politics during the 1950s. At the same time, neither "economic liberalism" nor newly formed pressure groups such as the CRL succeeded in reorienting the United Party (UP) away from a slide into reaction. By 1950, appeals for public support from the CRL, the Liberal Association, and later the LP, were made not in economic or overtly political language but rather in broad, moral terms. While the authors of the 1948/49 liberal Programmes retreated behind increasingly general terminology, however, the constituent elements of the brand of liberalism associated with the early LP were in place. An understanding of liberal activity and the different interpretations of liberalism that existed in the perid under study explains something of the internal conflict which racked the LP in the 1950s; it also goes some way to explaining the different directions followed by the very different elements contained within the LP in the 1950s and early 1960s. .

Liberalism, 1947-1950

In the 1940s (and subsequently) liberalism was used largely as a descriptive term covering the IRR and Natives' Representatives, welfare organisations, the hierarchy and certain prominent members of some English churches, and others who called for a spirit of inter-racial goodwill, governmental tolerance, and a relaxation of state interference in the affairs of black individuals. As Julius Lewin, lecturer and influential writer commented,

> That I was a socialist always seemed to people
> irrelevant ... People knew, or thought they knew, what
> a liberal is and what a communist believed and stood
> for. They knew that I was not a communist and that I
> worked with liberals, so they inferred I must be a
> liberal. So I was in the terms of South African
> tradition.[4]

At a general level, liberalism in South Africa (as elsewhere) in the 1940s was a political discourse centred on the war-time Four Freedoms and the freedoms contained in the Atlantic Charter. During the war, welfare-statism was partially endorsed by Hofmeyr and the progressive wing of the UP, and more wholeheartedly by the IRR, the Natives' Representatives, and others.[5] The war years saw the high point of this form of liberalism, as it became a discourse adopted by a wide range of organisations and individuals, from Hofmeyr to the Community Party (CP). It intersected with a similar international discourse, but the reassurance drawn from this fact by the liberals under study became increasingly sparse as post-war international opinion swung against South Africa's racial policies. At the same time, this general form of liberalism ceased to represent a domestic political consensus.

Using the same general definition, liberalism can be said to represent the dominant political discourse within the African National Congress (ANC), at least until the late 1940s. This was reflected in the demands of African Claims and the influence of the Atlantic Charter, as well as in the attention paid by the ANC to the UN and its Charter.[6] The rise of the Youth League, while moving the ANC into extra-parliamentary activity such as the passive resistance of 1952, represented a more militant call for democracy rather than a radical change in nature. Liberalism, as propounded by the Natives' Representatives, the IRR and others, remained, however, a parliamentary creed, and disavowed the use of extra-parliamentary methods of opposition. The seeming convergence of political outlook of the war years, between white liberals and the ANC, was by 1952 visibly untenable. The ANC developed an increasingly democratic programme, starting with the demand for universal suffrage in African Claims in 1943. The liberals under study in this paper - while representing the extreme wing of a general, parliamentary creed in calling for the gradual assimilation of all "civilised" blacks - rejected the ANC franchise demand and feared the "revolutionary" potential of extra-parliamentary opposition. While this form of liberalism continued to be developed by a process of interaction with black politics, the interaction during the late 1940s was based as much on wary suspicion as on a free exchange of ideas.

Within the large number of white individuals and organisations termed "liberal" by the generalised term described above, there existed fundamental disagreements over both ultimate goals and strategy. During the Second World War, the liberals under scrutiny in this paper, together with the IRR and sections of the UP, supported a general administrative programme which called for the gradual bettering of black living conditions, and successfully injected the rhetoric of welfare provision by the state to take the place (at least in part) of the cost of labour reproduction by the Reserves. Stress was laid on the need for the parliamentary achievement of such black socio-economic advancement. This represented the mainstream of white liberal thought and was championed by Hofmeyr until his death in 1948. Where their views coincided, Hofmeyr led the "progressive" wing of the UP that opposed migrant labour and called for a stable, permanent, urban, black labour force. The 1948 UP electoral defeat was blamed by almost all sections of the party (including the progressives) on Hofmeyr's "liberalism" – as described by Nationalist propagandists[8] – and it took Smuts's personal intervention to end the witch-hunt launched against Hofmeyr's position as UP deputy leader.[9] Despite the best work of Alan Paton's biographical study, Hofmeyr's repeated refusal to break from the UP, and his failure to translate the Christian, assimilationist sentiments of his speeches into political action, leave his status as a liberal – rather than a cultured or well educated individual – questionable.[10]

