

INTO QUEENSLAND, THE STATE IN A "STATE OF EMERGENCY"

On the day the Springboks reached Brisbane from Canberra, Thursday, July 22, in five light aircraft, the Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane, Dr. Felix Arnott, announced a special inter-denominational service because "we believe that many Christians are disturbed at the tensions now current in our community."

Professor Zelman Cowen, vice-chancellor of Queensland University, spoke on the same day of an "inflamed situation" and said he viewed the prevailing climate of protest and reaction to protest with deep concern.

When I arrived in Brisbane that afternoon these two statements seemed much too alarming, but by midnight it seemed they were not.

The Springboks were staying in a hotel on Wickham Terrace, high above the city, and it was soon apparent that that crowd control philosophy of the Queensland Police Commissioner, Ray Whitrod, was going to be very thoroughly put into effect. Whitrod does not believe in keeping force in the background. He believes in showing the size of the force which will be ultimately available, and showing it in the beginning.

"With a weak show of force, all you do is tempt the more radical people to have a go. You don't tempt radicals. I'd rather have my police on display," he had explained.

When the Springboks arrived at their hotel in two buses they were greeted by about 300 demonstrators on the footpath across the street. Facing the demonstrators were 300 police, including about 50 in white crash helmets. Just outside the front door of the hotel was the police emergency squad in overalls and asbestos gloves, presumably to deal with bombs and flares, of which in the end there were none. On the roof of a truck there was a police cinemaman, ready to record what happened. Several television crews, one already poised on the top of a specially erected tower of scaffolding, prepared to shoot.

The familiar cry, "Go home racists", was amended to celebrate the state of emergency. Now it was, "Welcome home racists". "The whole world is watching" was another chant, reminding the forgetful that they were, after all, in front of television cameras. Then came "Sieg heils" and rude words in Afrikaans.

There was also a smaller group, bravely cheering and clapping the Springboks.

After 15 minutes of this a police loud hailer asked the crowd to clear the footpath, and before this could have been done voluntarily (which in the mood of the day was perhaps assuming too much) two lines of police moved forward, shoulder to shoulder, and the crowd turned and ran. The police ran after them, downhill into a park, and that was all that I could see from the hotel in the dark.

(I was still on remand, charged with hindering the police and resisting arrest in Adelaide more than three weeks earlier.)

Later a reporter of the Australian Broadcasting Commission, John Gilbert, returned to the hotel with some taped interviews, having himself been chased with the crowd. He told me that he had seen people being kicked and punched by police. Then he played me his tapes.

"It's incredible. I can't believe it. This is Australia," said the voice of an 18-year-old boy on the tape, and a girl's voice sobbed, "And it's supposed to be student violence,"

Four hours later, writing my cable for London just before midnight, I said, "As the day ends more people are being arrested just across the street. Of course there are many decent young policemen among the 900 assigned to Springbok duty, but they are not being helped by the remarks made by the Police Minister, Maxwell Hodges, who described the demonstrators today as unkempt urchins and pseudo-intellectuals."

Hodges had accused the marchers in yesterday's demonstration of having no integrity because they had broken an agreement with the police to go by a certain route. In fact they marched on Parliament House, which disrupted the centre of the city for 1½ hours and 43 people were arrested.

Hodges' accusation that the marchers had broken an agreement was perfectly understandable, but in the eyes of the students their breach was honourable, a point which

the Minister for Police either didn't understand or didn't care to mention.

"We were going to prove to the people and to the government," explained one student later, "that this was a police state and therefore we could not accept the police statement because it would be accepting a state of emergency."

One local reporter, Andrew Kruger, who used to be at Queensland university, told me that, during the march, he saw a plain clothes policeman hit a man in the stomach, while both the man's arms were being held by uniformed policemen. Nearby two other policemen, having witnessed the action, said to each other: "It was an accident, wasn't it?" and "Yes, for sure." After which they smiled.

The reporter told me that from his experience it was no good laying charges against the police before Queensland magistrates.

