



LIBERATION

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THE FUTURE OF THE BANTU
LANGUAGES**

—By W. B. LOCKWOOD

**FIGHTING AGAINST BANTU
EDUCATION**

—AN EDITORIAL



A JOURNAL OF DEMOCRATIC DISCUSSION

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A Journal of Democratic Discussion

No. 14

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Editorial

FIGHTING AGAINST BANTU EDUCATION

“Teaching should lead the child to do naturally, and therefore willingly, what society has prescribed as correct, good and commendable.”

—“Draft Higher Primary School Course.”
published in the **Bantu Education Journal**.

A YEAR ago, when the A.N.C. Conference decided to embark upon a mass boycott of Dr. Verwoerd’s “Bantu Education” schools, many people were shocked. There were different reasons for this reaction. Some people were shocked because they did not think it would be a good idea to boycott the N.A.D. schools, even if it could be done. They feared that the children would be missing a whole lot of good education, mixed up with a little propaganda which would soon be forgotten. They did not really understand that, poor as “Native Education” has always been, handicapped by inadequate schools and equipment and undertrained teachers, the new “Bantu Education” was not only worse

in quality but different in kind. No one has done more than Dr. Verwoerd and the Native Affairs Department to clear up this misconception. It has now become clear to all who have examined this matter honestly and intelligently, that the Bantu Education Act is a deliberate effort to use the schoolroom as an instrument in the implementation of apartheid and white baasskap. The new draft courses published by the Department leave no room for doubt on this matter: from now on African schooling will consist very largely of N.A.D. propaganda in favour of the Nationalist ideology.

“ALTERNATIVE” EDUCATION

There were other objections to the decision of the A.N.C. Prominent among those was the argument that it would be wrong to withdraw children from the N.A.D. schools unless and until alternative education could be provided for, outside the official state channels. In practice this argument amounts to unconditional rejection of the decision—although it sounds like conditional support. It is obviously quite impossible for private institutions to take over the functions of the state and to create an entire educational system on the scale that is required. Moreover, the Act will not permit private schools to be started unless they are registered with the Native Affairs Department. And, presumably, the Department will refuse to register schools unless they comply with the Verwoerd-Eiselen syllabuses. The Roman Catholic Church has collected large sums of money from non-Catholics, who are no doubt under the impresssion that their mission schools are opposing Bantu Education. But in fact the Roman Catholic schools **accept** the Verwoerd curriculum. They are going to teach Bantu Education in their schools, plus Roman religious dogmas. Thus any idea that by contributing to their funds one was helping them to make a stand against Bantu Education was quite misguided.

The idea that the boycott should be made conditional on providing “alternative education” is in fact quite wrong in principle. The boycott is not an end in itself. It is part and parcel of a political campaign to protest against the Bantu Education Act and **to secure the extension to African and all other children of the right to a proper education along the lines envisaged in the Freedom Charter.** It is not the aim of a political boycott of this sort to relieve the State of its obligation to provide proper education, but rather to compel the State to fulfil that obligation honourably.

NON-POLITICAL THINKING

Of course, once the children are withdrawn from schools, the democratic movement will have to try to look after them. Cultural clubs and other movements will arise for the school-less children. But this will not be a substitute for a proper state schooling; it will merely be a part of the movement to win such schooling for all. The difference is important. This wrong conception of “alternative education” is in fact the result of non-political thinking about the subject.

The general background of all South African problems is one of

vicious colonial-type oppression of the majority of the people; the minority dictatorship exercised through the Nationalist Party with its fascist ideology.

If one tries to consider education or any other problem facing the people without reference to this background, one is certain to make serious blunders. There will never be a true opening of the doors of culture and learning until freedom reigns. It follows that the struggle for proper schooling can only be seen in its true significance as part of the broader struggle for the overthrow of the dictatorship. The object of the boycott is limited; it is to oppose and defeat Bantu Education. It is therefore ridiculous to demand that a new people's educational system (only fully to be provided by a people's government) should be established before the boycott begins.

"PRACTICAL" CONSIDERATIONS

These, we believe, were the main "theoretical" arguments advanced against the decision by genuine opponents of apartheid: neither as we have shown, can withstand serious examination. The "half-a-loaf-is-better-than-none" argument overlooks the fact that Verwoerd offers no bread at all, but a stone. And the objection about "no alternative education" really derives from the same fallacy: it assumes that the children will really be deprived of something valuable if they are kept out of the Verwoerd schools, and that the Congress is therefore called upon to replace the State as the organiser of education.

More important than these objections are the practical difficulties raised by those who, while accepting the correctness of the proposed boycott as a method of struggle against Bantu Education, doubt the ability of the movement to organise an effective boycott in a short time. To organise so great a mass movement, they point out, requires time, hard work, steady patient explanations. The absurdly short time originally allowed by the A.N.C. leaders revealed a serious underestimation of this factor.