The post-war failure of liberals outside the UP to influence Hofmeyr either to lead a new political party or to grant welfarist concessions, particularly during the NRC crisis (when Hofmeyr was Acting Prime Minister in the absence of Smuts), led to the development of a new strand of liberal thinking. The NRC crisis revealed the lack of influence the liberals under study could wield over Hofmeyr and the UP, and over the ANC in its adoption of the electoral boycott in late 1946. As a result, Leo Marquard, Margaret Ballinger and her supporters, followed cautiously by Edgar Brookes and elements within the IRR, accepted the need for the development of a **political** programme – albeit alongside the existing stress on administrative betterment. The point of difference between them and the UP progressives lay with the franchise. As mentioned above, by 1943 the universal franchise was the prime demand of the ANC, endorsed by "radical" and "moderate" alike. Hofmeyr and his supporters, such as John Cope, editor of The Forum, spoke of liberalism as an ideology which accepted "certain fundamental inequalities between Europeans and Africans" but which held that "Africans are (nevertheless) entitled to some place in the sun".[11] Margaret Ballinger, Marquard and others argued that, alongside socio-economic advancement, blacks had to be assimilated to the values of "western civilisation". Such assimilation, they argued, should be rewarded with full citizenship rights. It was because of this standpoint on the franchise that the Natives' Representatives and others described themselves as liberals and the true inheritors of the "Cape liberal tradition". While regarding Hofmeyr and others as overly cautious, these "extreme" liberals none the less looked to Hofmeyr to lead the new political party frequently hinted at.[12]

Liberalism as espoused by the Natives' Representatives was that with which Congress members came in most direct contact. Despite the break with the administrative agenda of the war years, the liberals under study remained at odds with the Congresses over the franchise. The Representatives had also been, and continued to be, actively involved in attempting to break the "native representation" boycott adopted by the ANC (see below). Through such actions, even this strand of liberal activity, seen by the UP progressives as "extreme", gained specific negative associations of timidity and obstructionism in the eyes of the Congresses.

A further strand of liberal thinking became clear after 1948, developed by Leo Marquard, Julius Lewin and others, particularly through their writing in The Forum. It was influenced by the work of Hymie Basner in the mid-1940s. These men defined liberalism as primarily concerned not with Christian moralism but economic development. Marquard argued that, if the humanitarian impulses of the larger grouping of white liberals in the churches, welfare organisations and elsewhere were to have any political force, they had to be allied to an economic interest – preferably alongside the "progressive" wing of the UP. Basner and Lewin both

campaigned for a non-racial alliance between "secondary industry" and the "working class" as a means of throwing off the yoke of the cheap labour system. Both called for a "liberal party" to achieve this new alliance.

None of these different strands of political thought, all of which influenced liberalism as it was defined in the 1950s, was exclusive. The ideas of the different groups and individuals under study – all of whom were white, middle class and well educated, and who operated in the same social and political spheres[13] – percolated through into the programmes and arguments of others. In 1948, proponents of the different strands of liberal thinking saw in certain conclusions of the Fagan Report the possibility of entrenching liberals – if not liberalism – in the mainstream of political life. This would be achieved by an alliance with that wing of the UP which supported the creation of a stable, urban black labour force. The Representatives (excluding Basner) united in an attempt to arrest the growth of support for what were seen as dangerously radical extra-parliamentary tactics. All united, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, in an attempt to exclude the CP from exerting influence over organised black political opinion. This was seen to be urgently necessary as the more moderate elements within the ANC leadership, to whom the Natives' Representatives and others had been accustomed to look for support, were coming under increased pressure from the CP and Youth League. At the same time, the period under study saw the Congresses and the African Peoples' Organisation (APO) displaying an increasing ideological and strategic unity, which found expression in such events as the People's Assembly for Votes For All in 1948 and the Defend Free Speech Convention in 1950.

