

Folk singers hit back at Dr. Vorster

By LIONEL ATTWELL

MANY of Johannesburg's folk-singers and coffee-bar patrons and owners are perturbed by a strong attack made on them last week by Dr. J. D. Vorster, the Prime Minister's brother, in which he said that the "folk-singing movement is used in many instances by the forces of doom." Dr. Vorster, who is chairman of the National Council to Combat Communism, added: "The songs they sing and the way in which they sing them is a sign of the utmost degeneration and should not be tolerated."

Some fear that this attack will lead to drastic steps being taken against modern folk-singers who do not conform to the dictates of the "volk."

Dr. Vorster and Mr. Gert Beetze, secretary of the council, were commenting on an article in an Afrikaans magazine which last week attacked the folk-singing movement in South Africa.

"Adolescent"

The two men, in their personal capacity, said they approved a request for action to be taken against certain folk-singers. "We hold that these long-haired, guitar-playing adolescents have no right to be called folk-singers because they do not belong to the 'volk,'" they said.

"Pretoria students assessed them correctly and banned them

from the campus. This is a lead other students should follow.

"The Afrikaner has so many authentic folk songs that these surrogates from the slums of New York are unnecessary. Many of their songs originate from the Negroes of Harlem and are extended by degenerate Whites who integrate with rootless Negroes at the lowest level. It is to be regretted that these people link up with certain instances in our country.

"Our own indigenous folk-singing and folk-dancing movements should act strongly against these people who are prostituting folk-singing. The songs they sing and the way in which they deliver their songs is a sign of the utmost degeneration and should not be tolerated.

"It is obvious that they are

Beating time
in a
coffee bar



Miss Gwendelyn Warrington (left) sits beating time to two folk singers, Monica and David Bray, in a Hillbrow, Johannesburg, coffee-bar this week.

used in many instances by the forces of doom."

This week I spoke to many folk singers and dozens of their fans who crowd Johannesburg's coffee-bars to listen to them.

Mr. Keith Blundell, leader of the largest group of folk-singers in the country — the Balladeers,

who number over 20 — told me: "The attack is so unwarranted and inaccurate as to be absurd.

"We strongly object to people suggesting that we are not patriotic South Africans and that we are degenerate. We sing songs from all over the world, none of which originate in the slums of

Harlem," said Mr. Blundell, who is 38 and married.

"But just because we are South Africans it does not mean we must only sing Afrikaans folk-songs, although there are several which are beautiful and which we do sing. The attack is not substantiated by any facts."