

POST

TRANSVAAL

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Detentions are no solution

THINGS are running true to form. The Government's response to the problems that have bedevilled this country in the last few weeks, is taking the predictable pattern. Massive police activity and the imprisonment without trial of many of the people in the community.

No other visible signs of any action being taken on the political front to come to grips with the underlying causes of the problem. And as usual, promises of sterner action are in the offing.

The nitty gritty of the problem are again the protests against an unequal and discriminatory system of education. We have, in the last four years, pleaded with the Government that the only way the education dissatisfaction is going to be removed from the arena of protest politics, is to do away with the system of colour education. There must only be one educational system catering for the people of the country in the same and equal manner.

We have also advocated for the establishment of a commission of inquiry into the whole problem of education.

But the Government has chosen to ignore our pleas, opting rather to dazzle us with facts and figures showing the growth of the educational population in black schools, yet ignoring to mention the frightening drop out rate in the process. We are constantly being reminded that it is not possible for equality to be reached immediately. It will put an impossible strain on the country's economy.

Yet, there is every opportunity for proper and intelligent planning to wipe out the backlog in the arena and set this country on a road that can lead to greater peace and stability. Surely this is a worthwhile price to pay instead of disruption and problems that are causing so much strain and uncertainty in the land.

Detaining people is not the way to solve the problem. On the contrary, it causes deep resentment and hate in the people involved.

The Star

Why not a law about breathing?

WHEN history looks back on this Government, it will be staggered by the number of laws our legislators deemed necessary to run the country. This year's session alone spawned about 110 Bills — and that is only average. A hundred laws a year, some fatuous, some dangerous, to control our lives . . . roughly 3 000 laws so far in one Government's lifetime!

If anything moves, it seems, a law is passed to control it. Every problem, every situation, is "regulated" by another piece of legislation. Many laws overlap: they not only patch over loopholes, they block up breathing holes as well. They all seem designed to deny the ordinary South African access to knowledge of what is going on around him.

Now, in the dying moments of the 1980 session of Parliament the Government has introduced the National Key Points Bill which empowers the Minister of Defence to ban publication of incidents at key points without his consent. The thinking behind this law appears to be to keep the saboteurs in the dark about the

success of an operation and to lessen its propaganda impact. At the same time it withholds information from the public, the people who need to know the precise extent of the onslaught they are facing. As academics have pointed out, censorship is the worst way to tackle the problem. It cannot stop rumour —and rumour tends to exaggerate. Distorted reports lead to alarm and despondency.

There are already several laws to meet the situation, but this one lets the Minister of Defence take all the decisions. Even if the public accepts as gospel any statement authorised by the Minister and lives in blissful ignorance, there would be danger. The people would be uninformed, unaware and unprepared. They would be unable to make their own judgments of the situation, nor could they make a valid assessment of political consequences.

There are many laws this country could do without: the censorship provision of the National Key Points Bill is among them.

A shot of hate

A MAN drove for his life on Friday evening when he thought that he and his wife and small son were about to be attacked by a carload of tsotsis. When bullets hit their car they were more than ever convinced that their pursuers had evil intentions. Subsequently both adults were wounded and the child was scalded in an accident during

a search of their Soweto home at gunpoint. Police officers later apologised, but how does one get through to the trigger-happy cowboys that they should have far more convincing reasons for trying to kill people? And that their behaviour is what blackens the name of the police —and, incidentally, the country?