



LIBERATION

ONE SHILLING

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**SEARCHLIGHT ON
THE CONGRESSES
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BOYCOTT—OR NOT?**



A JOURNAL OF DEMOCRATIC DISCUSSION

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No. 29. February, 1958.

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Editorial

SEARCHLIGHT ON THE CONGRESSES

The ten years that have passed since the disaster of 1948, when the caricature of democratic institutions that passes for a General Election in South Africa first produced a Nationalist parliamentary majority, have been years of sorrow, suffering and indignity for the people of our country; years of anger and bitterness. We cannot, and we shall not here, attempt to reckon up the balance-sheet; for one cannot even begin to reckon up the wrongs that the Nationalists have done to the people, and above all to the Non-White people. We can count the years of their harsh rule in terms of hunger; in terms of homes broken and families cast adrift; in terms of children whose minds are being deliberately deformed in schools of oppression; in terms of cruelty, degradation and intolerable insult. Let the parlour-politicians and shebeen intellectuals hold forth about the idea that "there is no difference between the Nationalists and the U.P." We are no defenders of the timid opportunism of the United Party! But let us ask the man in the street — the women forced to submit to that badge of servitude — the pass; the countryfolk burying their sten-gunned dead; the urban African hounded beyond endurance and finding life impossible on starvation wages; the Indian and Coloured people, insulted, degraded and robbed . . . and we shall find but one answer, in a dozen languages, spoken in a voice of burning anger: "These people are a pestilence that has descended on the country; we cannot tolerate them any longer; nothing could be worse; the Nationalists must go!"

And go they must. For there is another side to the anguish of the past ten years; a side written in heroism, steadily-growing mass political awareness and organisation, the brotherhood and unity that has been born out of the dark decade of 1948-1958. The people have shown, in a thousand

ways, more and more over these past ten years and never more so than in the fateful year of 1957, that whatever the cost and the sacrifice they are no longer prepared to submit to tyranny. The machinery of force and repression that has been built up by Swart and Verwoerd can no longer contain the people's anger; it breaks out ever and again, in Alexandra, in Zeerust, in Port Elizabeth, and every time, more conscious, more organised, more purposeful. Leaders are banned, banished and arrested, but for each one banned, new fresh leaders come forward, ordinary men and women from the workshops and townships and farmlands. People are losing their fear of prisons, beatings, even death. All the separate protests, against Group Areas, against passes, against removals and deportations and banings and censorship; all the separate demands, for higher wages, for decent housing, for proper education, for human rights and democratic freedoms: all are merging into a single mighty stream which sooner or later must sweep away the Nationalists and all their works. They must go, and they will go!

How shall they go?

As we approach nearer to the 1958 General Election, a weighty responsibility rests upon the White electorate of this country. In past elections they have demonstrated, beyond reasonable doubt, that they are unfit to retain their present monopoly of the franchise. But will they, in the face of the realities of this Sputnik Age, in the face of well-nigh universal disapproval from every country in the world, and in the face of the torrent of anger and resentment from the majority of the people of South Africa — will they persist in yet again returning a Nationalist Party majority to the Assembly? Or will they open their eyes to the truth: that another Nationalist-dominated Parliament will close the door to peaceful progress in our country and intensify every conflict to the point where it can only be resolved by a major trial of strength in which the European minority will be the major sufferers?

That is the real issue in this 1958 election. Not whether Strijdom is too ill to continue in office; not whether Graaff is the ideal fan for Prime Minister; not whether the United Party is better able to preserve "White leadership" than the Nationalists. But whether the European voters will have learnt sufficient from the past ten years to understand that they stand at the crossroads, that they have to share South Africa with others who are still denied the vote, and that another term of Nationalist Government will be the last straw, the final declaration of war, the fatal act which closes the door on negotiations and agreed solutions.

The two big political parties cannot and will not place this issue before the electorate. It rests on others to do so. It is the duty of the Labour Party and the Liberal Party to speak out loud and clear in these fateful couple of months, in terms of unmistakable warning. But above all, the task of clarifying the issue belongs to the great political organisations of the Non-European people themselves, which have risen to such great heights of courage and wisdom over the past dark decade, who have won the recognition of most in our country and nearly all outside it as the true voice of South Africa.

The African National Congress has shown a hundred times — and not least in Chief Lutuli's analysis of the election situation — that in its leadership, wisdom, humanity and understanding it stands on an immeasur-

ably higher level than the Nationalist Party. It has reached out to build bridges of understanding between the races; and as fast as the Nationalists have destroyed bridges, the Congress has rebuilt them and built new ones. Had it not been for Congress and its humanistic policy, which while it fortifies and creates African national unity and self-confidence, at the same time rejects racialism and strives for freedom for all men and women — had it not been for this Congress policy, we believe, South Africa would already be a hell of hatred and bloodshed, with men of each racial group at the throats of their fellows. And now, in this critical pre-election period, it has been Congress, with its partners in the democratic alliance, the Indian Congress, the Congress of Democrats, the Coloured Peoples' Organisation and the Congress of Trade Unions, which has proved through the statesmanlike bearing of its representatives at the multi-racial conference its superiority to the narrow doctrines of racial exclusiveness. And through the Lutuli call "The Nationalists Must Go!" this movement of the voteless has placed a challenge and appeal to the voters which they will ignore at their cost and their peril.

The Lutuli Call can still save South Africa. But, that message of hope and emancipation has still to be made effective. As a call it will remain a paper manifesto, an interesting and moving document perhaps for the future historians of our country. To make it an effective and living factor in this critical short period ahead it has to be brought home to everyone in South Africa, White and Non-White, voters and voteless alike. There is only one way in which the call can be brought to life. And that is by its being expressed unmistakably through the determined conscious action of hundreds and thousands of people.

For years political leaders, trade unionists, social workers, economists and others preached the lesson that the urban workers of South Africa were suffering from desperate poverty. What brought that lesson to life, brought home with unmistakable clarity to every man, woman and child in the country? The massive, heroic action of the thousands who took part in the bus boycotts a year ago!

So, too, it is no use our merely saying that "the Nats must go!" and that we shall not tolerate them any longer. We may issue innumerable press statements and leaflets — it will not be good enough. What is necessary is that we must show how we feel in this matter; we must, in hundreds of thousands prove our determination to free our country from this pestilence in a language that all can understand — the language of action.

And there is only one organised force in the country capable of carrying out this giant's task: the Congress movement. With a full knowledge of the issues that are at stake, with clarity, unity of purpose, determination and unsparing, selfless, brave work, Congress can swing the balance, and open up the road to peaceful progress towards a democratic South Africa in the short weeks between now and April 26. The way has already been prepared with the great struggles of 1957, with the plans and preparations that have been made for the Regional and National Workers' Conferences in February and March. What is needed is that Congress shall clear the decks for action and put its organisation and membership in order for these great tasks of the immediate future.