The Political Context

The following, brief, historical sketch outlines the political environment following the NRC collapse of 1946, within which liberals were working. In 1947 Leo Marquard complained that "liberalism is on the defensive", its forces "considerable if disunited".[14] The NRC crisis had questioned the legitimacy of the 1936 system of "native representation" under which the Representatives held their seats, and had closed the NRC as a channel of communication with and possible influence over black leaders. It had also left the Natives' Representatives isolated from Hofmeyr and others in the UP to whom they had previously looked for support. The IRR at the same time noted that Joint Council membership was declining in favour of black political organisations; this, the IRR concluded, was due to the Joint Councils' "inability to effect those fundamental changes which Africans have demanded (for) so long".[15]

Following the NRC crisis, which came hard on the heels of Indian mobilisation over the Asiatic Land Tenure Act, the need for a united front against segregation became a recurrent theme of Congress and CP propaganda. In January 1947 the CP Annual Conference called for the formation of a "broad fighting alliance" campaigning for a universal franchise.[16] At a "unity rally" in May 1947, Xuma commented on the "historic" nature of the rally, held as it was under the auspices of the ANC, Transvaal Indian Congress (TIC), and the APO.[17] In August 1947 a joint committee of the ANC, TIC and APO began organising a national convention to campaign for full democracy, and thereby to provide a "note of sanity" on the eve of the white general election.[18] The emerging black organisational alliance, behind the call for full and equal rights for all races, rallied none of the parliamentary liberals to its cause. The growing convergence of Congress and CP tactics after 1945 found expression in the 1946/47 electoral boycott and the endorsement by leading NRC and ANC members of extra-parliamentary methods of opposition, both of which were vigorously opposed by the liberals under study. As a result, they saw themselves in competition with the CP for black political allegiance. Anti-communist sentiments were fuelled by the growing Cold War and by threats of anti-communist legislation. It was in opposition to the emerging alliance that liberals in various quarters attempted to forge an alternative coalition of forces.

For liberals, the fruits of the alliance were the adoption of extra-parliamentary methods of opposition, particularly the electoral boycott. During 1946, Margaret Ballinger and Edgar Brookes moved from hectoring to threats and

private lobbying in an attempt to defeat the boycott.[19]   With the death in April
1947 of G K Hemming, Natives' Representative for the Transkei, the conflict between
the parliamentary liberals and the boycotters was brought into sharp focus.   William
Ballinger announced his intention to contest the seat.   With Margaret Ballinger and
Hymie Basner, he attended the emergency conference of the Transvaal ANC in June
1947, called to discuss implementation of the boycott.[20]   Supported by conservative
NRC member Paul Mosaka and others, the Representatives attempted to force the
conference to reject the boycott, and to call a national conference to do the same.
Hymie Basner described the boycott as a "silly" idea and warned conference that
"before you carry it out you will have the fight of your lives from me and from
others".[21]

The strength of the boycott movement in the Transkei, organised by Govan
Mbeki and sustained by the Transkei Organised Bodies and the Transkei African
Voters' Association, was sufficient to persuade Ballinger to stand down.[22]   He none
the less joined Donald Molteno in supporting the candidacy of Douglas Buchanan.   On
an electoral tour of the constituency, voters' meetings refused Molteno and Buchanan
a hearing.[23]   The Voters Association repeated the boycott call, warning against
"white careerists" and their "black Judases"; if elected, the Association stated,
"they will be representing nobody but their appetites".[24]   The opposition to
Buchanan could not be tested, because the seat was not contested; its strength can,
however, be gauged from the fact that he felt obliged to write to voters promising
that, if they replied in sufficient numbers asking him not to continue as their
Representative, he would stand down.[25]

By January 1948 the boycott, never a popular strategy with the "old guard"
ANC leadership, was openly rejected by Xuma and others.[26]   Sustaining a full
electoral boycott became impossible in the confused situation, and the ANC and CP
decided to support the election of "boycott candidates" who would call for the
repeal of the 1936 legislation.[27]   The arguments used by their candidates to explain
the switch, particularly the claim that insufficient organisation had taken place to
carry through a boycott and that the new NRC candidates would use their positions to
undertake such organisation, were the same that Margaret Ballinger had used in
1946.[28]   By the time the change came about, however, the parliamentary liberals had
been seen to be actively attempting to sabotage the boycott.   The well publicised
activities of William Ballinger, Molteno and Buchanan in the Transkei, moreover,
served to compound growing black hostility to what was seen as an obstructionist
position.

