

In support of a motion of no-confidence in the Prime Minister (9 July 1958)

Margaret Ballinger

The year 1958 marked the ten year anniversary of National Party rule in South Africa, and their overriding policy of racial segregation known as Apartheid. On the day of the speech under discussion, the current Minister of Native Affairs, H.F. Verwoerd, was less than two months away from being sworn in as South Africa's seventh Prime Minister.¹ During his time as the Minister of Native Affairs Verwoerd became known as the "Architect of Apartheid".² As such, his position is diametrically opposed to that of Margaret Ballinger, an elected member of parliament since 1937 in the role of Native Representative.³ The Native Representatives held four parliamentary seats set aside for White representatives and voted for by Black constituents.⁴

Margaret Ballinger had served her constituency of the Eastern Cape for over two decades, but, as much as her international fame, and liberal attitudes towards racial policy were well established, she had not been able to achieve any significant impact in terms of guiding South African politics away from White-minority rule and international disapproval and condemnation.⁵ At this point in time Ballinger had largely lost the support of the leadership of the African National Congress, as the younger members, such as Nelson Mandela, moved the organisation towards a more radical, revolutionary uprising.⁶ Ballinger, who had advocated for peaceful resistance refused to concede that she was largely ineffectual. At the point of presenting this speech Ballinger and her three colleagues were also within two years of Verwoerd scrapping the Native Representative seats in parliament altogether, and with it their political careers.⁷

As a Native Representative, Margaret Ballinger fought tirelessly for the rights of the Black majority, who been increasingly marginalised and subjugated by successive Parliamentary Acts of the White rulers.⁸ After time spent studying at Oxford, Ballinger returned and taught history at both Rhodes University and the University of the Witwatersrand.⁹ A highly gifted speaker, Ballinger was credited by a Time magazine article in 1944 with being perhaps the best speaker in South Africa's parliament apart from Jan Smuts (then current Prime Minister) and perhaps his protégé Jan Hofmeyr.¹⁰

¹ Lawrence Elwin Neame, *The history of Apartheid: The story of the Colour War in South Africa*, (London: Pall Mall Press with Barrie and Rockliff, 1962).

² P. Eric Louw, Thomas M. Leonard (Eds.), "Verwoerd, Hendrik", *Encyclopedia of the Developing World, 1*, (New York: Routledge, 2006): 1661.

³ Meghan Elisabeth Healy, Emmanuel Akyeampong and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Eds.), "Ballinger, Margaret", *Dictionary of African Biography*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012): 362-363.

⁴ Denis Worrall, *South Africa: Government and politics*, (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1975).

⁵ Margaret Ballinger, *From Union to Apartheid: A trek to isolation*, (New York: Praeger, 1969).

⁶ F. Alex Mouton. *Voices in the desert: Margaret and William Ballinger, A Biography*, (Pretoria: Benedic Books, 1997).

⁷ Louw, *Encyclopedia of the Developing World*, 1661.

⁸ Ballinger, *From Union to Apartheid: A Trek to Isolation*.

⁹ Healy, *Dictionary of African Biography*, 362-363.

¹⁰ Staff reporter, "Queen of the Blacks", *Time* 44, 1 (1944): 34.

Ballinger's particular rhetorical style focusses predominantly on the use of logos and extensive substantiation in order to form very powerful arguments and claims. Through comprehensive research, she was able to create arguments that were very difficult to dispute on rational grounds. The choice to steer away from pathos arguments and to avoid ethos claims might initially seem strange, in particular when considered in the light of major ethical questions concerning the ill treatment of Black South Africans. However, the two Nationalist party leaders who had the greatest influence on Apartheid policy (D.F. Malan and H.F. Verwoerd) both held PhDs (in Theology and Psychology respectively) and were very intelligent men, and Ballinger understood they could not be successfully out-manoeuvred using either ethos or pathos due to their superior educational and religious standing. As such, she realised that the audience for her speeches were predominantly conservative, Afrikaner men amongst whom her use of ethos would not stand comparison, and due to the religious aspect, neither would the use of pathos.