AFRAID OF FAILURE

There is a vast difference between this second group of critics and the first. For a while the first group we considered was afraid that the boycott might succeed, this second group is really afraid that it will fail, and that the prestige of the A.N.C. and the fight against Bantu Education will therefore suffer.

On the other hand, if we are afraid to act lest we might fail, we stand a grave danger of never acting at all, of always postponing action *on the grounds of unpreparedness until the fight is lost while we are getting ready for it*; our forces perhaps demoralised by continual inaction while the enemy strikes ever new blows.

We do not doubt that it was correct to postpone the original decision to commence the boycott on April 1. That decision has been correctly criticised by Congress itself—and we must say we find the present self-critical tendency of the A.N.C. the most heartening and inspiring phenomenon, and the surest guarantee that we are seriously heading towards victory. Unfortunately, the postponement of the boy-

cott has been taken by many people as a postponement or even abandonment of the campaign itself.

WHAT WAS WRONG?

What was **wrong** with the April 1st decision? Unless we are quite clear about that, we shall never be able to go forward with this campaign.

Was it that the date was set too soon? Not necessarily. Three months could be enough to get a campaign going properly, provided that massive, well-organised work was done. Was it that alternative education was not provided for? We have dealt with this idea above.

The real fault with the decision about April 1st was that it assumed that all that was necessary was to issue an order and the people would hasten to obey. It assumed that everyone would be ready to start boycotting on one particular day, and thus it staked the prestige of the Congress on a gamble. This fault was subsequently corrected by a more correct decision which saw the campaign to withdraw children from the Verwoerd schools as a process rather than as a miraculous sort of cataclysm. But the confusion created has not yet been cleared up, and the fact is that the campaign has made little progress during the year.

NO ALTERNATIVE WAY

The result of this failure of the campaign has been alarming. Many Africans, getting no clear lead from Congress, have tended to accept Bantu Education. The tension and the edge have left the campaign. Unless the original drive and fervour are restored, it will be difficult to implement the boycott in the near future.

Some readers may smugly say, "So what? It won't be the first boycott campaign that has failed. We shall find other ways of fighting the Act."

Such readers are making a terrible mistake. We dare not allow the campaign to fail, because there is no alternative way at present to fight the Act. The failure of the boycott campaign will be equivalent to the acceptance of Bantu Education.

LEADERSHIP WANTED

It follows that there is a most urgent duty falling upon the incoming executive of the A.N.C. and also upon every provincial executive, every branch committee and every rank and file member. And that duty is to really get down to work against Bantu Education without delay, in order to organise the boycott now.

Now that means real work. Meetings and door-to-door campaigns and election of parents' committees everywhere. It means explanation. Explain, explain, explain! That means that the National leaders must provide the material. Speakers' notes are needed. Articles and lectures, analyses of the syllabuses and courses. Never assume that the ordinary parent understands already: we have to show him. That is what leadership means—not issuing orders, but patient persuasion.

Look after these tasks, and the other things will follow! Once the campaign has started moving, it will develop a momentum of its own. It is instructive, in this regard, to look at those areas where the work was done earlier in the year and the boycott actually begun. It is precisely those areas where Bantu Education is a live and crucial issue today. It is there that cultural clubs have been started. The fact that those children are out of school, and those teachers out of jobs, underlies the whole of the country's attitude to Bantu Education. The children who are in the Bantu schools know that their comrades in other towns and other schools are out on the boycott. This very fact makes them vigilant and on their guard against the Nationalist lies they are supposed to learn. This campaign for the boycott, then, is no static thing. It is a snowball, that will build up to ever greater proportions as it grows and develops.

MUST BE FOUGHT FOR

Like every other sound decision, then, the boycott of N.A.D. schools must be worked for, fought for, even slaved for, against the bitter and determined opposition of the Government, the Native Affairs Department and its numerous allies and agents, open and concealed, among the African people and the "friends of the Africans" who are always ready with sound advice against militant action. The day that we find a decision of the A.N.C. Conference being publicised and supported by the daily press, English and Afrikaans, as well as by the various other gentlemen who at present have accepted office on Bantu school boards and rendered other services to the Government—that day we shall know Congress has made a big mistake.

But though the struggle for the boycott will be difficult, it is by no means impossible. It can be carried out during 1956, provided that it is undertaken in a serious and determined manner. Three main factors can lead to the success of the campaign:

1. That the campaign should be carried out continuously and flexibly, and that as soon as any parents in any area are organised and ready to carry out a withdrawal, even for a short period to start with, they should do so. No more **dates** should be "proclaimed."
2. That steady, planned, consistent propaganda and organisational work should be carried on in a businesslike, efficient manner, by the national, provincial and branch leaders everywhere.
3. That the campaign against Bantu Education should be regarded, not as a separate thing in itself, but as an integral part of the general struggle, the democratic South Africa for the Freedom Charter.