On the night of July 22 six demonstrators from the park took refuge from the police in the Brisbane Trades Hall (headquarters of the trade union movement in Queensland). Three policemen chased them inside before the doors could be locked. Two policemen were ejected, but the third arrested a student called Peter Beattie "for disorderly conduct". He was taken to hospital, but not in a serious condition.

While all this was going on ten of the 25 Springboks were being entertained by a stockbroker, Robin Corrie, at his home. There were two busloads of police on the street outside, and plain clothes police in the garden. The Springboks returned to their hotel about ten o'clock that night, when three more arrests were made.

Commenting on the big march through Brisbane on the previous day, the Premier, Mr. Bjelke-Petersen, said it had shown that a group of people and certain union leaders were determined to create chaos and strife. It was usual, he said, for claims of violence by police to be made after a demonstration. He was satisfied that police had handled the situation properly.

Next morning, on July 23, I went down to police headquarters to equip myself with the prescribed arm band, which was red and bore the word, "Press". I didn't have such a thing in Vietnam, I remember.

Slowly the day progressed towards its critical ending outside the Springboks' hotel. My cable to London that night

began, "The South African Rugby team will have to leave their hotel by tomorrow evening if the Queensland government and the police force are to avoid what might become an ugly confrontation with Brisbane's angry students."

I had just seen 500 students roaring and chanting about their hatred of apartheid in front of a much smaller number of policemen, who were personally led on this occasion by their Commissioner, Ray Whitrod, a calm good-humoured figure in a lounge suit. He was taking no more chances with the quality of the leadership of his force, immediately below him. Patently, he was also determined to control very closely the behaviour of unsophisticated country policemen, imported for the Springbok visit from all over this enormous State. In their khaki uniforms, these country policemen stood out from their city colleagues, in blue uniforms.

The students and their supporters and leaders (including university staff members, some trade unionists, and others of all kinds) were still infuriated by police behaviour on the previous night, when the demonstration was broken up with unnecessary violence, after only 15 minutes, and by the government's total support for this police behaviour. The Premier had refused a public enquiry and, despite Whitrod's reputation with the students, many of them were not satisfied by the Commissioner's decision to hold a private enquiry within the police force.

The night was dark, but television lights illuminated the scene which was tense and, in some ways, historic, because it marked a hidden confrontation between those in the police force following Whitrod, who wanted to practise understanding, and those who wanted to get tough, in the old tradition. Whitrod himself put the position less dramatically, saying, "When you walk a thin line, sometimes wrong decisions are made."

For three hours the din went on, the demonstrators emboldened and confident, because they outnumbered the police. The police watched the demonstrators. Some policemen were interested and patient, some itched for action again. Senior Inspectors, with walkie-talkies, walked anxiously up and down. Whitrod waited. When and how would it end?

Earlier that day the country policemen, in their barracks at Enoggera, had passed a vote of "no confidence" in their Commissioner, but now it was obvious that Whitrod

was very much in command of all his policemen, country and city, outside the hotel. No one, however, commanded the demonstrators, where all sorts of leadership vied for control. Here was another danger.

About 9 o'clock, the sister in charge of the Holy Spirit Hospital next door to the hotel, telephoned police headquarters to say that the noise was disturbing her patients. There had been two operations, and five other patients under intensive care had been upset by the noise. The message was relayed immediately to Whitrod, who invited one of the student leaders, Errol O'Neill, a strong orator, with very long black hair and a tense, thin face, to go and see the sister, to make sure for himself that the message was no police trick. (Many demonstrators believed that the hotel had been chosen simply because it was next door to this hospital and because the government believed that this proximity would inhibit all protests.)

When O'Neill returned, Whitrod handed him a loud hailer, inviting him once again to address the demonstrators. O'Neill confirmed what had happened and a silent vigil was then suggested. At this point Jim Henderson, a Communist and a much older man, who isn't a student but works at the university library, argued powerfully that this decision, put unconditionally, would be nothing but a victory for the government. He got the demonstrators to agree to disband, only after declaring that it would be the government's responsibility if the demonstrators disturbed both hospital and Springboks on the following night. They called on the government to remove the Springboks from their hotel.

Then at last the din was stilled, and eventually the demonstrators began to move away, although some remained all night.