But to do that it is, in the first place, necessary that the movement must rise above some of the disturbing symptoms that have been revealing themselves in recent months, to the great delight of every reactionary and enemy of freedom. Congress members are only human. They make mistakes and they have disagreements. More particularly, in times of stress and strain such as we live in, these disagreements tend to become over-emphasised, and the mistakes magnified. Certainly if mistakes are made, they must be rectified. And if individuals are unsuitable for their position, they must be replaced. That is precisely what conferences and democratic procedures are there for.

What, however, is all-important at the present time is the maintenance of Congress spirit and unity in the face of the fundamentally important tasks immediately ahead. We must correct errors and choose our leaders in such a way that we take nothing away from the unity and the Congress spirit and solidarity that we so urgently need today.

Let us examine some of the problems of the movement in the light of these guiding principles.

We shall start, by way of illustration, with the unhappy position that has arisen in the Transvaal Province of the A.N.C. We believe that it has turned out to be a mistake to call on the Provincial Annual Conference last November to return the existing leadership *en bloc*. No doubt it was proposed with the best motives. The Congress leadership is under fire, and it seemed to be a way of expressing confidence in and solidarity with those who are under Government attack, to vote solidly for their return to office. But Congress Constitution is there to see to the proper democratic functioning of the organisation, and it is wrong to suspend that functioning because of attacks made by our enemies — unless conditions exist which make it absolutely impossible to carry on in the normal way. Such conditions did not exist last November and they do not exist now. The surest proof that the decision was mistaken was that instead of leading to a demonstration of unity it has turned into a demonstration of disunity, more serious than any that have arisen in the Transvaal Congress for many years.

Worst of all, instead of discussing political principles and policies, the whole Province has been turned upside down in an absolutely useless and time-wasting dead-end discussion of personalities. It is absolutely false to suggest that there is a fundamental cleavage on policy between the Transvaal executive and its critics. True, it has been suggested that the critics are "Africanists." Who makes these suggestions? First of all, the incorrigible mischief-makers of "The World." And secondly, some of the members of the present executive.

What is this "Africanism" everybody is talking about? It would not be unfair to describe it as a sort of "Nationalism" of the Malanite variety, turned upside-down. Instead of saying the Afrikaners must be the master-race, these fellows say the Africans must be the master-race. Now it is true that Congress has got beyond this immature view-point to the deeper wisdom of rejecting each and every variety of master-race ideology in favour of a truly human vision of equality and brotherhood. But isn't it also true that the very fact of oppression and the official preaching of White baasskap inevitably brings forth this very reaction of African assertiveness and exclusiveness? You tell a man, "Your people are no good;

mine are better." Isn't his natural reaction to say, "Nonsense; your people are no good; mine are better." In a sense, this is the necessary first step towards accepting the Congress concept of equality; it is the first step towards casting out the servile mentality inculcated by the ideologists of "Bantu" inferiority. It has always existed in Congress, and will continue to exist, under whatever name, as Congress continues to recruit new members among the rank-and-file of the masses. Congress must take these new members, welcome them and educate them; not drive them away by swearing at them! The "Africanists" of today — all but a handful of cranks who will soon expose themselves — are the good and loyal Congressmen of tomorrow: we have seen all this happen before!

But apart from this, is it really true as the "World" and some executive members pretend, that the branches and individuals who are behind the petition for new elections, are really "Africanists?" Some of them may, of course, be dissidents, even Africanists, fishing in troubled waters. But it is plain ignorant or dishonest to say that these people constitute only a tiny minority of those who want reform in the Transvaal Congress. The proof was plain to be seen at the December National Conference. The overwhelming majority of the Transvaal delegates were critics of the executive. Yet when it came to the vote reiterating support for the Freedom Charter, the so-called Africanists who voted against this turned out to be a tiny isolated group.

We say with absolute confidence: ninety-nine per cent of the Transvaal Congress members stand four-square behind the established policy of alliance with other Non-European organisations and with democratic Europeans, behind the Freedom Charter, behind the National leadership of Congress. But many of them have lost confidence in some of the present members of the Transvaal provincial executive. Whether these feelings are justified or not; that is not the point. The point is that no member of a democratic organisation is justified in clinging to a position when the progress of the organisation itself requires that changes should be made. We have no masters and servants in our Congress; the masters are the members themselves and their servants are their democratically-elected executives and officials. A leader may show his true loyalty and quality sometimes by stepping back to the honourable position of rank-and-filer, and giving another man or woman the opportunity to develop, by exercising them, the faculties and experience of leadership.

We think the decision of last November was mistaken. Elections should have been held in the normal way. Failure to do so resulted in a split between supporters and critics of the present executive. The mistake must be rectified if further progress is to be made. The way to rectify it is to now provide for a new choice of leaders, in which a representative leadership of honest Congress members from both sides of the dispute should be elected, with the support of all, to work loyally for the implementation of Congress policy, the strengthening of the Congress Alliance, the defeat of the Nationalists and the winning of the Charter. If this is done quickly and in a good spirit, the breach will be soon healed and Congress will be able to face its vital tasks like one man. Nor should there be any more constitutional quibbles. The present executive will show its stature and win the gratitude of all lovers of freedom if it takes the logical step of resigning en bloc, calling a special conference and holding new elections,

in which of course the present executive members will be able to submit themselves for re-election. We confidently believe that they are big enough people to do so.

Space does not allow us here to go into similar details concerning Congress affairs in the other provinces. But we are sure that a similar spirit could put to rights various disputes which may have arisen in the Cape and Natal. People are putting far too much stress on individuals and personalities, like petty little shopkeepers who imagine that their own progress is the only thing that matters and are always out to give a dig to their "rivals." There is only one sort of "competition" between Congressmen that is good and healthy; let us "compete" to see who can do the most work and give the greatest benefit to the movement, whether as leaders or as rank-and-filers. Let us put an end to complacency, conceit, tale-bearing, tittle-tattling and undermining the reputation of others. If you have a complaint to make, make it in open Congress and let it stand up to open investigation. Otherwise shut up! This is not a matter of "Left" or "Right". Admittedly there are different shades of opinion in the national movement; we would not have it otherwise, for then it would cease to be a national movement and become something different. But this is not a matter of different opinions, the present policy of Congress is broad enough to unite all democrats and patriots. It is these clique-builders, whether of the Right or the so-called Left which are ruining Congress. In our opinion, they must stop it.

An unhappy position prevails, too, in the Coloured People's Organisation. The Transvaal executive members who chose to resign at this critical juncture must have known that their action would weaken the organisation and the whole Congress movement. Why did they do so? We know that many of them are honest and sincere people. Why did they allow their feelings about a particular issue to run away with them to the extent that they took a step which will be hailed with delight by all enemies of Congress?