Given **such** a campaign, Bantu Education will be defeated. Every fresh area that comes out in struggle and boycott will make more impossible the position of Dr. Verwoerd's tame Africans who serve on the "Bantu school committees," his pet Principals who write fawning letters to "Bantu" praising his schools, his ex-Congress collaborators like Nkomo and Vundla. The people can defeat Verwoerd's schools of slavery. And this defeat will be an important step on the road to the free South Africa that will **open the doors of learning and culture** for all.

THE A.N.C. CONFERENCE

By J.B.M.

EARLY in December 1955, Bloemfontein will be the venue for the 43rd Annual Conference of the African National Congress, where all different shades of political opinion will find expression. Many a time in the past has the African National Congress chosen Bloemfontein as the centre for the making and taking of far-reaching decisions. But never before has Conference assembled here at so critical a time; a time when the future destiny of the Non-European people in general and of the African people in particular is at stake; today, when the Nationalist Government in their mad determination to perpetuate White domination, have unleashed a reign of terror hitherto unknown in the annals of the oppression and exploitation of the mass of the South African people. Hence the political and organisational importance of the forthcoming conference can in no circumstances be overestimated.

Thus, Conference must take proper stock of the political situation and take decisions commensurate both with the gravity of the situation and the organisational strength and ideological influence of the African National Congress. Conference must focus attention of the delegates, as well as that of the whole of the country, on the great political tasks facing the oppressed and progressive peoples within the sub-continent. Conference must therefore lead, rally and mobilise the teeming millions of Africans of all classes and categories to take up a systematic struggle against the evils of the Nationalist Government which are embodied in their ignominious policy of apartheid in all its ramifications.

Conference must make delegates understand, that the defeat of the fraudulent policy of apartheid upon which the Nationalists climbed to the helm of our society will mean the end of the Nationalist regime in Southern Africa and the beginning of a new era. It is an historical fact that nice words and resolutions will not make the tyrant change his mind; it becomes imperative that a sharp departure be made from the old tradition of Conference indulging in revolutionary phrases and petty squabbles and failing to make delegates realise their responsibility to the nation, which is that of taking a lead in the implementation of Conference decisions in their respective areas.

FOLLOWING THE CHARTER

At this stage the Freedom Charter, which was adopted at the Congress of the People at Kliptown, Johannesburg, on June 25 and 26, comes in most conveniently as a basis for the discussion of future action. The Charter is the sum total of the demands and aspirations of the downtrodden and freedom-loving peoples; and was approved at one of the greatest and easily the most enthusiastic Congress that was ever held under the leadership and on the initiative of the African National Congress, supported by its allies in the struggle—the South African Indian

Congress, the Coloured People's Organisation and the Congress of Democrats.

This assembly took place in the face of police terror and intimidation unheard of in the history of South Africa; but the people refused to be cowed and instead demonstrated their readiness to struggle for their fundamental freedom.

This being the position, the Charter should provoke a very lively discussion of a vital document. For the Charter counterpoises the deceptive policy of apartheid with democratic principles aimed at transforming South Africa into a free country, in which the pigmentation of the skin will not be the criterion for the inferiority or superiority of the individual; but where all will be free, and accorded equal opportunities for development. Thus, in this era of imperialism when capitalism is resorting to fascism to prolong its parasitic existence, and when the Colonial people all over the world are making great sacrifices for their liberation and independence, Conference must adopt the Freedom Charter as a basis for a programme of action and treat it as the political bible of the nation.

The adoption of the Charter by Conference will give great impetus to the million-signature campaign, which in itself should help to consolidate the A.N.C. and greatly increase its numerical strength. The adoption of the Charter will afford the National Consultative Committee an ideal opportunity of drawing in all the national sections as represented by the African National Congress, The South African Indian Congress, The Coloured People's Organisation and The Congress of Democrats on a common programme of action against the tyrannical government of Strijdom, Swart and Company.

GIVING A CLEAR LEAD

Conference must of necessity direct the attention of the country and delegates to the burning and immediate problems that face the African people.

The delegates to Conference must be presented with a clear and objective analysis of the struggle against Bantu Education. The successes and failures of the campaign must be very carefully discussed, with a view to assessing the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the boycott weapon as revealed by the partial withdrawal of children on the Reef and in the Eastern Cape. The confusion and lack of clarity contained in the directive calling upon parents to withdraw their children from Bantu Education schools must be cleared by conference. Conference must make the delegates understand that the mere passing of a resolution calling for the boycott of schools and the fixing of a date does not automatically bring about the contemplated action. It is only the vigorous prosecution of the campaign among the parents, explaining the dangers inherent in Bantu Education that can give the desired results. It is the active and voluntary participation of the parents in the fight against Bantu Education that will eventually paralyse the Verwoerd machinations. There must and can be no compromise on Bantu Education and the waverers and collaborators must consistently be

exposed. It is in this light that delegates to Conference must approach the problem posed by the Bantu Education Act.

