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SOUTH AFRICAN CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS

P.O. Box 17133,  
Hillbrow.

Johannesburg.  
South Africa.

26th June, 1963.

S T A T E M E N T

ON THE 47TH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE (1963) AND ON THE REMARKS OF SENATOR A.E. TROLLIP, MINISTER OF LABOUR, IN THIS CONNECTION.

The Minister of Labour, Senator A.E. Trollip, in giving his reasons for asking the South African delegates to remain at the present I.L.O. Conference stated "the Government will not be forced to recognise the South African Congress of Trade unions for future nominations of workers' representatives." (THE STAR, 25th June, 1963).

He then claims that objections lodged by the South African Congress of Trade Unions to the credentials of the South African workers' delegations have failed in previous I.L.O. Conferences and would have failed again had it not been for the "atmosphere prevailing at this year's Conference."

What Senator Trollip ignores are the repeated recommendations in previous years of the Credentials Committee of the I.L.O. with regard to the nomination of the workers' delegation, all of which carried an explicit warning that if the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was not consulted, there was every possibility that future delegations from South Africa would not be recognised.

In 1959, the Chairman of the Credentials Committee of the 43rd Session of the I.L.O. Conference, in reporting to a plenary session on the reasons given by the Government of South Africa for not recognising SACTU, stated:

"Now why cannot it (SACTU) be registered as a trade union organisation? Just by reason of this very fact - because it includes amongst its ranks African workers who are not recognised for that purpose by those laws. The Credentials Committee did not and could not accept the argument in support of the attitude taken up by the Government of the Union of South Africa. It is true that, in so far as local affairs are concerned, the Union of South Africa is entirely free to pursue its own policy and to frame its laws in the way it deems fit.

But the position is different, in our opinion, when it comes to the international plane. Here any government has to comply with the Constitution of the I.L.O. and the principles upon which it is based. There can be no doubt that both the letter and the spirit of the Constitution are against any discrimination being exercised against a trade union organisation because of its racial composition in the designation of the workers' delegation to the Conference.

"On behalf of the Credentials Committee and I hope also with the support of everyone in this hall, I wish to express the hope that the Government of the Union of South Africa, will in future, act strictly in accordance with these principles and desist of its policy of discrimination against any trade union in that country on account of its racial composition.

Believing that that would be the future policy of the Government of the Union of South Africa, the Credentials Committee has decided not to exercise its power of invalidating the credentials of the delegation in question."

EXTRACT FROM PROVISINAL RECORD NO.22 (XLIII - 1959)  
43RD SESSION, INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE.

In 1960 and in 1961 the Credentials Committee again strongly recommended that SACTU be consulted. Yet Senator Trollip in his defence of Government policy, claims that "there has been no change this year in the method of choosing the workers' delegation." Precisely! South Africa has had sufficient warning that it must change its method of choosing the workers' delegation and, because it refused to do so, Mr. Liebenberg, the workers' delegate, was expelled.

Senator Trollip, however, evades the true problem, namely, that continued membership by South Africa of the I.L.O. makes a mockery of I.L.O. principles and conventions. It is for this reason that the African states withdrew completely from this year's Conference and the workers' delegations from every country in the entire world walked out of the Conference hall when a South African delegate stood up to speak. It was the remaining Government and employers' delegates who voted for the expulsion of Mr. Liebenberg. There were 57 abstentions, but not one country voted for South Africa.

While South Africa continues to pursue policies which violate the spirit of the I.L.O. and ignores every recommendation made to it by that body, other member states cannot help but feel that South Africa deliberately brings the I.L.O. into contempt. Membership of any organisation implies the acceptance, both in theory and practice, of the principles of that organisation. The Government of South Africa appears to consider that it is entitled to the benefits of membership of the I.L.O. without there being any corresponding obligation on its part to carry out any of the policies of recommendations of that organisation.

The Republic of South Africa has not ratified and does not honour the Conventions on Freedom of Association, Protection of the Right to Organise and the Right of Collective Bargaining. (Conventions No. 87 and 98). It constantly extends discrimination in employment by the implementation of Job Reservation in violation of Convention No. 111. African workers and work-seekers are arrested, fined, jailed and given lashes for 'pass' offences. Criminal sanctions are imposed for breaches

of contract under the Masters and Servants Act and for strikes of African workers under the Industrial Conciliation Act. All these actions cut deeply across I.L.O. principles, as does the removal from office of democratically elected trade union officials, by banning and confining orders and 90 days' detention without trial.

Now that the entire world has rejected South African membership of the I.L.O. and the workers of every country have demonstrated their implacable opposition to South Africa's labour policies, the South African Government does not re-examine those policies, but states "that it will not be forced to recognise the South African Congress of Trade Unions." What a petty and pathetic attitude to adopt! The non-recognition of SACTU was only one factor in the rejection of South Africa by the I.L.O.

Despite the fact that the Government has tried for eight years to smash SACTU and its affiliated Unions, SACTU has grown and has won world recognition because it is based on internationally recognised trade union principles. Workers will continue to combine to protect their interests, whatever the obstacles placed in their path. It is because of its inability to recognise this fact that the Government of South Africa has foundered at the I.L.O. No smears that SACTU is a 'political body', or that it is affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions (which it is not) will obscure the fact that the entire world has reached the point of no return as far as South Africa's race and labour policies are concerned. The world will not change its opinion as long as South Africa entrenches inequality and discrimination in its laws.

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Johannesburg.

26th June, 1963.

**Collection Number: AD1137**

**FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN 1954-1963**

**PUBLISHER:**

*Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive*

*Location:- Johannesburg*

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