Alliance Politics

Despite their inability to influence the UP, it remained the central focus for the
political hopes of the liberals under study.   For socialists such as Hymie Basner,
however, the Labour Party's continued support for measures which entrenched black
exploitation but protected the interests of the white working class was of more
immediate concern.   While Margaret Ballinger and others continued to make appeals
for a liberal party in the most general terms of "(a) policy of widening rights for
Africans"[29], Basner sought to create a vehicle which would champion a new alliance
between the (non-racial) "working class" and certain forms of secondary industry,
and thereby end the cheap labour system.   Basner's significance for the work in hand
were the direct appeals he made to his electorate as the basis for a new alliance
which would include ANC members but would exclude radical and/or CP members of
Congress.   Basner maintained a loyalty to the CP (which he had left during the war)
as "the best expression of the aspirations of the working class – irrespective of
race – now existing in the Union".[30]   He argued, however, that the CP was incapable
of achieving the democratic reforms which had to be won "before the fight for
socialism becomes anything like a reality".[31]

In early 1947 Basner attempted to capitalise on the wave of black support
engendered by his appearance at the United Nations[32] by calling for a non-racial
National Convention; when this appeal failed, he attempted to resuscitate the
defunct Socialist Party.[33]   Basner hoped to create an alliance between the "African
chiefs, the wealthy Indian merchants, (and) the clergymen of all denominations";
they would be joined by "the progressive white industrialists (and) trade union

leaders steeped in reformism".[34]   Such a bourgeois coalition, he felt, could be persuaded to unite with the working class on a "minimum programme of necessary changes" which would include abolition of the pass laws, franchise extension, and repeal of the industrial colour bar and the Land Acts.[35]   Basner claimed that, by adumbrating a message in economic terms that whites could understand, rather than moral or egalitarian terms they would reject, a new alliance could be created.   It is significant that Basner's minimum programme constituted the ultimate goal at which his fellow Natives' Representatives aimed.   More significant for its effects on future liberal activity was Basner's appeal to his black electorate, not simply for loyalty in the face of the boycott but as the means of forging an alternative alliance to that emerging between the Congresses, the APO and the CP.   The need to create a power-base came to be recognised by many liberals in the post-war situation, and Leo Marquard joined Basner in defining liberals in purely economic terms.   Marquard argued that liberals were simply those "who see in the development of secondary industries the prospect of a more sane outlook on African wages and social conditions", who demanded increased social services, and who saw hope for the future in "the progressive development of the African".[36]   To avoid division, Marquard sidestepped political questions regarding the franchise, residential and social segregation, by claiming that liberals "take full account of social forces and do not desire to force the social pace".[37]

The unstructured nature of such attempts to create a liberal consensus changed, following the 1948 general election, when liberals in various quarters sought to redirect black political opinion behind a "practical" and less radical programme than they were discussing.[38]   In July 1948 Margaret and William Ballinger submitted a "Programme for Progress", based on aspects of the Fagan Report, to the ANC.[39]   Margaret Ballinger described her main role following the 1948 general election as "helping Africans to build up their own policy".[40]   Privately, she stated that Africans had to do "some fresh thinking ... instead of drifting on a sea of old thoughts and emotions".[41]   The Fagan report, broadly speaking, attempted to satisfy different sectors of the economy with different labour demands, and thus maintain both migratory labour and a degree of black urbanization.   In so doing, the Report attempted also to unify different wings of the UP.   Liberals, both in and out of parliament, set great store by the Report following the commitment to it given by Smuts while still in office, which, according to the IRR, gave it a significance that "cannot be over-estimated".[42]   The IRR and other liberals, while criticising the Report, highlighted the positive passages which spoke of the inevitability of economic integration and the permanence of black urbanization.[43]

The Ballingers, influenced by Basner, went one step further and attempted to generate black support for the Fagan report.   They argued that the ANC should base its policy on the Report, "taking out what they would have and making clear what they would not have"[44], in much the same way as the Ballingers and others were doing.   The Ballingers were faced with the emergence of an increasingly radical black alliance which they experienced first-hand through the election boycott; moreover, they were denied any parliamentary influence by the Nationalist government.[45]   The Ballingers envisaged a moderate black power bloc which would use the positive aspects of the Fagan Report to create a rapprochement with UP progressives.   The point of contact between the two sides in such an alliance would be the liberals[46]: more specifically, the Natives' Representatives.   The Ballingers attempted to facilitate the creation of an alliance by concentrating on administrative issues and avoiding confrontation over divisive political demands.   While the Ballinger Programme dealt specifically with certain contentious proposals, it stressed the acceptability of the "general principles" of the Fagan Report.[47]

The two general principles most ardently supported by the Ballingers were economic integration and the acceptance of a permanent black urban presence.   At the same time they spoke hazily of the need "to level-up wage rates between one area and another".[48]   Until this levelling-up was achieved, however, the Ballingers proposed modification of the Land Acts and a capital injection for the Reserves;   rural migrants, they noted, posed "special problems":

> Let us have locations for the new and untrained people
> but for all the others there should be freedom to live
> as Europeans do (although we shall probably have to
> accept separate areas).[49]

The Ballingers, in carefully seductive language, attempted to translate the need
for a permanent, semi-skilled black labour force into the vision of a fully
integrated bourgeoisie, to which influx control and social (if not residential)
segregation need not apply.