Next come the vexatious Pass Laws which have turned South Africa into an open prison for African men. Their contemplated extension to African women means the further intensification of the age-old oppression of the African masses.

According to African tradition, men are the warriors and defenders of the women, children, homes and cattle against all marauders. One would therefore expect this onslaught upon the liberty of the women to arouse great indignation among the whole of the African people. In the past the militancy of the African women together with the solid support of their men-folk compelled the White oppressors to change their minds and refrain from drawing the women into the whirlpool of misery, humiliation and exploitation brought about by the obnoxious Pass Laws. Yet the only real defence for the women is the total abolition of all Pass Laws.

Needless to say there are already numerous suggestions from all over the country as to how this attack can be met. They include mass protests, boycotts, general strikes and defiance. Whatever happens, however, the country will expect a very clear and bold lead from the Annual Conference.

There can be no doubt that a militant lead given on the Pass issue will be followed by the overwhelming majority of the African people. The recent demonstration to Pretoria of women under the auspices of the Federation of South African Women is indicative of the mood the women are in and their readiness to follow a militant lead.

ELECTIONS

During recent years, the A.N.C. has orientated itself and moved away from its old traditional policy of secretarianism and narrow nationalism towards a more progressive nationalism which appeals to the broad masses of the people. This orientation has enhanced the prestige of the organisation at home and across the seas, and has also increased its fighting potential.

The present enormous political and ideological influence the A.N.C. commands calls for immediate consolidation. As such can only be accomplished by a progressive, conscientious and experienced leadership, the country is looking forward with great expectations to the forthcoming annual elections.

THE FUTURE OF THE BANTU LANGUAGES

By W. B. LOCKWOOD

THE Freedom Charter adopted by the Congress of the People at Kliptown, Johannesburg, contains the demand that "All people shall have equal right to use their own languages." Of late, this question of language has been very much to the fore in South Africa, where it has been discussed in the progressive press and elsewhere, and very different views have been expressed.

Recently, D. T. Cole, a lecturer in Bantu languages at the Witwatersrand University, wrote an article in *Forum* (Vol. 3, No. 2) dealing with the problem of the exceptional linguistic diversity in South Africa. His article is symptomatic of the confusion in the minds of many people, including well-wishers of the African, and it will not be out of place to consider his opinions.

Cole envisages for the Bantu languages a policy of linguistic unification which in the distant future might lead to the creation of two major Bantu languages. These two could then be "offered" official status which, says Cole, is out of the question for any Bantu language at the moment. Cole is led to this view by his general conception of the Bantu languages: "It is not an economic proposition, from any point of view, to maintain our seven literary Bantu forms as separate languages, nor to offer them anything like the status of English or Afrikaans . . . In addition . . . there are numerous lesser languages . . . whose small populations do not warrant (literary) development." For these patronising assumptions Cole does not, however, advance any evidence.

In fact, these assumptions are entirely erroneous. Cole deals with the problem as though it were purely a linguistic matter, although, as will shortly be clear, he tacitly makes a number of political assumptions. The future of the Bantu languages is not primarily a linguistic question, it is a political one.

Let us first ask the question: Which languages are to be used, and which not? I would say that if democracy is to exist, every man and woman must have the right to the practice of the mother tongue for all purposes. From this it follows that all languages should, as of right, be recognised officially. Where democracy is to prevail, it must have its firm foundation in local government. In the main, local government must always be the business of the local people and if these are to participate in democratic organisations, then the local languages must be used as the normal media in the localities. One of the crying needs of the world today, especially among Non-Europeans, is for literacy and education in the modern sense. It is axiomatic that progress is fastest where education is conducted in the mother tongue, for how could it be otherwise? In Africa, this presupposes the development and extended use of all the African languages. Then, as literacy becomes

general, the demand for all kinds of publications will increase and the natural tendency will be to wish to read principally matter printed in the mother tongue.

It is incorrect to state that relatively small linguistic groups cannot support a literary language and a modern literature. Cole refers to the Venda of the Northern Transvaal and says that since Venda is the mother tongue of less than 150,000 "its future as a literary language is distinctly tenuous." It is not so much numbers, but certain material conditions that are decisive here. If the Venda people are to remain as they now are, then indeed the Venda literary language will have but a precarious support. But should the Venda become an educated and prosperous community, then the Venda language too will prosper and flourish. Let us consider the implication that some 150,000 people are not sufficient to support a native literary language. The population of Iceland amounts also to about 150,000 souls; they live in a climate much less hospitable than the Venda and on soil much less fertile, yet Iceland not only runs its own Icelandic schools, but even its own Icelandic University, and produces, in the Icelandic language, a most voluminous modern literature. Out of their own resources, the Icelandic people created their own native literature and gave it a characteristic form in the saga, a form which has inspired imitators throughout the world. I humbly suggest that several of the African peoples will have traditions no less rich and art forms no less expressive than the Icelanders. What the Africans want surely is the chance to make themselves heard. The Icelanders are 100 per cent literate. Are the Venda? Every Icelandic child attends school compulsorily. Do the Venda children? The printing presses in Iceland turn out several different daily newspapers and have a wide range of weekly and periodical literature. Do daily newspapers and the like appear in the Venda language? Icelandic is an official language enjoying the dignity that only official status can give. But Mr. Cole has told us that the Venda cannot be "offered" official status. The Icelanders possess their own wireless station exclusively at the service of the Icelandic people. Have the Venda anything like that? Of course not. And this is the crucial point. It is not numbers, it is the abject poverty of the Venda, it is their present backwardness which makes their literary language so "tenuous."

