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SPEAKERS NOTES ON THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE.

L. WHAT IS THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE?

A. The Congress of the People is to be a gathering of representatives of the people of South Africa. They will come together with the object of discussing their demands and aspirations, and drawing them up in the Freedom Charter.

The Freedom Charter will, for the first time, embody the demands of all our people.

B. The Congress will not simply be a Conference of various delegates. It is to be the climax of a great campaign, spread over the length and breadth of South Africa, reaching alike into the cities, small towns, country districts, farms, and reserves. The people of this country, black and white, will formulate their demands through nation-wide discussion. The Freedom Charter will be a living document, breathing the life of our people.

C. A Call for the Congress has been adopted. It calls on farmers of the reserves and trust lands; on miners; on workers of farms, forests, factories and shops; on housewives and mothers; on teachers, students and preachers; on African and European, Indian and Coloured; to "Speak together of Freedom", to write their own demands into the Freedom Charter; to meet in a great assembly to discuss and adopt the Charter for Freedom. (Speakers can quote extracts from the Call.)

2. WHO IS ORGANISING THE CONGRESS?

A. The idea of the Congress of the People came into being through joint discussions of four organisations of the people, The African National Congress, South African Indian Congress, Congress of Democrats, and South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation. Members of the Executives of these four organisations have appointed a National Action Council to prepare for the Congress.

These organisations may be said to have sponsored the Congress, but it will be organised by the people of South Africa as a whole.

B. A network of local committees will be set up throughout the country. Through these committees the demands that will eventually be incorporated in the Charter will be formulated. Representatives from the particular locality will depend on the local Committee. Above all, the creation of a network of local committees in every corner of South Africa will in itself be a major political achievement.

3. WHAT FORM WILL THE CONGRESS TAKE?

A. The Congress will consist of delegates elected to speak on behalf of the people. Through Elections will be on the basis of a vote to every person over the age of 18 years. For the first time there will be elections for the whole population with direct representation, in contrast to the long history of indirect sham representation which the Non-European people have suffered.

B. Wherever possible representatives will be elected by direct vote at a public meeting of the electors in various electoral units. Where this is not possible, as for instance on a mine or European farm, then other methods will be used.

4. HOW WILL WE PREPARE FOR THE CONGRESS?

A. The same spirit of self-sacrifice and discipline which was the hallmark of the defiance Campaign must be created. This will only be achieved if people grasp the significance of the Congress, and regard the Charter as their document embodying their demands.

B. It will be necessary for teams of organisers to cover every corner of the land. Every area should be visited, not only by organisers but where possible by prominent leaders of the people. Thousands of volunteers will be needed.

C. Freedom volunteers will pledge a certain time, a week-end or even longer periods to carry the campaign to all parts of the country where an organisational basis does not already exist.

D. Pamphlets and propaganda will be distributed on a large scale. Money must be collected for all this preparatory work.

5. WHAT CAN I AS AN INDIVIDUAL DO?

News of the Congress must be brought to every man and woman throughout the land. Every organisation must be brought into organising for the Congress, and every leading member of an organisation pledge his support.

Everyone of us must become an organiser. We must work together with our Congresses, and the Regional and local Committees that will be established. We must see that these Committees are functioning in our areas, we must assist in organising Committees in areas where there are no Congress branches and the people lack political experience.

We must help to make the idea of this Congress and the Freedom Charter capture the imagination of the people. Each of us must be tireless in collecting money to make the Congress a success, and to supply funds to issue the propaganda which must go all over the country.

The delegates at the Congress will be the result of free elections, such as our people have never participated in before. The Congress will not only show the world the false and limited basis of what is called democracy in South Africa, it will also broadcast to the world the needs and desires of our people, the things they will work for, to which we are prepared to pledge our lives.

Make the Congress of the People the greatest assembly that South Africa has ever known! Make the Freedom Charter the starting-point of attaining freedom!

LET US SPEAK TOGETHER OF FREEDOM!
LET US WORK TOGETHER FOR THE FREEDOM CHARTER!
LET US ORGANISE TOGETHER FOR THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE!
LET US GO FORWARD TOGETHER TO FREEDOM!

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TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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