The issue itself is a simple one. In this month's Liberation, a contributor puts the case for a boycott "on principle" of the forthcoming Coloured parliamentary elections. He is answered, fairly and squarely; by Mr. Mandela. In deciding Congress tactics, one thing and one thing only is, ultimately, cardinal and relevant: the progress and benefit of the movement and of the masses of the people. To adopt any other criterion, to elevate any particular tactic into a matter of principle is to fall into the sort of sectarian error which has bedevilled the Non-European Unity Movement in the Cape for so many years, and made it a brake upon rather than an aid to the progress and advancement of the Coloured people. Decide arbitrarily on a single tactic — in this case, the boycott. Make it a matter of absolute principle. Call everyone who, though sharing the goal of freedom and equality, adopts any other tactic, a sell-out and a quisling. You will, whether you realise it or not, be splitting the camp of progress and doing a fine job for the Nats and other upholders of White supremacy. That is exactly what the NEUM has been doing all these years. A reading of the recent SACPO Transvaal Bulletin, full of the ranting name-calling we have come to associate with "The Torch"

convinced us some time ago that this barren NEUM approach of petty-bourgeois "ultra-revolutionarism" was infecting SACPO in this Province. This latest action has confirmed this impression. We can only hope that some of the dissident SACPO-ites will realise their error, and see, also, that they are being used by others who are clever enough to remain behind the scenes, before they commit political hara-kiri.

We may perhaps seem to have drawn an over-pessimistic picture of Congress shortcomings in this editorial. But we are convinced that the movement will not be able to meet its tremendous responsibilities at present unless it faces up to and overcomes these shortcomings, and we have chosen to speak bluntly about them because without straight talk there can be no straight thinking.

But this is not of course, the whole truth about the Congress. It has shown time and again that its members, because of their close links with the people, have the strength and the ability to rise above every misfortune. The Congress movement has survived every vicious blow aimed at it by the Nationalist Government. It has survived the removal of its most able and experienced leaders by Ministerial edict; and though, no doubt grave damage has been suffered in the process and grave mistakes made, the end result can only be that the movement will emerge with more experienced and tested cadres than ever before. It has survived innumerable laws, bans on meetings, police interference and persecutions: and in the process has grown bigger, more popular, hardened and more realistic. And if Congress has survived all these attempts to exterminate it, Congress will survive internal difficulties, the product of confusion, misunderstanding, selfishness and ambition as well.

It is therefore with every feeling of optimism and confidence that we have dealt with our present difficulties. Let not the opponents of democracy begin prematurely to cheer because we of Liberation, a magazine which has consistently backed Congress policy (though we have been and remain a fully independent journal) now see fit to criticise some negative features. We are criticising ourselves, not in despair, but to clear the decks for decisive action. A movement which indulges in idle boasts of its strength and hides away its weaknesses need not be feared very much. But when a movement speaks publicly of its weaknesses, and sets to work to put them to rights, wise men among its opponents will realise that it means business.

We offer no apologies, therefore, for these remarks. To all Congressmen and Congresswomen we say at this critical time: Friends, if you are sincere, you will understand that our sharp words are just and necessary. Let us cast aside all apathy, personalities and small matters. Great tasks await our full and undivided attention; our unsparing work. To friends of the Congresses who stand outside and criticise, we say: Get into the Congresses and build them up; they are the hope and the future of South Africa. To the upholders of White supremacy, we say, do not mistake this critical mood for a sign of weakness: it is a mark of strength and the guarantee of our victory!

IT MUST BE BOYCOTT!

Writes A.B.C.

THE acceptance of a decision to participate in the elections to be held under the Separate Representation of Voters Act, 1956, is not consistent with the demand for full and equal citizen status for all peoples in South Africa. On the contrary, it is the acceptance of an inferior status. In a word, full democracy and indirect representation on a racial basis, are contradictory political concepts. This is the crux of the whole matter as I see it. If we accept the principle of equal democracy as the cornerstone of our movement then we must reject any institution, agency or instrument which is inconsistent with our acceptance of this principle.

If this is not done, if we agree to support the principle of compulsory indirect racial representation, even irrespective of whether such representation is of a discriminatory or inferior character, then conversely we cannot consistently claim that we accept nothing less than the principle of equal democracy for all in South Africa.

ADHERING TO ELEMENTARY PRINCIPLES

The importance of keeping in mind our guiding principle cannot be overstressed. For unless this is continuously done we will become sidetracked in irrelevant and technical details of alleged practical advantages of participation in the Separate Coloured Elections. And I think that articles on the subject and discussions that have appeared recently have suffered largely because they have to too great an extent concentrated on the so-called practical benefits to be gained by participation on the one hand, and the disadvantages of participation on the other.

Questions such as the number of White representatives that are to be elected, the powers such representatives will be allowed to exercise or the basis of the qualifications for the Coloured Voters are of secondary importance. Our national democratic movement demands for all people absolute and complete political equality in the affairs of the land. To accept anything less is to retreat from the basic principles of our movement and to accept an inferior political status. For the establishment and operation of the Separate Representation of Coloured Voters' system is nothing less than the foisting of an inferior political status upon a section of the South African people.

To accept this status, to work this separate representation system, is to accept discrimination, to accept the principle of political differentiation, and to condone the principle of separate treatment on a basis which is openly racial. It amounts to the acceptance of the contention that certain sections are unfit to represent themselves in Parliament and that they must consequently be represented only by other superior and better persons

(racially). The natural inequality of men we must recognise; the racial inequality of men we can never recognise. It must not be assumed, however, that there is anything wrong with voluntary indirect representation. To advocate the compulsory representation of any racial group by members of that group only, is equally unacceptable to our movement and is to advocate racial politics.

The political leader who professes to the people on the one hand his undying belief in and support for the principle of political equality and on the other hand exhorts a section of the people to work or support an instrument which is avowedly politically discriminatory, and therefore unequal, even if such exhortation is based on the illusory belief that the working or supporting of such instrument is in the interest of the people concerned, must be exposed and removed from the political life of the people. His activities can only result in confusing the people and retarding their political development.

SEPARATE REPRESENTATION INCONSISTENT WITH EQUALITY DEMAND

As I have said, the acceptance of the system of separate representation for Coloured voters is inconsistent with the acceptance of the principle of complete and universal political equality for all the people of South Africa. At this stage of our political development we are entitled to assume that our leaders in the democratic movement believe in the principle of full and equal democracy in all spheres for all the people of this country. At all times our struggle against oppression has proceeded on this basis. Implicit in our struggle for equality is the total rejection of all the old ruling class concepts of racial superiority and inferiority, while trusteeship, white paternalism, etc. At this stage of our development to propagate support for and advocate the working of political agencies expressly designed to retard the development of the people's consciousness is, consequently, to deceive and mislead the people and to play the game of the ruling class.