Earlier that day about 3,000 of the 18,000 students at the University of Queensland decided to go "on strike". They declared that they would attend no lectures until the Springboks had left Queensland. They called on other universities throughout Australia to follow their example. A "strike mobilisation committee", formed by the mass meeting, commandeered the students' union building, declaring that they would remain in charge of it while the Springboks remained in Australia. David Luck, president of the student union, reluctantly handed over the keys of the building.

A student deputation asked the vice-chancellor, Professor Zelman Cowen, to "turn this into a strike-bound University and a centre of anti-racist propaganda." Professor Cowen, who later sent four staff observers to the demonstration outside the hotel to see what would happen to the students, said it would be wrong to give any official endorsement to strike action. He said it was the vice-chancellor's responsibility to see that the university carried on normally, at the same time ensuring full and frank debate on all manner of issues.

Dan O'Neill, elder brother of Errol, and a lecturer in the English department, gave his radical interpretation of what was going on. "We can no longer beat the Springbok tour, and fight racism in the streets of Australia," he said. "The only way is to stop Australia and bring the industrial system to a halt."

Another speaker at the meeting said, "The total powerlessness of our situation became evident when we relied on police allowing reasonable dissent. Now the government has completely unleashed the power of police to stifle dissent. The only avenues left to us are the universities and the trade unions." Later an economic lecture was disrupted when about 15 students tried to persuade other students to join the strike. A vote was called among about 150 present, but only three voted for a strike.

The University of Queensland has the greatest number of students in Australia, more than 18,000, of whom over 8,000 are full time. There are more than 1,000 academic staff, and about 2,000 other staff. It's a huge, sprawling, rather hideous place, short of finance and badly planned. For some years there has been unrest on the Queensland campus, but one of the basic troubles is that the great mass of students are very conservative, perhaps the most conservative in Australia. This drives the radicals to distraction and to extremes of thought, speech and action.

Of the staff, only about six would be real radicals. Of the students, perhaps 50 to 100. And there are also some radical ex-students who frequent the university and have influence there. On certain issues the radicals can command the support of thousands, but not for more than a few days have they been able to keep the support of more than a few hundred students.

The anti-apartheid issue came on top of other issues, like dissatisfaction with the university and its Vice-Chancellor, with the state of emergency and with police behaviour. Hence the strike.

Meanwhile, suspense mounted as the Springboks prepared to play their first game in Brisbane, against Queensland. The Exhibition Ground was ready, with its great fence and its deep holes, but Whitrod said that police plans had been quite drastically changed because of a threat which he would not disclose.

However, the rumours were startling. The Police Minister, Maxwell Hodges, had already spoken of rockets, with explosive tips being fired on to the playing area from outside the ground.

While the Springboks were playing Queensland, voters in Brisbane and Maryborough would be deciding two by-elections, described in a government advertisement as "no longer ordinary," because of "threats to freedom to live as you wish," apparently from the unions. (On July 21, almost all trade unions in Queensland had stopped work for the whole day. What had started as a demand for higher pensions was later combined with a protest against the state of emergency. Even among union members it was not a popular strike, because it meant a loss of money when prices were rising fast.)

However, Tom Burns, federal president of the Labor Party, told one meeting that the workers of Queensland, by withholding their labour, were protesting against the Premier's policy, which "overrides law and order, denies constitutional justice, invokes police rule and destroys the democratic reputation of our nation."

Also on July 23 the Supreme Court of Queensland adjourned its hearing of a challenge to the validity of the government's proclamation of a state of emergency for the Springbok visit. Harold Dean, a Labor member of the Queensland parliament and a member of the Royal National Association, brought the action. His counsel argued that the commandeering of the Exhibition Grounds was an infringement of the property rights of those who owned the ground. Mr. Justice Stable reserved his decision.

While all this was going on the Springboks, when they were not training, could be seen wandering about the streets

of Brisbane, unmolested and generally unrecognised. They didn't wear their Springbok blazers.