To leave the matter in no doubt, I will go further in this matter of numbers. To the south of Iceland lie the Faroe Islands, inhabited by only 30,000 peasants and fishermen. But the Faroese language is official for all purposes, there is a flourishing daily and periodical press in Faroese, education is conducted in the mother tongue and a modern literature exists. This is in accordance with the democratic will of the people and, needless to say, the Faroese are justly proud of their progress here as elsewhere. I have had the privilege of experiencing this at first hand, for I have made a special study of Faroese, of which I am a fluent speaker.

It should not be thought that these small Northern peoples have cut themselves off in any way from the great languages of Europe. On the contrary, a large number are able to express themselves in one or more foreign languages, much as many Bantu speakers know some

English and Afrikaans. Obviously similar developments would take place naturally in South Africa if every linguistic group were in a position to make the most of its resources in a modern way.

Any worthwhile discussion of minority languages today must include a reference to Soviet policy, a policy which is identical with that pursued by China and several other countries. It will suffice here to refer to the Soviet Constitution (adopted in 1936). Article 110 lays down that "court proceedings shall be conducted in the language of the constituent or autonomous republic or autonomous province, with the guarantee to persons not knowing the language of full acquaintance with the material of the case through an interpreter, and also of the right to speak in court in their own language." Article 121 reads: "Citizens of the U.S.S.R. have the right of education. This right is ensured by universal compulsory elementary education, by education free of charge, including higher education, . . . by instruction in schools in the native language . . ." (Translation in S. and B. Webb, *Soviet Communism*, pp. 528 (20), (22).) This policy which began effectively in 1917 has led to an unparalleled development and use of all the languages of the U.S.S.R. The implementing of this policy meant that several minor languages which before 1917 had never been written down at last received a literary form. According to Professor W. K. Matthews, **The Languages of the U.S.S.R., 1951**, no less than 13 languages of the U.S.S.R. are spoken by as few as 2,000 persons or under. Yet every one of these is cultivated as a literary medium and printed material issued regularly in them all. One of these languages, Yakugir, the speech of a tiny community of arctic nomads, is used by only 500 souls. Yet this smallest of linguistic groups has since 1930 possessed a cultural base with a printing press for the production of a modest literature in this language.

What now are we to think of Cole's contentions that seven literary Bantu languages in South Africa are too many and that languages with a small number of speakers do not "warrant" literary development? If the Soviet Union can make provision for its minorities in this way, prejudicing no man or woman on account of language, is not South Africa also capable of doing the same, given the will to do so? Cole seems to have been completely put off by the large number of languages actually in use in South Africa. However, there is no cause for defeatism. Similar conditions are to be found in the Caucasus, where 50 languages or so are in use in an area considerably smaller than the Union of South Africa. But, as we have seen, according to Soviet practice each group uses its own language officially for its own affairs. For wider contacts better known languages serve as a means of communication, in the Caucasus especially Georgian and, of course, Russian, which is the state language of the U.S.S.R.

Along lines similar to these we may yet see the way forward for the African languages of South Africa.

CAN THE CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATS WIN MASS SUPPORT?

A Criticism By R. PRESS

THE article by T. Johnson in the September "Liberation" is an attempt to analyse the situation in which the white electorate finds itself under the rule of Nat fascism. Although the analysis is on the whole sound, there are, I feel, a number of factors, important basic factors, which he has neglected.

In all political situations, it is economics which pays the piper and calls the tune, underlying his statement on page 20:

"This creates a conflict within the class: conflict between the less reactionary sections and the most reactionary, which has control of the State."

is the more vital and basic reason for this conflict, the rise of Afrikaner Capital as outlined in New Age by Mr. Dickenson. This surely is the reason for conflict between secondary industry which backs the more liberal U.P. and the farmers who back the Nats. This is the reason why the Nats are imposing their apartheid on Springs, Benoni and Alexandra Township, since they wish to drive labour to the farmers and the rural districts for the benefit of Nat Capitalism, and at the expense of secondary industry largely owned by English-speaking Europeans.

This is also the reason why the U.P. is moving towards the Nat Camp. The Chamber of Mines and their fellow travellers are well aware that their basic economic needs will be served by the State, although perhaps better by the right-wing U.P. than by the Nats.