The other dominant aspect of Ballinger's speeches is her ability to couch her claims and warrants in terms of the best interests of the White men who formed the governing party. While she would express the importance of greater equality for the Black population she represented by ensuring that the argument always revolved around the benefit that would accrue to the White farmers, businessmen and population in general, should this happen, Ballinger was able to constantly undermine the Apartheid façade. Additionally, newspapers reporting on her speeches meant that it became increasingly difficult to contain the veracity of her arguments, and many Parliamentary rebuttals of her positions were no more than ad hominem attacks designed to detract from her ethos.

The speech that is presented below is one given by Ballinger in support of a motion of no confidence in the Prime Minister of South Africa, J.G. Strijdom, which was brought before the House by the Leader of the Opposition, Sir DeVilliersGraaff of the United Party. Ballinger's speech follows that of J.H. Abraham, the National Party MP for Groblersdal against the motion. Of particular interest in this speech is the manner in which she uses the information supplied by the National Party Government to substantiate her arguments. Unfortunately, the only version of this speech which exists is that of the Hansard transcripts of Parliamentary Debates, which do not clearly record all of the paragraph breaks. I have chosen not to change this, as it could possibly influence the reading of the speech and the interpretation thereof.

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Mr Speaker, as a representative of the Africans in this House I must confess to a certain degree of anxiety when I first heard the terms of the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition. I listened with great care to the statement of his case which he made yesterday, and I hope that I am right in interpreting his claim for common ground with the Nationalist Party on the subject of Native policy as limited to the necessity for developing the reserves. I myself cannot imagine any other possible ground on which, with our experience of the Nationalist Party, any non-Nationalist could possibly have any common ground with them. On that particular issue I concede that it is a standpoint of some considerable importance. The reserves are, after all, our national asset and the people who live in them are our national responsibility, and I think we are all committed, no matter what our political views and principles are, to the development of our national assets and

the recognition of our national responsibilities. In those circumstances my anxiety is to some extent allayed. I may say in passing that I trust the Leader of the Opposition will reassure us in this regard on the next possible occasion. But having that anxiety to some extent allayed I find myself faced with a new anxiety in the speech of the hon. the Prime Minister in reply to the case of the Leader of the Opposition.

The Prime Minister made two points I wish to deal with. One was that insofar as Native affairs are concerned this Government has a record to be proud of. He was very insistent that this Government has done a great deal more than anyone else has done to rehabilitate the reserves, and that he feels he has a right to be satisfied with the progress that has been made. The second point he made was that, whatever the situation in South Africa between Black and White, we here have less trouble on our hands than any other country in Africa in this regard. I wish to express my regret at the outset that apparently it has not been possible for the Prime Minister to be here to-day. I trust it is not due to any deterioration in his health; but I regret it particularly because I feel that it is important that the head of state should hear debates on these matters, and I am sorry that he cannot hear at first hand what I have to say as a representative of Africans.

I want to deal first of all with the reserves. The Prime Minister's case is that this Government has spent more money on the reserves than anyone else. That may have some justification in the eyes of the Prime Minister but I want to remind him that he assumed certain responsibilities in regard to the reserves which no other section of the community has so far assumed. On terms of the policy of the National Party, the reserves are not only a national asset to be developed but they are the potential national home of the African population whom it is the declared intention of this Government to segregate. Now against that background I can only say that the Prime Minister is seriously misled if he considers that this Government is facing up to its responsibilities in that regard. It is not even facing up to its responsibilities in regard to the case we would make in respect of the reserves. But in regard to its own responsibilities, I want to remind the House that his Government specifically repudiated the conditions upon which it might have been possible to build up the Native reserves to serve the purpose which they postulated for them. They repudiated the recommendations of the Tomlinson Report in three important respects. They repudiated the recommendation of the Commission which is basic to all policies in regard to the reserves, that there must be a reorganisation of the basis of landholding. The Commission told them that it was quite impossible to develop the reserves on the present basis of landholding, that it was essential both to stabilize the people in the reserves and to increase the holdings of those who were potentially good farmers. The Tomlinson Commission also told the Government that in order to begin on the path which was necessary to build up the reserves for the purposes which they assumed, it was absolutely essential to begin at once with a diversification of the economic life in the reserves, and to do that it was absolutely essential to harness all European support that could be given. But the Government repudiated that proposition also. Finally, on the simple question of money, the Commission told the Government in most explicit terms that it was not a case of spending a few million pounds, but that it is essential to spend at least £100 million and to get on with the job at once. On that basis alone the Government has denied its own case