The assumption that the urbanised African who adopted "western
civilisation" would be rewarded with full citizenship rights was, as shown above, by
no means shared by even the "progressive" wing of the UP. The Ballingers none the
less saw the "Programme for Progress" as "a practical programme designed to
strengthen the African population to the point at which it may successfully make its
own demands".[50] The Programme hinged on the coming into being of a black middle
class, seen as an "inevitable" product of economic integration and urbanisation.
They submitted the Programme to precisely those members of the ANC leadership who
had worked closely with them in the past, and who were coming under incresing
pressure from the Youth League. These included A B Xuma, who opposed the electoral
boycott, and secretary-general James Calata. The Ballingers submitted the Programme
in time for adoption at the mid-1948 ANC Bloemfontein Conference[51], where it was
ignored. Margaret Ballinger, facing both Nationalist opposition and the election
boycott in her Cape Eastern seat, concluded that "there are apparently no African
organisations active enough to take the stand they should be taking".[52]

Adjustment and Influence

The Ballingers were alone in attempting to carve out a direct liberal role in black
politics. In January 1948, Donald Molteno, Natives' Representative for Cape
Western, presented a "Democratic Programme" at a public lecture as a future guide
for white liberal activity.[53] The most significant aspect of Molteno's Programme
was his description of the future role of the white liberal, which informed the
subsequent proposals of the IRR and others. Molteno stated that

> The main features of a democratic programme ...
> would be the elevation of practical achievements
> above doctrinaire considerations, the fostering of
> inter-racial goodwill and the avoidance of all
> rigidities in legislation and administration, thus
> leaving the door open to adjustment in accordance
> with changing conditions.[54]

A similar desire to maintain liberals in positions of influence while avoiding the
party-political arena marked an IRR pamphlet which appeared in June 1948, entitled
Apartheid and Other Policies, written by IRR Director Quintyn Whyte.[55] Whyte
attempted to deflect the internal pressure brought to bear on the IRR to declare
itself a political party[56] by claiming that liberals had a special role to play as
those armed with the knowledge of "modern social thinking" which "has presented us
with a number of generally accepted doctrines". Among these he cited agreement that
"the racist doctrine of the Herrenvolk is abhorrent and that man must not exploit
man or one group of interests another".[57] He argued that, as predicted by the Fagan
Report, economic integration would continue unabated, and

> there must be constant adjustments and it will fall to
> the lot of the liberal mind to try to ensure that
> those adjustments are made with the minimum friction.
> This will not be an enviable task; it will please
> neither the radical nor the reactionary: but it is an
> essential function in our society.[58]

The Programmes of the Ballingers, Molteno and the IRR shared a common fear
of exclusion from the political process by the proponents of extremism, from both
left and right. At the same time, however, the Fagan Report seemed to offer an

objective economic promise of black political assimilation, described by Julius Lewin as "their belief that the requirements of economic progress would somehow magically lead to a change in race relations".[59] Liberals soon began arguing, Leo Marquard noted, "that 'economic forces' will so alter the situation that even a reactionary parliament will be compelled to abandon the attempt at reactionary legislation".[60] In contradistinction to the Ballinger initiative, Molteno and Whyte argued that liberals ought to entrench themselves in the political machinery where, through an objective acceptance of economic facts which were unpalatable to white voters, they would advise on the points of "adjustment" caused by economic development.

Economic Liberalism

The last programmatic attempt to define liberalism explicitly in terms of the Fagan Report was made by The Forum in a series of editorials and articles published in mid-1949. The Forum based its argument on the proposition that the industrial colour bar

> deprives Non-Europeans of the opportunity of doing skilled work, and deprives the country of a vast reservoir of latent talent and ability which is being frittered away ... The basis of (our) approach is economic integration ... The country's economic salvation depends on a better use of our manpower and a steadily rising standard of living for the mass of the Native people.[61]

The Forum continued by stating that "in South Africa the industrialist stands to gain from almost everything advocated by the liberal school of thought", since both shared a vision of the black population as the single greatest potential source of labour and consumer goods.[62]