Here also, I feel, rests the present cause for the vacillating of the U.P., the division within it of those who serve monopoly capitalism and those who serve the petty proprietors.

There is yet another contradiction which Mr. Johnson touches upon but again does not analyse sufficiently.

"Until recently, white South Africans, workers and petty bourgeoisie, have had a stake in the colonial exploitation of the non-white people in the shape of relatively high living standards and advantageous social and political privileges."

And again:

"They reckon, however, without the manifold contradictions and conflicts which fascism engenders and the effect of these on the economic, social and political conditions of this group, and more

especially of that section of it which is discriminated against in favour of the supporters of the regime.”

Here the reference is to the contradiction between capital and labour. In this respect the situation is very similar to the state of politics and economics in Great Britain. The European working class has been brought off, and only economics, a depression, or the decay of Afrikaner Capitalism (which has not yet set in) will bring this section to the side of the African workers and peasants.

In the light of the above, to say “Already, in the process of achieving power, to gain the support of the most backward element, the Nationalist Party has had to divide the group; it has had to drive a wedge into it,” is to put the cart before the horse.

The split is the result of economics and not caused by the Nationalists. It may well be, however, that their methods and propaganda have increased the breach, but they know that it is not to their advantage, and they are trying to close the gap.

In the light of this analysis, I feel we cannot expect those sections of the Europeans who get the sticky end of the fascist bargain to come over to the side of the Non-Europeans, where they would lose those economic privileges which they are fighting to preserve from fascism.

The European monopolists are going—or have already gone—over to the Nats. The petty bourgeoisie proprietors are caught between two stools, loss of privilege and economic status to the Nats, and the prospect of economic competition from the non-white bourgeoisie and a rising militancy and wage demands by the non-white workers. The European worker has not yet been reduced to seeking the hand of his black brother.

I agree, there is the prospect of increased support for C.O.D., there is the possibility of more people sacrificing their economics for the sake of honesty and justice, but let us not expect a mass change of heart.

C.O.D. has a vital role to play in the struggle against the Government, against white domination. Its magnificent workers stand out as the final refutation of the apartheid lie.

All men are brothers, black and white. The struggle is not of black against white, but of justice against tyranny, peace and friendship against war and hate. The Freedom Charter against apartheid.

The Congress of Democrats shall inherit the leadership of European South Africans. Although the majority of anti-Nationalists, anti-fascists, may not now, nor in the near future, see their way clear to stand with us, and may, when the final struggle draws close stand aside in apathy, born of individualism; when freedom is won, when democracy is achieved, we shall inherit the leadership of white South Africans and show them the way mapped out by the Congress movement and the Freedom Charter.

To be worthy of this role, we must now be consistent, staunch and fearless in the face of the blows of fascism. We must undauntedly proclaim our stand and never waver from our aim. Now when the struggle grows fiercer, must we redouble our efforts, widen our sphere of activity, and proclaim our organisation and our aims fearlessly and independently.

SWORD OF DAMOCLES OVER SOUTH AFRICA

By WALTER M. B. NHLAPO

PUBLIC opinion in this country has been rudely shocked by the unwarrantable and dastardly attacks which have been launched by this Government. They have labelled all criticism and opposition as agitation and communistic. These accusations are for no other reason than the fact that the masses take certain decisions and critical oppositions which in their honest and democratic conviction are in the best interest of the country.

The Government attacks in the form of laws and raids have catapulted to a point of pike-staff clarity the dangers which hang like the sword of Damocles over this country.

Most people for fear of the Government have become like dumb cattle in the bivouac of life, and this in spite of the fact that they realise that the liberty of man to express himself in accordance with the dictates of his conscience is now dangerously threatened. There is now as never before an overt attempt to stifle freedom of talk, movement, criticism and opposition which is the inalienable right enjoyed in civilised and democratic countries.

These threats to the expression of one's conscience and to the freedom of opposition when undemocratic and repressive issues present themselves are only a foretaste of sadder things in store.

We are fully aware of the fact that any person who takes an independent and opposite line from the Government has his integrity besmeared and is liable to be banned or deported, for opposition means sedition and treason. One is guilty to think objectively and independently. But looking through the trickery of raids, banishments, deportations one realises the folly and vanity of the Government and that opposition of democrats are vital issues affecting the destiny of their oppressive rule.

“The wave that breaks against a forward stroke
Beats not the swimmer back, but thrills him through
With joyous trust to win his way anew
Through stronger seas than first upon him broke
And triumphed . . .

—Algernon Charles Swinburne.

TRADE UNIONS—WEAPONS FOR FREEDOM

By E. R. MATAJO

I SEE in New Age and other papers that Industrial Conciliation Boards these days often result in a deadlock. This means that no wage increases or improvements in conditions are granted to workers.