Such activities can only confuse the people, raise false hopes that support of the system of separate (and unequal) representation can result in some alleviation of their sufferings, delude them into misconceptions of the effectiveness of parliamentary struggle and sidetrack them from the only struggle which can solve their burning problems, the democratic struggle of the people for social and political equality. My firm opinion is that nothing is to be gained by the oppressed people by spreading the illusion that anything can be achieved by looking to an all-White Parliament in South Africa.

GROUP REPRESENTATION AND TRIBAL POLITICS

The impact of ever increasing oppressive legislation, particularly over the last decade or so, has had the effect of stimulating a steadily developing consciousness among the people. Political and industrial struggles of great importance have been waged. The desire to end and abolish hateful repressive legislation and oppressive treatment has grown to enormous proportions.

To a certain extent these latent forces have been organised. But to a large extent this deeprooted desire of the people has not reached political expression but has smouldered ever deeper and fiercer under the surface. A people marching forward to freedom cannot and will not accept ruling class schemes designed to place a political halter on their progress. Let us face it: no conscious Non-European today wants to be told that he must be represented by a White in Parliament or the Senate. The people are demanding the right of direct representation and there is nothing racialistic in such a demand. The right of direct representation is one of the most elementary democratic rights and it is the denial of this elementary right over centuries that causes the most deeprooted resentment in the minds of the oppressed people.

As I have pointed out, the demand for direct representation does not mean that Africans must be represented by Africans, Indians by Indians, Coloureds by Coloureds or Whites by Whites. For to insist on such a policy is equally repugnant to the democratic ideals of our movement. While we demand the right of direct representation this must not be taken to mean that we must advocate compulsory group representation. Such tribal politics have no place in our movement.

In a true democracy it would be commonplace for Whites to be represented by Non-Whites or vice versa, and inter racial representation among Non-Whites will be equally common. For, in fact, the significance of the old racial categories will disappear and there will be no particular merit or advantage in being White or no demerit or disadvantage in being black.

In the light of the new ideas gaining ground among the people today, therefore, the leaders who now attempt to force played-out political institutions down the throats of the people are trying to turn back the wheels of progress. The people are no longer in the mood for half measures. They have seen how the sham of "Native Representation" worked. The "Native Representatives" themselves have complained that they have achieved nothing in Parliament. And the paltry number of White Representatives (or should they be Coloured Representatives) to be allowed for the Coloureds, in addition to everything else, makes the whole policy of support for separate representation even more farcical. Their effectiveness in preventing the advance of the Nationalist steamroller or in advancing the cause of the Coloureds will in fact be nil, whatever their individual capabilities.

We cannot and will not accept a system of separate representation for so-called Coloureds. For we cannot then logically reject it for Indians or Africans. To carry the principle to its logical (and ridiculous) conclusion, nor can we then reject a system which provides that only Coloureds can represent Indians, or Indian Europeans. Can we then stop at Zulus representing Xhosas, Jews Gentiles, etc.? To accept the separate representation system is to confuse and mislead the people at a critical stage in their development, a stage when the people are at last beginning to see through all the old claptrap of racial superiority, White guardianship, baasskap, etc., and in the boycott we epitomise our complete break from these old ruling class conceptions and ideas.

BOYCOTT AN ACTIVE NOT A PASSIVE WEAPON

As far as the question of organising an effective boycott is concerned, this must be commenced now. This is a matter which must receive the urgent attention of all the political organisations of the people. It is not a matter for the so-called Coloured people only. It is not a matter to be dealt with only by "Coloured" organisations. It is a matter which affects all the people of South Africa. Do not let us fall into the trap of waging separate racial fights. It is a matter which must be related to the whole struggle against inequality and discrimination in South Africa, and the participants in the struggle must not be confined to Coloured persons. It is a matter where a united front can be formed of persons and bodies who although not in general agreement on political issues yet see eye to eye on the necessity of boycotting the separate Coloured elections.

The organisations representing the Coloureds appear to be in agreement on the need to boycott the elections and there is no reason why a campaign should not be initiated embracing all organisations in the liberatory movement who are in similar agreement.

For boycott does not mean sitting with folded arms or turning the other cheek. Boycott is not necessarily a negative weapon, nor does it, or should it, signify abstention or inactivity. The interest of the people before and during the elections must be used to raise their consciousness. Meetings, mass demonstrations, protests, etc., must be organised, calling upon the people to reject the sham of separate representation and urging them to intensify the struggle for social and political democracy. Intensive canvassing of the voters must also be undertaken so that the boycott policy reaches those most directly affected.

The more effective the boycott campaign the more difficult the so-called "friends of the Coloured people" and other careerists will find it to ride into Parliament on the backs of the people. Those who nonetheless are elected as "separate Coloured Representatives" will have been subjected to such ridicule and contempt in the process that they will be useless for the purposes of the ruling class. They will stand exposed as petty careerists and opportunists under their fine phrases and will have become so discredited in the course of the boycott campaign that their activities in Parliament will deceive or mislead no one. With proper and vigorous campaigning there should be no reason why the boycott should not be 80-90% effective. No significant political organisation of Coloured people has come out in favour of participating in the sham elections and with the boycott campaigns of the Van Riebeeck Festival and the Coloured Affairs Department still fresh in the minds of the people I do not see any great difficulty in organising a very effective boycott, at least in the Cape.

But this does not mean to say that the boycott should not be successful elsewhere as well. For, after all, to refuse to vote for a "separate representative" requires neither great political consciousness, understanding nor great courage. The relative ease of practising a boycott at once commends itself. And this is a factor which the wide awake leaders must recognise and utilise.

The boycott of a dummy candidate, the refusal to exercise a vote, constitute acts which do not expose the individual voter to any great political hazards. He is not courting arrest by defying an unjust law, nor is he participating in a political or industrial strike, or a procession liable to be

attacked by police. It is this comparative simplicity of the boycott weapon which gives it its greatest scope.

It is true that in general the consciousness of the people is today at a fairly high level. But no right-thinking person will dispute that the people are unfortunately organisationally backward. In view, therefore, of this position, it is commonsense to attempt those tasks which stand the greatest chance of success, those tasks which appear to be most capable of achievement with the resources at our disposal and at the present stage of our development. In fact, the question whether a particular undertaking is capable of realisation must be considered very seriously by a responsible leadership before such undertaking should be embarked upon.

And in my view the boycott of the Coloured elections is a task which is eminently realisable. Conversely, it is undesirable that tasks should be undertaken which on the probabilities it is not within our power to accomplish; although admittedly it is at times necessary to take justifiable risks. But in these days of intense reaction and police terror with their undeniably inhibiting effect on the whole movement, where the people yearn for a victory, however small, it would be criminal not to take up with both hands a weapon around which we can mobilise thousands of people in an effective demonstration against the Government, and which could raise the people to new heights of political consciousness.