The Forum accordingly defined liberals as those who opposed migratory labour and favoured a stable urban labour force, and who opposed unnecessary bureaucratic control over the work-force, not least because of the cost involved in the administration of influx control. Finally, The Forum cited the desire of both liberals and industrialists for "labour contentment", and warned against the inflammatory effects of both "communism" and apartheid.[63] The only political suggestion offered by the series of articles was to call for the reintroduction of the old Cape franchise. The Forum linked its liberal articles to Margaret Ballinger's 1949 announcement that she was considering launching a new political party.[64] Both Ballinger and The Forum defined their liberalism in the economic terms above, while rejecting the universal franchise and ignoring other political issues, and both defined liberalism in explicitly anti-communist terms. The involvement of leading CP members such as J B Marks with issues such as the Western Areas tram boycott, which began in September 1949 and was attended by sporadic violence[65], served merely to compound the liberal view that communists were making political capital out of black living conditions. Both Ballinger and The Forum called for the creation of a middle class as a bulwark against communism.[66]

The Ballinger/Forum initiative seemed to combine the very different directions followed by liberal strategists in this period. It brought together, on the basis of the Fagan Report, the ideas of those who sought influence over societal adjustment, and those who sought power by alliance with the UP. It also looked to undercut the CP and offered Margaret Ballinger as a replacement for Hofmeyr as a national figurehead. As with all the liberal initiatives of this period, the Ballinger/Forum plan attempted to use the different labour requirements of the burgeoning industrial sector as a stepping-stone to ultimate black political participation. According to this view, representation for "civilised" blacks was a necessary concomitant of economic progress. The qualified franchise was taken as granted in those liberal initiatives which dealt with political, rather than administrative, issues. The Ballinger/Forum proposals mentioned black representation only in passing, and fell away precisely because of the black hostility they attracted.

The left-wing newspaper The Guardian had maintained a largely positive attitude towards the Natives' Representatives in the post-war period, but was by 1949 openly hostile to "liberals" and made no distinction (where it had previously done so) between the liberalism of the Representatives and that of Jan Hofmeyr.[67] Black reaction to the 1949 Ballinger/Forum proposals also reflected the tendency to characterise the different creeds mentioned above as one, and showed growing hostility towards such "liberals" en masse. A letter from leading NIC member Ahmed "Kathy" Kathrada defined liberals simply in terms of their refusal to support the strategies and campaigns of the Congresses after 1945. Accusing "the men and women of the liberal creed" of cowardice, Kathrada stated:

> Our experiences have been that these individuals, who
> are usually vociferous in their claims for justice and
> fairplay for the black man, have on every occasion
> when their assistance was required, sadly failed us.[68]

At a meeting of the left-wing Durban organization, the Council for Human Rights, a black speaker described the methods of liberalism as "humble petitions and respectable deputations" which had failed to "deliver the goods".[69] At the same meeting Jordan Ngubane, editor of Inkundla ya Bantu and later a prominent member of the Liberal Party, stressed that the failure of white liberals to intervene significantly in black political life was assisting the growth of "revolutionary" philosophies and methods.[70] A year later he noted that "the collapse of African Moderation has been largely occasioned by the failure of the European Liberals as a group to take an unequivocal and unfaltering stand on the vital colour question".[71]

Conclusion

As the Nationalist Party entrenched itself in power after 1948, and African nationalism expressed itself in mass civil disobedience in 1952, the liberals under study found themselves continuing to attract considerable national publicity but unable to exert influence over either of the two dominant political discourses. The complete failure of the 1948/9 initiatives to create a centrist coalition meant that liberal activity focussed on the UP for the next five years. When the Liberal Party was finally launched in 1953, arguably the main strand of South African liberalism remained within the UP and broke away only in 1959. The LP was at base an umbrella organisation, drawing together conservatives, socialists and ex-communists alike. The initially dominant group within the LP were the liberals under study, and their conservatism - the response to their failure to influence African nationalism or to rally industrial or political support for their programmes - led directly to the internal conflict which dogged the LP until the end of the 1950s. At the same time, however, the constituent elements of the form of liberalism discussed above - notably political caution over the franchise, anti-communism, and an emphasis on parliamentary methods of achieving change, combined with mistrust of other forms of activity - were the core elements of LP appeal in the 1950s.

