

TALKING C.O.P.

The other day, I met a man. We got talking about the Congress of the People. He said that he thought the idea was a good one, but that trade-unionists had more important things to worry about. "After all" he said, "you'll never get the things the Freedom Charter will speak of, without a strong trade union movement ~~has~~ to fight for them." And so, he went on to argue, trade unionists should stick to organising their fellow workers, and leave it to others to work for C.O.P.

Now I agree that a strong trade union movement, fighting not only for better wages and conditions of work but also for wider demands of life and liberty, is absolutely necessary if the Freedom Charter's aims are to be won. But it seems ~~taxeszzstrangezzkertzsfzizadennioniazaxwhizhxzihisxbanxwasxvisualizingx~~ to me that you don't get strong trade unions by talking about them, but by organising ~~people~~ ^{workers}, and by getting them to see, through their own experience, that their trade unions are their real strength and shield in their everyday life. And workers will never learn that lesson, if their trade unions stand aloof from the real struggles and campaigns which are being waged in the political field, saying "That's not our affair. We deal only with wages and hours of work."

As I see it, the C.O.P. campaign gives us a tremendous new chance to spread the trade-union message to industrial workers who have never before heard or been convinced of it. Especially does this apply to the non-white workers, who are not going to get "the rate for the job" or be promoted to posts that pay a living wage, until they have won the right to compete for any job that's going and at the same rates of pay as the man with a vote. And that right can only be won in political campaigning. The trade unionists must not stand aloof from C.O.P. They dare not be too busy with "their own business." They must, it seems to me, be the heart and soul of the C.O.P. campaign amongst the industrial workers, and make the demands of the workers for ^{jobs,} trade-union rights and security of employment a vital part of the Freedom Charter that the C.O.P. is to adopt.

And then again, there is the other side of it. How can the trade unions hope to win their battles without the sympathy and support of the non-trade union workers, and their families and friends? The 1922 strike ^{lasted as long as} ~~achieved the strength~~ it did because the farmers and the townsfolk helped with food and money to keep the strikers going. And, conversely, the 1946 strike of African miners failed, partly because the Chamber and the Government managed to persuade many citizens that the strikers were their enemies, deserving of shooting and batoning; and so ^{they} cut the strikers off from any outside assistance. The C.O.P. as I see it, gives us the chance to unite our trade-union movement with the majority of the people, and to assure ourselves of their support for our battles when we come to fight them, just as we assure them of our support.

So I say, more power to the Congress of the People! And I call on all my fellow trade unionists, rank and file workers as well as officials, to help us along by really getting down to the job now of organising delegates from every factory to go to the C.O.P.

(Ben Giles.)

E N D S

Collection Number: AD1812

RECORDS RELATING TO THE 'TREASON TRIAL' (REGINA vs F. ADAMS AND OTHERS ON CHARGE OF HIGH TREASON, ETC.), 1956 1961

TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand

Location:- Johannesburg

©2012

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of the collection records and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a private collection deposited with Historical Papers at The University of the Witwatersrand.