On Saturday, July 24, as the Springboks prepared to meet Queensland in their first Brisbane match, "The Courier Mail" reported a rift in cabinet between the Premier, Mr. Bjelke-Petersen, and the police commissioner, Maxwell Hodges, about the need for an enquiry into allegations about police brutality on the night of July 23. The Premier said he had every confidence in the Queensland police force, which had a reputation second to none in Australia. On the night in question they had faced an extremely difficult situation. "They were opposed by trained agitators, radicals and militant union leaders," he said.

The Premier said that police violence had become the "catch-cry of demonstrators and law-breakers in Australia and overseas." It was remarkable how union leaders who would trample arrogantly over the rights of their own union members, as well as of citizens, were the first to complain when the events for which they were directly responsible affected themselves. He said that the Trades Hall, where some demonstrators had taken refuge from police, had a reputation "as the treason centre for draft dodgers, and it would appear that it is to become the headquarters for law-breakers taking part in demonstrations against the Springboks." As for this day, the Premier said, "I would not be surprised if the demonstrators open a new line of attack. I have heard that it could be rough in the streets today."

The Police Minister, Maxwell Hodges, said police had conducted themselves well, but he ordered a special enquiry into allegations against the police department.

Meanwhile "The Courier-Mail" was describing the Premier's "bland assurance that he is satisfied with police behaviour" as not good enough. Tom Burns, federal president of the Labor Party, was calling for a Royal Commission into allegations of police brutality. It should be headed by a judge, appointed by the Commonwealth Government and not by the government of Queensland. The Labor Party, said Burns, had many independent witnesses willing to give factual evidence. Burns went on, "The Labor Party will not stay silent while the Premier and the Police Minister indulge in blood sports at the expense of the life and limbs of young Queenslanders. What kind of Queensland will de-

velop if they grow up in an atmosphere of police bashing and persecution?"

The Labor Party, the trade union movement and students from Queensland University and the Institute of Technology all decided to boycott the match that afternoon as the best way to show their disapproval of the racially selected South African team. They decided instead to hold a big meeting in Victoria Park, near the Exhibition Ground, where the match was to be played.

It was typically Queensland in Victoria Park that morning—warm winter sunshine, jacaranda trees not yet in bloom, and a pie stall. Also, for the first time on the tour, the Labor Party was right up with the anti-apartheid movement. I think this was because of the sincerity of Gerry Jones, the young State organiser of the Labor Party, who was an unsuccessful candidate for Kennedy in the 1969 Federal Elections. Jones did well at that time, and he still has political ambitions in parliament, but he refused to let these ambitions stand in the way of his convictions against apartheid.

Gradually the crowd built up, and I noticed John Houston, the Labor Party's Queensland leader, who was born at Wick in the north of Scotland, but he didn't speak. The crowd, as usual, was mostly students, very young, with some old people, some children and some aborigines. They sat on the grass and were not a bit excited. It was a simple sort of scene.

Gerry Jones had brought along an open truck, with a loudspeaker. At each end of the truck was a flagpole. The flags of Australia and the United Nations were flying. Warily, Jones gave the crowd, now well over 1,000, to a wide variety of speakers.

Jim Prentice was one of the first, a student suspended from the university last year, with a shock of wild red hair; he wanted to burn the Australian flag, because of what it stood for today. He is 21, and a Marxist-anarchist, if anyone can be fairly described so shortly.

Prentice was a fiery speaker, and I think Jones must have switched off the power on the loud speaker, quite soon and secretly. Anyway, Jones was soon taking a "dead" microphone away from Prentice and, oddly enough, it began to work again while Jones suggested to the crowd that, instead of burning the Australian flag, it might be better to burn the South African flag at the end of the meeting. Fortuitously,

he had one with him. Jones, I thought, was a good organiser.

The next speaker, I remember, was Dick Shearman, another suspended student and a Marxist-Leninist Communist, who spent one month in China last year. Shearman is a savage, powerful speaker, also 21, and he demanded a march on the Rugby Union club at Ballymore. He suggested they burn it or "stay there until the government gets the bloody Boks out of our country."

There was anger and desperation lurking within the crowd, and Shearman and the very small minority of violent radicals might have got the crowd to march where they wanted, and then there might have been real trouble. About this time a bearded Irishman, called Declan Affley, began to sing, with a guitar, "We shall overcome" and other famous protest songs.