The twin elements of non-racialism (still debated in the Liberal Association in 1952) and anti-communism served to sustain the appeal of the LP after its policies on issues from the franchise to land and wealth redistribution were virtually indistinguishable from those in the Freedom Charter. Moreover, an understanding of the core elements of the form of liberalism associated with the LP goes some way to explaining why the LP was able to hold together groups of substantially different political outlook. It also suggests a means of understanding the internal contradictions of the LP - its successful black recruitment, not in urban, industrial areas but in the rural areas of northern Natal and northern Transvaal, and the association of some of its members with the sabotage group the African Resistance Movement. This paper has suggested that these core elements were not simply responses to the nature or membership of the Congress Alliance, but had a much longer history. An understanding of the period 1947-50 goes some way to revealing the complex nature of liberalism and the influences it drew on, as well as providing a framework for an understanding of liberalism in the 1950s and 1960s.

[1] This paper is taken from an early chapter of my thesis, being written up at the moment, entitled White Opposition to Apartheid, 1945-1960. The thesis concentrates on the organisations of the 1950s, the Liberal Party and Congress of Democrats, and traces their origins (organisational and ideological) in the 1940s.

[2] See Peter Brown, The Liberal Party: a chronology with comment (Rhodes: ISER, 1985); Janet Robertson, Liberalism in South Africa 1948-1963 (OUP, 1971); D Everatt, "'Frankly Frightened': the Liberal Party and the Congress of the People" ("SA in the 1950s" Conference paper, QEH, Oxford, 1987).

[3] See BC587 E2.88: Leo Marquard to Peter Brown, 27.12.1964, for Marquard discussing the "hi-jacking" (the phrase is his); see also Brown, op. cit., pp 5-6, and Everatt, op. cit.

[4] Julius Lewis, Autobiographical fragment, pp 32-33.

[5] See, for example, Martin Legassick, "The Rise of Modern South African Liberalism: its assumptions and its social base" (ICS seminar paper ISS/72/2), p 30; see also A S Paton, Hofmeyr (OUP, Abridged Edition, 1971), pp 312-14, and the relevant sections of M Ballinger, From Union to Apartheid: a trek to isolation (Folkestone, 1969).

[6] See Tom Lodge, Black Politics in South Africa Since 1945 (London, 1983), pp 23-24.

[7] See, for example, D Scher, Dilizintaba (IRR, 1979), chapters 4 and 5; see also, Lodge, op. cit., p 23, and the relevant chapters of Ballinger, op. cit., and Paton, op. cit.

[8] See Paton, op. cit., pp 371-78; see also E H Brookes, South African Pilgrimage (Ravan, 1977), pp 88-89, and W K Hancock, The Fields of Force 1919-1950 (CUP, 1968), pp 499-505.

[9] See Paton, op. cit., pp 387-92, and Hancock, op. cit., pp 511-13.

[10] For divisions between Hofmeyr and the Representatives after 1946, see D Everatt, Liberal Nadir: Liberals and the Natives' Representative Council Crisis (York: CSAS Conference, March 1988).

[11] John Cope, describing "Hofmeyrism" in The Forum, 1/11 (2nd series), February 1953, p 2.

[12] See Paton, op. cit., and Everatt, "Liberal Nadir...".

[13] Basner is the exception in this group; he is included because of the influence of his ideas on the liberals under study. Despite his Senatorial status, Basner's former membership of the CP and use of the UN as a platform for attacking South Africa combined to exclude him from an otherwise cohesive group. See Basner in The Guardian, 10/49, 23.1.1947, p 3, and Everatt, "Liberal Nadir".

[14] BC587 C71.4: Leo Marquard, "Memo on the Political Situation", n.d. 1947, p 1.

[15] IRR, Survey 1946-47, p 55.

[16] The Guardian 10/47: 9.1.1947, p 1.

[17] The Guardian 11/12: 8.5.1947, p 4.

[18] See Mary Benson, The Struggle for a Birthright (IDAF, 1985), pp 118-19; this became the Peoples' Assembly for Votes for All.

[19] See Everatt, "Liberal Nadir ...".

20 The Guardian 11/17: 12.6.1947, p 1.

21 Ibid.

22 Anton Lembede noted that "In the past resolutions passed by Congress were not
    implemented; they were even ignored by Congress leaders. This time it is the
    whole people who are pushing the leaders ahead ... Even Mr Ballinger has
    admitted that the African youth of the Transkei are foremost in this boycott
    movement": The Guardian 11/19, 26.6.1947, p 6.

23 Ibid. See also The Guardian, June–July 1947.

24 The Guardian 11/20, 3.7.1947, p 4. Transkei African Voters' Association:
    Executive Committee leaflet.

25 The Guardian 11/24, 31.7.1947, p 1. Buchanan did not more than send out the
    letters.

26 In his New Year message Xuma called for the return en bloc of the sitting NRC:
    The Guardian 11/49: 22.1.1948, p 3.