Therefore some trade unionists have concluded that it is no use applying for Conciliation Boards or having registered trade unions. In fact there is a growing feeling that the whole wage-fixing machinery is bad for the workers. This machinery, it is said, is the cause of illusions created in the minds of the workers that all they need is a registered union to obtain wage increases.

No doubt there are trade union leaders who have given the workers this illusion. On the other hand we should not go to the opposite extreme of condemning the system of collective bargaining lock stock and barrel, unless we have a better alternative.

Let us look at the Industrial Conciliation Act. It was introduced by the Smuts Government after the Rand revolt of 1922 when Smuts said "never again." The Act provides for the registration of trade unions, machinery for the settlement of disputes by negotiation between workers and bosses. In other words, its purpose is to avoid strikes and achieve "peace in industry." The method adopted is to establish industrial councils or conciliation boards consisting of an equal number of workers and bosses.

The definition "employee" excludes the African workers. Until the Native Labour Settlement of Disputes Act came into operation in 1953, African women were employees in terms of the Act. This pernicious discrimination divides the ranks of the workers and is partly responsible for the weakness in trade union organisation and the poverty and slums and tuberculosis that the African and all other Non-European low paid workers have to live under.

The South African trade unions demanded every year at their annual conferences that the definition be amended to cover African workers. Many trade unions supported this demand because they feared that the African would work for lower wages and would thus undermine their Industrial Council Agreements. Parliament amended the Act in 1937 and gave Industrial Councils power to fix wages for Africans. But few trade unionists were satisfied that this amendment would give the artisans sufficient protection against undercutting.

On the other hand many trade unionists objected to the discrimi-

nation on entirely different grounds. These militant trade unionists condemned the Industrial Conciliation Act because it weakened the strength of the workers, firstly by splitting them on racial grounds and secondly by limiting the right to strike. We recognised, however, that the right of collective bargaining was an advantage for which the workers had struggled and suffered much during the early days of trade unions. We did not think of scrapping the principle of collective bargaining; what we wanted was its extension to Africans and improvements by recognising unlimited freedom to strike.

PROBLEMS IN SECONDARY INDUSTRIES

The Industrial Conciliation Act and the Native Labour Settlement of Disputes Act have created a very serious problem for workers in the secondary industries. These employ large numbers of Africans, Coloureds and Indians. Although they often do much the same kind of work, Coloured and Indian workers are able to have registered trade unions. These can and do utilise the I.C. Act machinery to negotiate with employers. If strong, they are successful, but, as I have already remarked, in many cases negotiations break down. One reason is that employers have become more stubborn. They are aware that the Government is on their side.

But there is another and more serious problem. In many industries there is a large and growing number of African workers. They cannot belong to the same union as their fellow workers. The African unions do not fully participate in wage negotiations. This division is bad. It weakens the registered trade unions. Whilst the Coloured and Indian workers, when negotiations break down, can go on a legal strike, the African workers have not got this right. In fact under the Native Labour Settlement of Disputes Act they run the risk of going to jail. What is more serious is that if they lose their jobs they are chased out of their homes and the towns, back to the farms and reserves. This means that those Africans who have been organised, and who understand the meaning of a trade union, become scattered. The union is weakened and empty places are filled by peasants and migrant workers who are not accustomed to trade unions. (There have been several recent cases of this kind, such as the strike of the African workers at the United Tobacco Co., Durban.) Consequently the Coloured and Indian workers do not feel confident to strike if Africans are left in the factories, as the strike cannot be successful. To call the African out is a great responsibility.

This position has created a feeling of frustration and resentment towards the whole system of Industrial legislation. Conciliation Boards reach a deadlock because the registered trade unions cannot be certain to pull off a strike, to tie up the factory or industry.

This feeling of frustration has led some people to suggest that the registered unions should not apply for Conciliation Boards, but in fact should deregister, and that the Industrial Conciliation Act machinery

should not be used. The argument is that by giving up registration certificates the present statutory differences between African and Coloured and African and Indian workers will disappear. The African workers will have no reason to consider themselves "inferior." The Coloured and Indian workers will have no reason to consider themselves "superior" and there will be more chance of unity and concerted action.

DECLINE IN STRIKE ACTION

Before discussing this argument I think it will be useful to consider briefly the record of industrial disputes before and after the introduction of wage-fixing machinery. This is set out in the following table:—

Period	No. of strikes	No. of workers involved	Aggregate duration in working days	Estimated loss in wages
1911-15	24	43,442	266,801	299,050
1916-20	168	136,771	1,428,176	430,491
1921-25	46	40,799	1,462,734	1,952,965
1926-30	47	19,684	23,151	10,014
1931-35	70	16,626	168,386	85,944
1936-40	116	18,622	47,129	15,190
1941-45	183	36,939	137,781	45,756
1947	64	28,012	1,372,757	1,880,446
1948	44	3,952	24,608	19,009
1949	37	7,143	50,848	133,170
1950	33	3,277	15,871	4,625
1951	36	7,994	12,555	13,757
1952	54	6,559	22,217	14,097
1953	30	2,298	9,216	44,102

In reading the table we should bear in mind that it is not a true statement. Certain strikes have been omitted, such as those which took place between 1950 to 1953 in protest against the Nationalist Government's fascist legislation and interference with free trade unionism. Nevertheless, even if these strikes were included the table would show a proportional marked decline since the Nationalists came into power.