Then Bill Hayden, who was a policeman until he entered the Commonwealth parliament in 1961, became the first member of the House of Representatives in Canberra, to stand up on a platform with anti-apartheid demonstrators of all persuasions, including the extreme left. By now the crowd was much more roused and Hayden's intervention was courageous, because it was open to so much misrepresentation by his political enemies. It was an example of the best kind of democratic leadership. Hayden contributed his own strong, direct reasoning to a rare kind of public debate, from which some sort of definite action was going to emerge.

Hayden warned the crowd away from folly, telling them not to march on the Rugby Club at Ballymore and ridiculing the idea that Brisbane was ready for the "barricades", as the extreme radicals had argued. "You will be cleaned up," he said. "A lot of innocent people will get hurt. Remember the workers are not behind you."

Hayden argued, correctly, that if the students wanted to get the workers behind them against apartheid and racism, they must get into the factories and educate and persuade trade unionists.

A couple of university lecturers, Dan O'Neill, the prominent radical, and John Maguire, a very interesting Roman Catholic priest, also spoke strongly. So did Peter McGregor, who had come up from Sydney for the weekend.

By this time many people in Australia, of all persuasions,

were becoming convinced that the cricket tour by the South Africans, beginning in October, could not go on. But Mrs. Sekai Holland, the black Rhodesian, said very bitterly, "I don't believe the cricket tour will be cancelled. I think it is coming." Mrs. Holland argued that massive police precautions in recent matches, and government policy in the non-Labor States had given the authorities an unexpected ability to keep demonstrators at bay while sport went on. She believed that the authorities were now deciding to start the South African tour and to keep it going, for domestic political reasons and because they wanted to do business and make defence arrangements with a white South Africa.

Long before the meeting ended, the match at the Exhibition Ground started. So I left the crowd and, partly as a reporter and partly because I wanted to, I went to watch the football. On the ground behind the high wire fence stood the customary force of police. But the Springbok match against Queensland was the quietest of the tour, and there were no distractions for spectators. I began to enjoy myself and I remember feeling rather irritated when intelligence reached us in the stand that the crowd in Victoria Park was on its way. Where was it going to go? Which of the speakers had finally won?

Obviously a reporter had to find out, so reluctantly I left the ground and went into the street. The crowd was on its way into the centre of the city, marching confidently but quietly right down the middle of the streets, which were very empty in any case, because it was Saturday afternoon.

One of those in the lead was Senator George Georges (Labor), who represents Queensland in the Senate in Canberra. Senator Georges had also spoken from the truck that afternoon and he showed, I think, political courage in deliberately using his public position to protect the hot-headed young, by just being with them and also by trying to keep a liaison going between them and the police. He had a son at the university. I noticed Bill Hayden, his Labor colleague in the House of Representatives, on the pavement, keeping up with the march but not taking part. Having made his stand, he was now being circumspect.

The march went on to the hotel where the Springboks were staying. That night a record number of 1,500 demonstrators faced about 500 policemen, outside the hotel, under

the close control of their Commissioner, Ray Whitrod. Some windows in the hotel were broken, and there were nine arrests, and finally a forceful removal of the demonstrators.

But I saw none of this, because that evening I had to fly to Adelaide, 1,000 miles away, to prepare for my appearance in court on Monday, July 26, on charges of hindering the police and resisting arrest at the Springbok match in Adelaide on June 30.

That day, July 25, the Queensland government won two by-elections, at Merthyr, in Brisbane, and at Maryborough, up the north coast. The Premier, Mr. Bjelke-Petersen, said the victories "make it clear that the electors support our law and order policy." Maryborough had been held by a Labor M.P. for 25 years, and the Premier said the electors had obviously opposed those "who wished to impose their will on the majority."

John Houston, the State Labor Leader, said, "the results will be seen by the world as evidence that Queenslanders support racial discrimination." He accused the government of setting up the situation and using fear tactics to mislead the electors.

As usual, in politics, both leaders were overdoing it.