THE QUESTION OF BOYCOTT CANDIDATES

The argument has from time to time been raised in discussion of the boycott of the separate Coloured Representation system, whether so-called boycott candidates should not be put up as candidates under the Separate Coloured Representation Act. These boycott candidates would take a pledge not to sit in Parliament but merely perform such acts as may be necessary to ensure their remaining members of Parliament. They would, in fact, boycott Parliament, the reason for their accepting election being to prevent reactionary or careerist elements from representing the so-called Coloured people under the Act.

The immediate objection to putting up boycott candidates is that again the people will have to support a compulsory system of so-called indirect representation. The candidates will have to be White persons as only Whites will be allowed to sit in Parliament. Once again the people will be faced with all the evils of the old and unacceptable system of compulsory indirect representation, of Non-Whites having perforce to vote for White candidates to represent them. We will be compelled to witness the perpetuation of a mode of political representation which has become anathema to the people.

At a stage when these played-out institutions have been completely rejected in the process of acquiring a new political outlook, we will be once more obliged to fall back upon outmoded and wholly unacceptable procedures and devices. I consider this the main objection to the adoption of the idea of boycott candidates. In addition it will have to be continually explained to the people that although separate representation has been rejected in principle an exception must be made in supporting the boycott candidates, who will only be elected to prevent undesirable elements grabbing the parliamentary seats. It is inevitable that this policy will cause a great deal of confusion in the minds of the people who will not really be able to understand whether they are boycotting the separate re-

presentation system or supporting it. In my opinion it will be far simpler and less confusing if only one call is made to the people: **A CALL TO REJECT AND BOYCOTT THE SEPARATE VOTERS ACT IN TOTO** and to break completely from the system of separate representation.

SHADOW ELECTIONS

The question of the tactics of "shadow elections" whereby candidates nominated by the peoples' organisations irrespective of colour stand for election on a platform of full democratic rights, etc., appears to have more to be said for it.

Such candidates would utilise the interest displayed by the people during election times to spread our political ideas and increase their consciousness while at the same time build up the organisations of the people. Provided proper campaigning is undertaken, the number of votes polled by such candidates, as against the "official" candidates, taking all factors into account, might be a good indication of the strength of the support for the boycott. The question of "shadow elections" might be worth while considering in the peoples' organisations. I consider the idea eminently more acceptable than the policy of accepting the fraudulent system of Separate Representation, with whatever reservations, and participating in the farcical elections held thereunder.

THINGS TO COME

BANTU AREAS — the machinery of oppression: this is the subject of an article by Mr. P. P. D. Nokwe in next month's **LIBERATION**. Regular readers will know that Mr. Nokwe's articles are always stimulating and informative, and this one is no exception. Reserve your copy of **LIBERATION** to keep up with the latest ideas in the progressive movement.

JOB RESERVATION AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. A veteran Trade Unionist, Eli Weinberg, has contributed an important article on the issue that has sprung to importance in the past few months. This article is packed with information to assist all who are concerned with Trade Union affairs.

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Boycott is not an inflexible principle

OUR STRUGGLE NEEDS MANY TACTICS

by NELSON MANDELA

Political organisations in this country have frequently employed the boycott weapon in their struggle against racial discrimination and oppression. In December, 1947, the African National Congress decided to boycott all elections under the Natives Representatives Act of 1936 as well as all elections to the United Transkeian Territories General Council generally referred to as the Bunga; to the advisory boards and all other discriminatory statutory institutions specially set up for Africans. A year earlier the South African Indian Congress had decided to boycott and had launched a resistance campaign against the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act which, inter alia, made special provision for the representation in parliament of Indians in the Provinces of Natal and the Transvaal and for the representation in the Provincial Council of Natal of Indians in that Province. During Easter last year the South African Coloured People's Organisation considered its attitude on the question of the election of four Europeans to represent the Coloured people in Parliament and decided to boycott these elections as well as the election of twenty-seven Coloured persons to the Union Council of Coloured Affairs. In December of the same year SACPO reversed this decision and decided to participate in the Parliamentary elections.

Apart from such boycotts of unrepresentative institutions, boycotts of a different kind have often been called by various organisations on matters directly affecting the people. For example in 1949 the Western Areas Tram Fares Committee successfully boycotted the increased fares on the Johannesburg—Western Areas tram route. Similarly last year, and by means of the boycott weapon, the Alexandra People's Transport Committee achieved a brilliant victory when it rebuffed and defeated the decision of the Public Utility Transport Corporation, backed by the Government, to increase fares along the Johannesburg—Alexandra bus route. The Federation of South African Nurses and Midwives is presently campaigning for the boycott of all discriminatory provisions of the Nursing Amendment Act passed last year. By and large, the boycott is recognised and accepted by the people as an effective and powerful weapon of political struggle.

Perhaps it is precisely because of its effectiveness and the wide extent to which various organisations employ it in their struggles to win their demands that some people regard the boycott as a matter of principle which must be invariably applied at all times and in all circumstances

irrespective of the prevailing objective conditions. This is a serious mistake for the boycott is in no way a matter of principle but a tactical weapon whose application should, like all other political weapons of struggle, be related to the concrete conditions prevailing at the given time.

For example, the boycott by the Indian community of the representation machinery contained in the Asiatic Land Tenure and Indian Representation Act of 1946 was correct at the time not because the boycott is correct on principle but because the Indian people correctly gauged the objective situation. Firstly, the political concessions made in the Act were intended to bribe the Indian people to accept the land provisions of this Act which deprived Indians of their land rights — a bribe which even the Indian reactionaries were not prepared to accept. Secondly, a remarkable degree of unity and solidarity had been achieved by the Indian people in their struggle against the Act. The conservative Kajee-Pather bloc worked in collaboration with the progressive and militant Dadoo-Naicker wing of the S.A.I.C. and no less than thirty five thousand members had been recruited into the S.A.I.C. before the commencement of the campaign. Under these conditions the boycott proved correct and not a single Indian person registered as a voter in terms of the Act.

Similarly, the 1947 boycott resolutions of the A.N.C. was correct in spite of the fact that no effective country-wide campaign was carried out to implement this resolution. It will be recalled that at that time in an endeavour to destroy the people's political organisations and to divert them from these organisations, the United Party Government was fostering the illusion that the powers of the natives Representation Council, the Bunga, the Advisory Boards and similar institutions would be increased to such an extent that the African people would have an effective voice in the government of the country. The agitation that followed the adoption of the boycott resolution by the A.N.C., inadequate as it was, helped to damage the influence of these sham institutions and to discredit those who supported them. In certain areas these institutions were completely destroyed and they have now no impact whatsoever on the outlook of people. To put the matter crisply, the 1947 resolution completely frustrated the scheme of the United Party Government to confuse the people and to destroy their political organisations.

In some cases therefore, it might be correct to boycott and in others it might be unwise and dangerous. Still in other cases another weapon of political struggle might be preferred. A demonstration, a protest march, a strike or civil disobedience might be resorted to, all depending on the actual conditions at the given time.

