

SOUTH AFRICAN INSTITUTE OF RACE RELATIONS : Natal Region.

TRANSLATION OF PUBLIC STATEMENT  
by

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"The Word of the President-General concerning the Disturbances which are the outcome of the protest made by the Women of Natal.

Africans :

1. To praise the attitude of protest amongst Africans:

I issue this word as President-General, nevertheless also as President of Congress in Natal. I make known praise and rejoicing for this attitude of protest of the women which is nearly the same all over Natal.

2. The Grievances of the Women:

The grievances of the women in their firm stand are obvious; they have troubled every person who is an African in this country.

The women are protesting against the following:-

- (a) The removal of people from places where they have built and the pulling down of their homes such as at Cato Manor.
- (b) Oppressive laws which refuse permission to go and seek work in the towns (Influx Control), as well as laws of personal passes for women.
- (c) Increase in rents of houses in the towns, as well as poll tax.
- (d) New laws of tribal authorities for the filling of water in dipping tanks without payment, and the culling out of women to do this work as well as the gathering together of people into one place to erect locations in the reserves.
- (e) The low wages but at the same time the price of goods and rents are going up all the time. If people want a pound a day they are ignored and it is said they are talking nonsense.

All these afflictions together with many others which I have not mentioned, are done without discussion with the councils at home. The Government is satisfied to talk with Chiefs, and the people are suddenly loaded with laws about which they have never been told or on which their opinion has not been sought. The women are trying to meet these troubles by working for their abolition. The spirit of standing firmly against affliction is the spirit of Congress. Congress commends the spirit that people should not accept afflictions with folded hands.

3. Opposition without Bloodshed.

I have already commended the firm protest of the women; I have an important word of advice that has caused me to send out this warning. I want again to make known to the country that it is not the policy of Congress to make a protest by shedding blood nor by destroying property. With earnest pleading I advise those who have the spirit of this opposition which I have commended that a firm stand should be taken with no bloodshed. We of the Congress do not agree with anyone who pulls down and burns homes and destroys property. It profits the nation nothing; on the other hand also to spill blood causes us to lose influence in the whole world because it makes us appear to be gangsters and robbers, then those that sympathise with us in this country of ours and in other lands are disappointed.

Let us not allow anger and being overwhelmed by troubles to make us gangsters. I ask and plead with the leaders of the women that they should listen/...



listen to this word of mine, whether they are carrying on their protest apart from the aegis of the national organisation or whether they say they are followers of Luthuli. I advised that leaders and gatherings that wanted to protest should consult with the leaders of Congress in Durban and in other places, so that they would get advice and explanations for protest without bloodshed. Beware of people who come to you saying they belong to Congress, and you accept them too readily, because some will come having their own aims and they will carry them out in your name and in that of Congress. If one says he is a leader, and is unknown, ask him for his papers. It is right that we should join ourselves to a national organisation. The battle for freedom may possibly take a long time, therefore it is necessary that :-

- (i) we learn to listen to the word of a leader if we are doing something to which we were not assigned by him;
- (ii) if we start a protest in a disorderly manner we should build ourselves into a respected gathering of our district and also join the National organisation.

#### 4. To the Men in Various Places:

The women are fighting our battle whether we agree or not with their methods, as is apparent in their grievances which they report to the magistrates. Those they complain of are things which vex all Africans very much. If because of their protests the women get into worry and troubles, it is the burden of the men that they should enter into this affair and help the women in those troubles in these ways:-

- (i) By helping the women to carry on their protest in ways which do not spill blood and do not destroy property, nor burn houses;
- (ii) To put their heads together, and gather money with which to get lawyers, together with what relates to and is concerned with the charges made against the women, such as to care for and look after the children of those imprisoned.

If you come upon a woman being beaten by her husband, you first make peace and afterwards enquire what the matter is. Let us admit, men, that it was our duty to go first to the Native Commissioners to complain about the raising of the Poll Tax, and about being prevented from seeking work in the towns. It is not a breaking of the law to take our complaints to the Commissioners; that is the very method which it is fitting to use at all times.

The present time calls for men of various places to combine, and not fear to make known to those who rule us their complaints, especially should they join the national organisation led by Luthuli, the African National Congress. We will never get the freedom fought for by the women only while we men look on from afar.

#### 5. To Congress Members in Various Places:

Let it be the responsibility of all those who belong to Congress in the various places, to advise and instruct the people in the Congress method of protest which spills no blood and causes no damage to buildings and property.

#### 6. Mourning:

I mourn deeply for those who have lost their lives also those who have lost relatives, and those who have been hurt in these riots, whether they are protestors or police.

#### 7. My Desires:

I trust that this spirit of protest against afflictions will not retreat in Natal, and will go ahead and fill the whole country, also that it will go on as I have instructed without bloodshed.

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So that there may be evolved a cure for these difficulties compounded by each making a contribution, the National Meeting, Congress, sends out a call that  
we/...



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we should get ready for a Conference of the Natal District, to which are invited the delegates of the people - both rural and urban. To this Conference each branch should send two delegates. This Conference will be in the BANTU SOCIAL CENTRE, Beatrice Street in Durban on Sunday, September 6, 1959. To welcome this spirit of protest which we possess here in Natal today, it was my desire that I myself should conduct this Conference. But then as you know I am still forbidden to speak (my mouth is still sewn up). I will be among you in spirit and desire and by my talk which will be read at Conference. May it return! Africa! Freedom in our Time.

Signed:-

Albert J. Luthuli,

P.O. Groutville. "

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