This decline is to some extent a continuation of a process that has been at work since the introduction of industrial legislation in 1924.

It will be noticed, however, that a remarkable increase in strike activity occurred after 1936. This must be attributed to the movement amongst the Africans (who then also were excluded from the industrial conciliation machinery) and low-paid Coloured and Indian workers who were coming into trade unions round about this period.

What has changed since 1945 to bring about a decline in strike action? Clearly it is not the industrial legislation as such. The African suffered the same disabilities in the 1930's and 1940's as today, whilst the Coloured and Indian trade unions have the same freedom to strike now as they possessed in the earlier period. Can we explain the decline in strikes on the grounds of improved industrial relations and conditions of employment?

Whilst there has been full employment in the post-war period the steep rise in prices has undoubtedly reduced the actual value of wages. These conditions lead to a wave of militant action in other countries, both in the great industrial countries like the U.S.A. and Great Britain and also in underdeveloped territories such as Northern Rhodesia and West Africa. I do not believe that conditions here are so good that the low-paid workers have not felt it necessary to press for improvements.

I should say that there is in the first place greater intimidation by the ruling class and resistance on the part of both employers' and Government to wage demands. One might expect that this resistance would lead to greater working-class militancy; we must realise that the Non-European low-paid workers are living under a hostile police state, with vicious attacks on civil liberties and free trade unions since 1948. The removal of the best and most experienced trade union leaders who were almost wholly responsible for organising and leading the low-paid workers, deprived large numbers of workers of guidance when they most urgently needed it.

This difficulty of political repression would clearly not be overcome if registered unions were deregistered. The workers will have to battle for elementary trade union rights like workers in other countries have done and won these rights, and like workers are doing it now elsewhere on the African Continent.

The African worker must still win the rights for free trade unions. He has to do this job. No one else will win these and other democratic rights for him. The English workers fought for the rights to organise and to strike. The fact of the matter is that the African worker has fewer trade union rights than the British workers had 100 years ago.

The fundamental problem to us is that the African worker has not got the right to strike, the most elementary right of workers. Conciliation Boards break down because Coloured and Indian workers feel too weak to strike on their own and the Africans have no right to strike. The employers are aware of this weakness and of the general

trade union disunity. But there are no short cuts. We dare not become frustrated and impatient. We must develop trade union organisation at the point of production.

Our present weakness is the absence of trade union organisation amongst African workers. When the workers have overcome this weakness they will be powerful enough to smash the repression which is now holding them back. It is then that industrial legislation will be reshaped to suit the workers' interests.

The truth of the matter is that the level of trade union organisation is very low. A great number of workers are not only unorganised but also politically backward. But our main weakness is that we have not enough experienced trade union leaders and organisers who will develop and give political and trade union understanding to the workers. The scarcity of African, Coloured and Indian trade union leaders is a major weakness. My opinion is that although the National Liberatory movement passed resolutions to support the organisation of workers in trade unions, it is not yet really conscious of its importance. Why don't we find young educated African, Coloured and Indian persons coming forward ready to sacrifice, ready to organise their people?

To get workers interested in trade unions, day-to-day demands must in no case be considered as of secondary importance. The closest attention must be given to the small grievances and demands in each factory and workshop. Starting from simple petitions and deputations to the management, the workers will go on to strike action.

Let us remember that the African workers always have had to grapple with laws prohibiting their strikes, such as the Native Labour Regulation Act of 1911, the Master and Servants Act and the War Emergency Regulations of 1942 which were only repealed when the Native Labour Settlement of Disputes Act came into force. African strikes have nevertheless taken place and succeeded in winning improvements. The Durban dock strikes are an example.

The issue is clear—the task is to organise this growing force of labour as shown in the following table:—

TOTAL NUMBER OF WAGE EARNERS EMPLOYED IN THE MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIES

Year	Europeans	Africans	Coloureds	Indians
1925	56,433	82,608	27,391	10,026
1935	92,919	112,091	27,352	9,879
1945	128,071	245,538	58,719	17,492
1950	191,291	327,351	79,988	21,559

The workers' strength lies in unity. They must unite to overcome divisions fostered by the Government and boss class. They must unite

to struggle for bread, for their economic and social needs. They must unite, struggle and win trade union and democratic rights!

The 1886 Congress of the 1st Working Men's International resolved that:

"In addition to their original tasks the trade unions must now learn how to act consciously as focal points for organising the working class in the greater interests of its complete emancipation. They must support every social and political movement directed towards this aim."

How true these words are for us!

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