In the opinion of some people participation in the system of separate racial representation in any shape or form, and irrespective of the reasons advanced for doing so, is impermissible on principle and harmful in practice. According to them such participation can only serve to confuse the people and to foster the illusion that they can win their demands through a parliamentary form of struggle. In their view the people have now become so politically conscious and developed that they cannot accept any form of representation which in any way fetters their progress. They maintain that people are demanding direct representation in Parliament, in the provincial and city councils and that nothing short of this will satisfy them. They say that leaders who talk of the practical advantages to be gained by participation in separate racial representation

do not have the true interests of the people at heart. Finally they argue that the so called representatives have themselves expressed the view that they have achieved nothing in Parliament. Over and above, the argument goes, the suggestion that anything could be achieved by electing such representatives to Parliament is made ridiculous by their paucity in Parliament. This view has been expressed more specifically in regard to the question of the boycott of the forthcoming Coloured Parliamentary seats.

The basic error in this argument lies in the fact that it regards the boycott not as a tactical weapon to be employed if and when objective conditions permit but as an inflexible principle which must under no circumstances be varied. Having committed this initial mistake people who advocate this point of view are invariably compelled to interpret every effort to relate the boycott to specific conditions as impermissible deviations on questions of principle. In point of fact total and uncompromising opposition to racial discrimination in all its ramifications and refusal to co-operate with the Government in the implementation of its reactionary policies are matters of principle in regard to which there can be no compromise. In its struggle for the attainment of its demands the liberation movement avails itself of various political weapons one of which might (but not necessarily) be the boycott. It is, therefore, a serious error to regard the boycott as a weapon that must be employed at all times and in all conditions. Secondly they fail to draw the vital distinction between participation in such elections by people who accept racial discrimination and who wish to co-operate with the Government in the oppression and exploitation of their own people on the one hand and participation in such elections not because of any desire to co-operate with the Government but in order to exploit them in the interest of the liberatory struggle on the other hand. The former is the course generally followed by collaborators and Government stooges and has for many years been consistently condemned and rejected by the liberation movement. The latter course, provided objective conditions permit, serves to strengthen the peoples struggle against the reactionary policies of the Government.

The December decision of SACPO in favour of participation in the forthcoming parliamentary elections is correct for various reasons. The principal and most urgent task facing the Congress movement today is the defeat of the Nationalist Government and its replacement by a less reactionary one. Any step or decision which helps the movement to attain this task is politically correct. The election of four additional members of Parliament, provided that they agree with the general aims of the movement and provided that they are anti-Nationalist, would contribute towards the defeat of the present Government. In advocating this course it is not in any way being suggested that the salvation of the oppressed people of this country depends on the Parliamentary struggle, nor is it being suggested that a United Party regime would bring about any radical changes in the political set-up in this country. It is accepted and recognised that the people of South Africa will win their freedom as a result of the amount of pressure they will put up against the reactionary policies of the Government. Under a United Party Government it will still be necessary to wage a full-scale war on racial discrimination. But the defeat of the Nationalists would at least lighten the heavy burden of harsh and restrictive legislation that is borne by the people at the present moment. There would be a breathing space during which the movement might recuperate and prepare for fresh assaults against the oppressive policies of the Government.

SACPO's struggle and influence amongst the Coloured people has grown tremendously but it is not without opposition and there are still large numbers of Coloured people who are outside its fold. In order to succeed a boycott resolution requires a greater degree of unity and solidarity than has been so far achieved amongst the Coloured people. Prior to the December resolution certain Coloured organisations had indicated their willingness to participate in these elections. Under such conditions to boycott the elections might result in hostile and undesirable elements being returned to Parliament.

In several conferences of the A.N.C., both national and provincial, the view has been expressed that the 1947 resolution requires to be reviewed in the light of the new conditions created as a result of the serious and dangerous attacks launched by the Nationalists on the liberation movement. The political situation has radically changed since. The political organisations of the people are functioning under conditions of semi-illegality. Legal authorities are refusing to permit meetings within their areas and it is becoming increasingly difficult to hold conferences. Some of the most experienced and active members have been deported from their homes, others have been confined to certain areas whilst many have been compelled to resign from their organisations. Institutions such as the advisory boards are regarded as too advanced and dangerous by the present Government and are being replaced by tribal institutions in terms of the Bantu Authorities Act. Platforms for the dissemination of propaganda are gradually disappearing. Having regard to the principal task of ousting the Nationalist Government it becomes necessary for the Congress to review its attitude towards the special provision for the representation of Africans set out in the 1936 Act. The Parliamentary forum must be exploited to put forth the case for a democratic and progressive South Africa. Let the democratic movement have a voice both outside and within Parliament. Through the advisory boards and, if the right type of candidates are found, through Parliament we can reach the masses of the people and rally them behind us.

WRITE TO LIBERATION . . . if you want to express your views on any issue affecting the struggle for democracy in South Africa. Your views, in the form of a letter or article, are welcomed.

ARTICLES ON CULTURAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC QUESTIONS ARE INVITED.

The first two articles in this series appeared
contribute to

South Africa

By REV. D. C. THOMPSON

The Reverend Douglas Chadwick Thompson, at present Methodist Minister at Springs, is well-known to progressives in South Africa. Like his fellow-contributors to this series this month, he is one of the accused in the Treason Trial.

1. What Political Changes Do You Consider Desirable In South Africa?

The Political changes which are desirable in South Africa are those which must eventually reflect the true nature of our multi-racial society comprising all the racial groups in the Political union. This means that the attempt of the white dominant minority to hold power at all costs, whether political, economic or military must give way to inter-racial co-operation. The aim of political policy should be to secure the full development of all races to the fullest extent of their ability in the economic, cultural, and social spheres in a truly democratic society.

The effort to maintain the industrial colour bar and to limit the Africans to unskilled work in what is called "White areas" is unrealistic, and does not conform to existing conditions, which show that nearly two-thirds of the African population live and work in the "White areas".

This means that White workers in South Africa who have in the past been unfair and still are unfair and unreasonable in their attitudes towards African advancement must change not only in fairness to the Africans but in the economic interests of the whole population.

White South Africa has begun to reach a point where it cannot ignore the cumulative consequences of past policies, and try as they will the Whites of both major parties cannot avoid the entry of the colour question into their own political battles. The whites are bitterly divided, and therefore cannot refrain from the sharpest political controversies about entrenched clauses, language rights, the mounting rise of oppressive legislation, which resulted in the completion of the apartheid pyramid during the last session of Parliament.

For many years now it has become more and more apparent that the policies pursued by successive governments are awakening and strengthening the very things they have wanted to remain asleep and weak.

The outworn and immoral creed of white domination, must give place to a truly representative and democratic government.

in our November issue. Readers are invited
this series.

after the Nats.

By MR. JOE MATTHEWS

Joseph G. Matthews, born in 1929, has taken an active part in the youth movement. Son of Professor Z. K. Matthews, he is one of the few African attorneys. He was a pioneer in the A.N.C. Youth League, and was arrested during the Defiance campaign.