that it has made here. The result is that the only thing that is going on in the reserves is a continuation of an all too slow process of trying to redeem the agricultural deterioration of those areas. The fact is that there is no dynamic change in the condition of the reserves and to-day the reserves are just as little on the way to becoming a national home for the African population as they have ever been. So that the emphasis in this regard is not on what the Government has done but on what it has not done. On the economic side they have failed lamentably, and on the political side the story is no better. Their record there is the establishment of the so-called Bantu authorities, another of the Nationalist Party's great frauds which is becoming more and more revealed as such, a system which pulled up by the roots the whole democratic process which had been developing in the reserves for over 50 years. It is not a restoration of the Bantu tribal authorities but the establishment of Ministerial authority. The Bantu authorities are a very thinly disguised façade for the authority of the Minister of Native Affairs. The Bantu authorities are the people who are prepared to say yes to the Minister of Native Affairs. They are not traditional authorities. The traditional authorities are the chiefs but they can only be chiefs whilst they agree with hon. the Minister. A chief is a chief today but not tomorrow if he does not say what the Minister of Native Affairs wants him to say. The other concession to this so-called political progress of the African population is the old story that the Africans will get self-government in their own areas when they are able to exercise the powers which will be granted to them as they learn to use them. Sir, this sort of story at this stage, in the middle of the twentieth century, is a complete farce. Here we have in South Africa the most highly developed African population on the African continent. Our people have had 300 years of contact with so-called Western Christian civilization. They have had a long history of education. They are educated, they are experienced and they have developed as no other African population on this continent. But on this continent today, while other communities are becoming self-governing nations, we are talking this idle, silly nonsense about conceding to our Africans rights of local self-government, government in their own areas, when they are ready and fit to exercise it. It is against that background that the Prime Minister has told us that we are having less trouble in South Africa than anywhere else in Africa. What I want to tell the Prime Minister is that it is easy for him to say that and believe it, in view of what is going on in South Africa. But before I come to that point I want to put another point to the House.

Here we have a situation in which both on the economic and political front this government has failed to meet any of the obligations of its own policy, to build up the African population to make them independent and self-governing, but at the same time they have whittled away the civil rights of the Africans. They have reduced their rights of movement and their property rights. They have reduced their access to the labour market where they might build up their own reserves to help themselves. They have created new insecurity and instability among the population in the towns upon whom their own livelihood is dependent. They have deprived the African population of any liberties they had in what they call European areas but what is our common economy, on the ground that these people were going to have rights and full development in their own areas. It is against this background that the Prime Minister told this House that we in South Africa are having less trouble in race