27 The Guardian 11/47, 8.1.1948, p 1: Report of the 1948 CP Annual Conference.

28 Edwin Mofutsanyana, CP member and NRC candidate, in The Guardian 11/48,
    15.1.1948, p 1. See Everatt, "Liberal Nadir ...".

29 A410/BC.5.37: M Ballinger to Dr R Bokwe, 5.2.1947.

30 The Guardian 11/3, 6.3.1947: letter from Hymie Basner, p 2.

31 Ibid.

32 See Everatt, "Liberal Nadir...".

33 The Guardian 10/48: 16.1.1947, p 6.

34 The Guardian 11/3, 6.3.1947: letter from Hymie Basner.

35 Ibid.

36 Marquard, 1947 Memo, op. cit., p 2.

37 Ibid.

38 The Programme of Action was sent out for discussion in 1948, and adopted in
    1949: Thomas Karis, Hope and Challenge 1935–1952 (Stanford, 1987 ed), pp
    103–04.

39 A410/BC.16.2 (file 5): Margaret and William Ballinger: Outlines of a
    Programme for Progress for Africans, 9.7.1948.

40 A410/B2.5.13: M Ballinger to Rev J Calata, 12.8.1948.

41 A410/B.2.8.2: M Ballinger to E Brookes, 29.6.1948.

42 IRR Survey 1947–1948, p 21.

43 See Helen Suzman, A Digest of the Fagan Report (SAIRR, 1949); see, for
    example, Julius Lewin, criticising the Report for timidity while commending
    it, in The Forum, 12/1: 2.4.1949, pp 22–23.

44 A410/B2.5.2: M Ballinger to B Mdledle, 13.8.1948.

45 Edgar Brookes noted that, unlike Nationalist Ministers, UP Native Affairs
    Ministers "would consider, often very sympathetically, any amendments which we

(Representatives) might suggest"; cited by S B D Kavina: <u>The Political Thought and Career of Hon Dr Edgar H Brookes of South Africa</u> (PhD, Bombay, 1972), p 121.

46   The IRR argued at the same time that this was a role for which liberals, as the bearers of "modern social thinking", were uniquely qualified: see below, p 13.

47   The Programme rejected the proposed retention of the Urban Areas Act, the proposed nationwide labour bureaux, the labour service contract, and other proposals.

48   <u>Programme for Progress</u>, p 4.

49   <u>Ibid.</u>, p 4.

50   <u>Ibid.</u>, p 1.

51   A410/B2.5.2: M Ballinger to B Mdledle, 13.8.1948; copies of the <u>Programme</u> were sent to A B Xuma, Z K Matthews, R Bokwe, James Calata, and R H Godlo.

52   <u>Ibid.</u>

53   BC579 D1.32: D B Molteno, "Segregation and Democracy", lecture, Rhodes University, 8.1.1948.

54   <u>Ibid.</u>, pp 13-14.

55   Q Whyte, <u>Apartheid and Other Policies</u> (including "A Practical, Positive Programme for Non-Europeans") (SAIRR, 15.6.1948)

56   IRR <u>Survey</u> 1947-48, p 13.

57   <u>Apartheid and Other Policies</u>, pp 13-14.

58   <u>Ibid.</u>

59   Julius Lewin, "Why Liberalism Failed", <u>Cape Times</u>, 28.4.1970.

60   Marquard, "Memo", 1947, p 2.

61   <u>The Forum</u> 12/15: "The Liberals' Policy for Natives", 16.7.1949.

62   <u>The Forum</u>, 12/2: "Industry and the Liberals", 20.8.1949.

63   <u>Ibid.</u>

64   See <u>The Forum</u>, 14.5.1949 and subsequently.

65   See <u>The Guardian</u>, September 1949 - January 1950.

66   <u>The Forum</u> 9/13: 17.6.1950.

67   This may also reflect changes in CP policy following Zhdanov's "two camps" report in 1947; see Peter Hudson, "Images of the Future and Strategies in the Present: the Freedom Charter and the South African Left" in Frankel, Pires and Swinning (eds), <u>State, Resistance and Change in South Africa</u> (London, 1988), pp 262-63.

68   <u>The Forum</u> 12/17: 30.7.1949.

69   <u>The Guardian</u> 13/29: 10.11.1949, p 3.

70   <u>Ibid.</u>

71   Jordan Ngubane in <u>The Forum</u> 3/13: 15.4.1950, p 29.