

Shared concern

TO A SHOCKING extent the Nationalist Press has eviscerated the real issue of Mr. Ahmed Timol's death in detention, and instead has waged an unprecedented campaign of vilification against this newspaper and others who have urged a public inquiry.

There has been one honourable exception — Report. Last Sunday it published a leading article which revealed the concern shared by sincere Nationalists. So closely does it reflect our own sentiments that we publish a translation of it today in our own leader column.

THE SPATE of raids last weekend, and what followed, have caused widespread disquiet in South Africa, including particularly people who fully support Government policy and realise that the struggle against the dangers threatening us cannot always be conducted according to peacetime rules.

Our police, especially those specifically charged with State security, bear a heavy dual responsibility. They must protect the State in dangerous and often painful circumstances. And they must not expose themselves to serious accusations that the quite extraordinary powers existing for this purpose are put to unnecessarily wide use.

There are too many people who wish to promote the impression, both inside South Africa and abroad, that police terrorism exists here. Our sense of values, our internal and foreign relations, cannot afford even the slightest justification for their campaigns.

But let us turn from principles to practicalities.

When such a series of raids occurs, it serves to encourage rumours and fears among a public already conditioned to anxiety by the facts of our life. Police visits on such a scale and at such a time must surely indicate that something is seriously wrong.

Apart from other considerations, the authorities could in this instance have minimised the political damage here and abroad by exhibiting the greatest possible openness with the public. Such sharing of confidence does not only limit the effect of damaging rumours and whipped-up emotions, but also serves as a deterrent to possible abuse of power.

In addition, a detainee died while in police custody. He jumped through a window on the tenth floor of a police building. Another was under guard in hospital.

We have just had an emotional campaign led by a fasting priest about the death of a previous detainee. Such an occurrence at this stage was therefore guaranteed to do the maximum possible damage to our internal

Detainee protest meeting: UP men jeered

Political Reporter

THE UNITED Party's shadow Minister of Justice, Mr. Michael Mitchell, yesterday faced a barrage of heckling from students and Progressive Party supporters at the protest meeting against detention-without-trial in the Johannesburg City Hall. Jeers and interjections were flung at Mr. Mitchell and the leader of the United Party in the Transvaal Provincial Council, Mr. Harry Schwarz, when they tried to explain why the United Party had supported the passage of the Terrorism Act through Parliament during the second reading.

Demands for questions to be allowed from sections of the audience of about 600 people were ignored by the speakers. After the meeting, Mr. Schwarz was surrounded by critical members of the audience, demanding clarification of the party's attitudes to "detention-without-trial" legislation.

Mr. Mitchell said his party had opposed the passage of Section Six of the Terrorism Act — which permits no-trial detention — "tooth and nail".

"We made it clear that our support for the principle of the Act at the second reading was not support for Section Six," he said.

LAW

"I am satisfied that this law was necessary and is necessary."

The United Party was opposed to communists and terrorists because they aimed at the destruction of the very foundation of democracy.

"This ideology must be stamped out," he said. He told the hecklers that were it not for the presence of the United Party over the past 20 years they would not be holding the protest meeting.

The leader of the Opposition, Sir De Villiers Graaff, had asked for an independent judicial commission of inquiry into matters concerning detention in terms of Section Six.

This had been turned down by the Prime Minister, Mr. Vorster, who was out of touch with the people and their fears in this regard as he was on every other matter.

Mr. Schwarz was booed by Progressive supporters when he referred to the "gibes" of Mrs. Helen Suzman, the Progressive MP, at Thursday's protest meeting at the University of the Witwatersrand as "both uncalled for and unwarranted."

● Embassy move on Australian detainee.—Page 3.

RAND DAILY MAIL, Saturday, November 6, 1971.

MITCHELL BLAMES VORSTER

RECENT statements by the Prime Minister, Mr. Vorster, and the Minister of Justice, Mr. Pelsler, could only have encouraged the Security Police to feel that under the Nationalist Government the courts were no longer a factor in the determination of the freedom and integrity of the individual.

This was stated yesterday in Johannesburg at a United Party meeting in the City Hall by the party's shadow Minister of Justice, Mr. Mike Mitchell,

when he dealt at length with the failure of the Security Police to use the section of the law requiring them to bring detainees before a Supreme Court judge within 14 days of their arrest.

Mr. Mitchell accused the Prime Minister of removing the free and independent judiciary, which is the keystone of democracy, by his own inertia.

"When we have reached the state of affairs which we have, where the Minister of Justice,

the Minister of Police and the Prime Minister, say that the integrity and the dignity of the individual may be violated indefinitely in the entire discretion of the police — and indicate that they are not prepared to use their undoubted administrative powers to supervise the activities of the police in this regard — then they have removed themselves from the society in which we live and its very basic democracy." —Sapa. SEE PAGE 4.

Students plea to PM on Imam

Own Correspondent

DURBAN — The Prime Minister, Mr. Vorster, has been called on to answer why he persistently refuses to appoint a judicial commission of inquiry into the death of the Imam Haron.

The call comes in an open letter to Mr. Vorster from 10 students of the University of Natal in Maritzburg. Several of them, including Mr. Tim Dunne, president of the Students Representative Council, were subjected to searches by the Security Police nearly two weeks ago.

Mr. Vorster is asked if he has access to information, not known to the public, which suggests that a commission of inquiry into the death of the Imam in detention would not vindicate the actions of the Security Police.

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We have just had an emotional campaign led by a fasting priest about the death of a previous detainee. Such an occurrence at this stage was therefore guaranteed to do the maximum possible damage to our internal and external relations. But this is not the crux of the problem.

The real questions are: How do the Security Police look after their prisoners to make possible the seventh (according to some counts, the tenth) detention suicide? And is it really impossible to apply a form of continuous judicial supervision over the application of these exceptional State powers?

Why the initial silence about the death of Mr. Ahmed Timol? At the very least, this creates an impression of callousness.

It would have been better to announce immediately, and with regret, the detainee's death with the added assurance that a

full public inquiry would be held as soon as possible.

We have unfortunately reached a stage where arguments about the Security Police are hampering their task and their effectiveness. We believe a new approach of openness with the public would reduce damaging disunity over an essential service.