

"REVEAL"

PUBLISHED & EDITED BY BEN DOKTER

18 PARAKEET ST., INALA

QLD., AUSTRALIA

Phone 70 4356

Associate Editor
L. SMITH
Box 33 P.O., University of Qld.
St. Lucia, Brisbane

THE DEFENDERS

OF

HUMAN RIGHTS ASSOCIATION ANU ARCHIVES OF
BUSINESS & LABOUR

84 SMITH RD., GOODNA

Phone 70 4079

President
I. IVANOFF

Secretary
D. LYNCH

Liaison Officer
BEN DOKTER

EDITORIAL

The state of Civil Liberties in Queensland is best described as being in an unhealthy and confused mess. Confused-because some groups are denied privileges which extend to others. Permits for demonstrations are denied and other protests suppressed by arrests or fines for some groups, while other groups act quite freely. Unhealthy -because of this bias and the denial of means of political protest for some groups, which forces them into the breaking of the law, if any action is to be undertaken.

At present under Traffic Regulations 123 and 126, a permit from the District Superintendent of Police is required before a pamphlet can be distributed, a placard publicly carried or open-air demonstration or meeting held. A permit can be denied or any conditions set without explanation or appeal, and 14 days notice for a procession or meeting is required.

In brief, major means of political expression, indeed for the "average" citizen virtually the sole means of expression, are in the hands of policemen. The potential abuse of such powers are enormous. The present practice of them is bad. It seems incredible but in Queensland a person can be and has been fined for placing a pamphlet in a letter-box. This is surely time enough for a change.

The Civil Rights Action Committee was formed to bring these facts to the public notice and attempt to improve the situation. Its aims are moderate. It believes that the distribution of literature or the display of placards should be unrestricted - provided that such activities be undertaken in a peaceful manner and do not obstruct the flow of traffic either vehicular or pedestrian. It recognises the need for a police permit to be issued for an open-air meeting, procession or demonstration, but can see no need for any period of notice. Also in order to prevent abuse of this power written explanation should be given for a denial of a permit or if significant conditions are set.

The Committee has attracted support from people across a wide part of the political spectrum, from Labor and Liberal supporters, from those who, for example, support and oppose the war in Vietnam.

Meetings have been held to plan activities. A delegation was received by the Minister for Justice and although no action was promised, some radio coverage was given and it was a major news item for the night on Channel 7. Widespread backing is being given to the committee from the unions. A speaker has addressed the Trades and Labor Council and was given an enthusiastic reception. A pamphlet is being distributed through the unions and elsewhere. All state newspapers and the major interstate organs of the press are being sent a letter, which includes an offer of a speaker to give short addresses to meetings of interested organisations. Test cases are being supported. The next issue of the University newspaper will have a supplement devoted to this campaign and civil liberties in Queensland. All this is hoped to culminate in demonstrations which are planned to be held on September 1, 2 and 5th.

We, the Editors of REVEAL believe that the right of political freedom to the fullest dissemination of, and access to, information and ideas is a more basic right than even the right to vote. It is only when one has adequate access to information and arguments, that one can vote and act wisely and well. Only with the fullest freedom of political expression can there be even the expectation that injustices and iniquities will be exposed and solutions placed before the public. We therefore urge all readers of REVEAL and members of the Defenders of Human Rights Association to give active, moral and financial support to the work of this Committee. Freedom from fear of political expression should be extended to all in our society.