(The following report appears in a London newspaper 1972)

From the stand that had been specially set up for foreign journalists it was difficult to see the end of this immense crowd. We understood from South African journalists that there had never been such a huge gathering in all their history.

For weeks people had been streaming into Cape Town from all parts of the country. From the moment the date of the opening of the new parliament had been announced the people of South Africa started to converge on the City. Although the new government of the country had made special efforts to see that foreign journalists and visitors were well cared for it had been difficult to obtain accommodation in view of the large numbers of visitors to the City.

I had last been in South Africa 15 years previously covering the Treason Trial of 156 prominent leaders of the democratic movement. Even then it had been quite clear that the neo-Fascist Nationalist regime could not last forever. The Treason trials had been a historical divide — a turning point.

In the course of the 15 years following that trial the democratic movement had gone through tremendous tribulations and difficulties. But under the determined, inspired and often brilliant leadership of the multi-racial South African Peoples Congress all these problems had been overcome. Today it is accepted that the South African Peoples Congress is the dominant political force in the country especially in view of the recent general elections in which it won with an overwhelming majority. Incidentally the recent elections were the first truly, free, equal and universal general elections in the history of S.A.

I have referred to the South African People's Congress as a multi-racial

SOUTH AFRICA AFTER

THOMPSON (Continued)

There are those who believe that the extension of political freedom and economic opportunity is possible without conflict and bloody settlement. There are others who do not believe that justice will be achieved, except by group pressure resisting injustice, leading to inevitable conflict and inter-racial strife.

2. Do The Social Forces Exist In Our Country To Accomplish Such Changes?

Yes, I believe that the social forces are both potential and actual, and will become increasingly actual in the next few years.

The Congress movement is in the process of building unity between the people of the different races in our land.

There are also rational and religious resources which are playing, and will continue to play their important part in the overall changes which are taking place in South Africa.

Inter-racial Church gatherings are important, and I hope that the role of the Afrikaner Churches will be considerable, when they are awakened to their Christian responsibility not only in sacrificial missionary expenditure and endeavour, but in removing the "middle wall of partition". The Bloemfontein Conference of African Leaders, the recently held Multi-racial Conference at Wits. University, and the outstanding contributions of the Institute of Race Relations and SABRA's own efforts will continue to indicate the more excellent way of love and goodwill.

Despite restrictive legal measures, the workers solidarity as expressed in many Trades Unions must continue to flourish.

Local welfare organisations and associations are playing a noble part, and the many individuals with truly human impulses are maintaining social contacts across the colour line. The Liberal Party with its non-racial political emphasis, and the Open Universities are of incalculable importance to the future South Africa.

3. What Basis For Unity Exists Between The Racial Groups?

The most fundamental basis of course, is the consciousness when discovered of our common humanity, and the realisation of the Scriptural truth "That God hath made of one blood all nations of men." The Congress movement is the political expression and united front of this fundamental unity, which will become increasingly articulate, and it will then become more obvious that the abstract ideological prejudices which divide us must give way to the forces making for progress, freedom and peace among all the peoples.

4. Is The Accomplishment Of Universal Franchise Feasible At The Present Stage?

YES. A voteless people is a voiceless people. Universal suffrage is an

THE NATIONALISTS

MATTHEWS (Continued)

organisation for lack of a better word. The new authorities are very touchy on these matters and I found that words like "racial" were frowned upon if used in reference to their peoples. This is part of the campaign to wipe out all racialist feelings in the country.

The Congress itself developed out of the four or five separate national organisations that had existed previously. The fusion had not been the product of mere theoretical and ideological considerations. It was the expression of a democratic unity that had been demanded by the people themselves as a result of numerous struggles and sufferings endured in common.

The problem of the means that would be employed to effect a fundamental change in South Africa had always been an intriguing one to us foreigners. In the event most of the prophesies had been proved incorrect.

The South African People's Congress had been able to unite under its leadership a nation-wide variety of classes and groups. Of these the most significant had been the industrial workers. The people in the reserves and the farming areas both of whom had a great stake in the end of the old society had played a great role. Apart from these basic segments of society vast sections of the middle class who had been ruined by the great economic crisis of the sixties that had struck the economies of all but one third of humanity had swung into support of change. Then there were the intellectuals.

It is worthy of mention here that the Afrikaans Progressive Society had been vital in swinging Afrikaner intellectuals and workers behind the policies of the South African People's Congress with which it had eventually merged.

Despite the worst that the reactionary Nationalist government could do the South African People's Congress uniting the bulk of the people of South Africa behind it had been able to win a great victory. The victory was especially memorable for the fact that it had been won practically without violence and no bitterness on the part of the People's Movement. It was a victory based on the overwhelming support of the majority of the people of all nationalities and superior organisational efficiency.

The corrupt reactionary Nationalist regime had been unable to continue ruling in the old way the moment the people were no longer prepared to be governed in the old way. With absolutely no co-operation from the people and completely isolated in a world which had considerably changed the Nationalist Party's reliance on force had been unable to maintain it in power.

The crowd was still swelling bigger every minute. All space within miles of the Parliament buildings had been taken up. A small number of earnest and harrassed policemen composed of all nationalities was trying to control the situation. To anyone who had been in South Africa

SOUTH AFRICA AFTER

THOMPSON (Continued)

obvious objective of all peoples struggling for their freedom, and is being realised in more countries and nations of the world.

It will not be possible for the White rulers of South Africa to maintain their colonial subjects in a perpetual state of tutelage, and experience will prove that those who think and act as though it was an unalterable assumption, are going to be disillusioned. For more and more oppressive laws in the name of Apartheid must bring increasing resentment, strife and eventual social collapse.

The way forward is to face existing realities, and mend our ways before we arrive at the point of no return, so that political rights may reflect more truly the economic and social structure of our multi-racial society. If done soon and co-operatively we shall be saved from the inevitable collapse of a multi-racial society that failed.

The Colonial subjects of South Africa have very little say in the councils of the nation, and to a large extent they are debarred by law and custom from playing that part in the building of a nation to which their abilities and ambitions urge and entitle them.

5. What Immediate Economic Changes Are Likely To Be Found Necessary?

The most immediate economic and political changes that are necessary are to be bound up with the question how to terminate colonialism reasonably and peacefully. This is not something unique in the world of today. Immediate economic objectives must be to secure to every member of the community equal justice and the equal right to live and to remunerative work. This must include that every one has the right to earn his or her living legitimately according to his skill and ability, and the usual right to hold full and secure possession of land. Eventually this would lead to the disappearance of the present reserve system and its implied territorial separation of the races.

The colour bar in industry would be abolished, and every worker would receive his due and living wage, and the stage would be set for an expanding economy, utilising to the full the great natural resources of the country and indeed the continent.