relations than any other country in Africa. My answer is that at least the other countries in Africa know what they are up against; they know what troubles they are facing. We in South Africa do not know what troubles we are facing, and why not? For this reason, that when the inevitable pressures of these policies lead to discontentment and unhappiness amongst the African populations, every effort is made to reduce their capacity to make their discontents known to a European electorate which in any case is not interested. This Government has continuously taken every power in its hands to suppress free speech and to reduce the capacity of the African population to reach the White electors and to put before the White electors the burden of its troubles. In the towns, and indeed wherever trouble arises, wherever there is anxiety and distress, they throw a cordon round the Native areas. The new policy of the Minister of Native Affairs is to seal off the African population. His attempt is to seal off the African population from the European population in any case. He is doing his best to reduce every point of contact between European and African in this country; but he is also doing his best to prevent this community from knowing what is going on among the African population. We have the wide use of a banning process to remove people who are likely to be troublesome in Native locations, whether in town or country. We have a ban imposed, at the will of the hon. Minister himself, on meetings of Africans where they are likely to express their discontent, and we have this process whereby the African population itself is kept herded away from the European community. Typical instances of serious cases which this House ought to be investigating very carefully at the present time are Zeerust and Sekukuniland. What the truth of these troubles is nobody really knows, because hon. the Minister, when he finds himself up against difficulties, seals off the area, and not only refuses to allow people to go in to see what is happening, but even refuses to allow the people themselves to come out to tell anybody what is happening. This is a situation in which I feel the hon. the Prime Minister is on dangerous ground if he believes that silence means peace, if he believes that because we have no open and declared and recognised troubles, there are no troubles amongst the African populations. There are troubles amongst the African populations and conflict between Africans and European authority in this country as never before. In my opinion, of course, the hon. the [sic] Prime Minister himself is anxious about this situation. He keeps harping, as do other members of his Cabinet, on the necessity for all Whites to stand together in defence of the White man in South Africa. That was the main theme of the Prime Minister's appeal yesterday: the Whites must stand together in South Africa to protect their position and secure their own safety. The hon. the [sic] Prime Minister talked as if we were a beleaguered camp. I think, Sir, there is the shadow of reality in that attitude. I think the way things are developing, if we are not a beleaguered camp now we will be, and that at no distant date. I am myself convinced – and I am in very good company, increasingly extensive company that it is quite impossible for any government to continue to hold down an African population – any African population, but particularly ours – as this Government and this Minister are endeavouring to do. We will have to face the Nemesis of this situation, and we can only hope that we shall have enough time to reconsider the position and try to save ourselves. The real advice that we can give to the Government is not that White men should stand together to

defend themselves, and to defend White civilization in this country, but that sensible White men should urge and induce the Government to get into co-operative relationship with all the non-Europeans in this country, to establish a system in this country under which there will be consent and mutual respect and mutual safeguarding. It is long past time we stopped talking as if in fact we were a beleaguered community. It is long past time we took the only reasonable means of safeguarding ourselves here in South Africa, and that is to come to an understanding with our fellow citizens and to build up a truly democratic society. The Prime Minister was at great pains to tell us how democratic the Afrikaner is. All I can say is that he has queer ways of showing his democratic tendencies. The record of the Statute Book during the last ten years has been a progressive record of the deterioration of the civil liberties of all sections of the community. There has been a deterioration of the civil liberties of the non-European community, but what we are learning is that you cannot have a deterioration of the civil liberties of one section without getting a deterioration of the civil liberties of all sections. We have had a record of the narrowing field of civil liberties for all people in this country in the last ten years, and a complete denial of the principles of civil liberties and rights of self-determination of our non-European population in South Africa. Sir, we suffer here in South Africa from an over-weening vanity, but we cannot indefinitely stand against the opinion of the world or the forces of our own society. We can only again warn the Government and put on record our view of this situation. In doing this, we are doing the only thing we can do and we shall do it as long as we are allowed to do it. I propose to move as a further amendment; to omit all the words after "That" and to substitute "This".

House views with increasing anxiety:

- i. The continuing failure of the Government to establish any co-operative understanding with the African people; and
- ii. The progressive attempts of the Department of Native Affairs to isolate the African community and to administer it by decree and intimidation.

It therefore calls upon the Government in the interests of internal peace and our standing in the world outside, particularly in Africa, to abandon the practice of arbitrary government now in operation among Africans, to restore the civil liberties and progressively extend the political rights of the African people and thus set the country on the road to true democratic government.