Chester Bowles in his recently published book, "The New Dimensions of Peace" has written, "In much of Asia, Africa and South America, where more than a billion people are living under nearly intolerable conditions, revolution is a word of hope. We have seen that their revolutionary objectives have at least four dimensions — demand for independence, insistence on human dignity without regard to race, creed or colour, rapid economic progress for the benefit of the many as well as for the few, and peaceful conditions under which to live."

No one can doubt that we are living in a world which is being trans-
(Continued at foot of opposite page)

THE NATIONALISTS

MATTHEWS (Continued)

before, the spectacle of unarmed policemen controlling a crowd consisting largely of Blacks was a refreshing reminder of the new times.

As regards the policy of the new government we foreign journalists could only guess. It was one of the things that would become clear in the opening speech of the President-General of the Congress who it was expected would be elected President of the Republic at this session of Parliament.

Already, however, in the recent general elections the principle of universal adult suffrage without distinctions of race, sex, colour or creed had been observed. All visible marks of inequality in government departments and in the country generally had been removed with great thoroughness and surprisingly little difficulty. The establishment of friendly relations with all states had already been accomplished. But the problems remained to be solved — in particular the problem of creating a foundation for a prosperous economy that could meet the constantly growing material and cultural requirements of all the people on the basis of higher industrial techniques.

The struggle for freedom had been hard and the Congress had taught that much work would have to be done to remove the legacy of backwardness inherited from the previous South African regimes.⁷ But the South African people remained full of confidence in the future.

On this the 26th day of June, however, the people had put all cares aside and gathered outside parliament buildings to celebrate the proclamation of the New Democratic Republic in S.A.

Thompson (Continued from opposite page)

formed before our eyes, and none dare doubt that South Africa must face the necessity of these changes in her own economy.

6. Is Racism So Deeply Rooted In The Consciousness Of The People That Special Measures Would Be Required To Eliminate It? — If So, What Measures Would You Suggest?

Group conflict is a reality, and whether the group be of race, colour, class or religion, it must be continually demonstrated that lesser group loyalties may be transcended in two ways. Firstly, the basic part played by economics in the social order, and the fact that we are economically interdependent both within the Nation and internationally. And secondly, the ultimately decisive factor is the expansion of common consciousness. In this way exclusive group loyalties are transcended.

Presumably, there will always be the Little Rock of Arkansas type of Colour and racial reaction to be cleared up, until mankind learns to beat to the throb of one pulse and humanity.

This seems the ultimate possibility and impossibility!

A REVIEW OF THE MULTI-RACIAL CONFERENCE

by W. SISULU

The people of South Africa witnessed with profound interest the coming together of the leading men and women of different racial groups at the Great Hall of the University of Witwatersrand in what was correctly described by the "Rand Daily Mail" as "South Africa's biggest multi-racial conference since Union".

Briefly, the multi-racial conference was the direct outcome of the All-In African Conference held in Bloemfontein in October, 1956. That Conference not only rejected the Tomlinson Report which it had met to consider, but went further to call for a united front against the apartheid policy of the Nationalist Government and suggested that the first step should be a conference of all races in the country.

This idea was enthusiastically received by political parties, church leaders, trade unions, individuals and Non-European national organisations.

The interest shown by those who welcomed the conference was due to the fact that it was a correct idea at the correct time. The country was in a ferment due to the misrule of the Nationalists. Many serious-minded people among Europeans realised that the time had come to face the truth that South Africa cannot be governed by one racial group and that peace can only be secured by the co-operation of all racial groups.

The sponsors of the conference were from the initial stages faced with various problems. The Institute of Race Relations, with considerable influence among the liberal-minded Europeans and other organisations were so keen to see SABRA and the DRC included; and were prepared to wait until these supporters of the Nationalists were convinced; whilst others felt that no time should be lost. As a result the Institute did not take part in the preparation for the multi-racial conference. The DRC leaders made attempts which amounted to undermining the calling of the conference by writing to .D.A.M.F. suggesting a multi-racial conference which would not attack apartheid and the government. But all these manouvres failed. The multi-racial conference was held.

The "World" seemed to have been an organ of those who wanted to undermine the multi-racial conference before and after the conference. It went all out to discredit the conference and published malicious stories about it; but to their disappointment the Conference was a resounding success.

Describing the Conference, delegates both European and Non-European felt that the University premises were a "world of its own" according to Ruth Matseoane, who said, "We were just South Africans, not Europeans or Africans and we felt it." There was a spirit of friendship, of brotherhood between the professors and the workers, the Roman Catholic Bishops and the Moslems.

The delegates made sure from the start that they shaped the Conference and they were determined to see a new South Africa emerging. They were not going to leave things only in the hands of those who prepared speeches, nor were they going to leave things to the sponsors and the Planning Committees. They challenged the Chairman who said that the Conference was neither anti-government, nor anti-apartheid.

There were many controversial issues during the Commission discussions, but the people had one spirit.

In the Educational, Religious, Economical and Civic Rights and Political spheres the findings of the Conference were unambiguous in their straight-forward rejection of discrimination and domination. Summarising the findings of the Conference, the Bishop of Johannesburg said in respect of the economic and civil rights, the findings of both these subjects are a clear indication of the deep concern of the Conference in these matters.

"We are convinced that if our community is to be healthy it must be re-ordered that the basic civil rights of all people are adequately safeguarded. For this reason, we urge the repeal of all laws denying or restricting these rights, and the entrenchment of the basic freedom to which all the members of a democratic society are entitled in a written constitution.

"It is urgent for us to continue to give serious attention to the formulation of an economic policy which will provide adequate opportunities for Indians, Africans and Coloured, as well as Europeans, and give to those of all races a share in the wealth they have produced and the facilities they have created."

The first two articles on the political report state "This Conference has as its fundamental aim the creation in South Africa of a common society."

"Conference is convinced that only universal suffrage on a common roll can meet the needs and aspirations of the people of this country. It appreciates, however, that there is disagreement as to the ways and means of achieving the transition from white supremacy to a non-racial democracy in which these franchise rights may be exercised."

One of the wisest decisions of the Conference was that of establishing a continuation committee to popularise the multi-racial idea to all corners of South Africa and to include in the continuation committee representatives of organisations who after all are in contact with the masses of South Africa.

We have every reason to be proud of the decisions of the multi-racial conference which means widening the democratic force, bringing it nearer and nearer to the Freedom Charter; particularly when we consider the organisations and associations the delegates represented at Conference. The Nationalist Government and all their followers have been alarmed and shaken by the Conference. It is this achievement, with the possibilities for a successful struggle for democracy which should make the Congress Movement consider seriously methods of consolidating this ever-growing power, and the new steps to be taken in getting wider sections of the South African population to embrace the spirit and the outlook of the multi-racial conference. This means taking the findings of the Conference to the masses of South Africa. This is an immediate task which must not be shelved even for an hour. If this is properly handled it could within a short space of time transform the whole South Africa situation.

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