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THE PAST AND PRESENT WORK OF THE A.N.C.

In order to give a fair and proper survey of the history of the African National Congress, past and present, which, like other political organisations of the oppressed and exploited Nationalities struggling for their emancipation, has had its own ups and downs, one must have records to refer to, and directly have the inside knowledge of the activities of the movement. Whilst I have no records, but my personal contact with this National movement gives me some authority to write with confidence. It is an undeniable fact that records are required when one has to deal with the past history of any movement. But I want to mention here in passing that there are some historical factors which are known to many without referring to any records. These can be summed up as follows :-

(a) That the African National Congress came into being as a result of the political and economic dissatisfaction of the relatively conscious section of the Africans which was fast growing in those days - namely, the urban workers, under the guidance and leadership of the African intelligentsia who were its founders and organisers.

(b) That the A.N.C. was once a powerful political organisation which commanded a respect amongst all the sections of the African community throughout the country and was supported by the chiefs and commoners alike. In short, the African National Congress was a true expression of the hatred of the National oppression. It played a very important role as the defender of the political and economic rights of the Africans, in those days. It conducted a number of direct actions in various parts of South Africa whether by mass actions or legally, and was successful in gaining some concessions in some of its actions.

THE DECLINE OF THE A.N.C.

Despite the fact that the A.N.C. played an important role in giving a lead on the immediate issues affecting the Africans, but it was rather too slow in building up the ranks of the ordinary people to take up a lead in the branches and residential areas and to tackle the day to day issues and keep the fire burning. Everything was inclined to depend upon the head office. Propaganda was carried on through the then organ of the movement, known as 'The Bantu Batho'. There was no other means of educating the people politically, apart from agitation. Very few pamphlets were written, and that is why it is difficult today for the African Youth to know much about the growth and decline of the A.N.C.. Whilst credit must be given to the African intellectuals as the founders of the A.N.C., the blame for its decline can also be laid at their door. When the militancy of the people outgrew the leaders a period of vacillation set in, and this reflected itself in petty squabbles under the pretext of fighting for leadership, which ultimately wrecked the movement to nothing.

THE AFRICANS SUPPORT THE A.N.C.

The Africans have always supported the A.N.C. even at the time when there was no movement worth talking about. The name of the A.N.C. has always been an inspiration. The Youth Conferences which meet in December of each year at Bloemfontein, have never ceased even in the dark years of this organisation. Sometimes only a few people met and passed some meaningless resolutions in the name of the Congress. Individuals went on deputations in the name of the A.N.C. and claimed that this was the work of the organisation. This went on for years until some progressive people came together and decided that the A.N.C. should be revived.

THE REVIVAL OF THE A.N.C.

After many years of hardship without a political home for the Africans in the lines of a National movement, the A.N.C. is under a new period; a period of reorganisation. There can be no doubt but that this will succeed. Everywhere the Africans are speaking about the A.N.C. as the

yearly
annual

mother organisation. The trade unions, the Advisory Boards, the Teachers' Associations, Social and Cultural bodies, all are morally supporting the A.N.C. and have pledged that they will help build it up.

NOTHING NEW CAN SUCCEED.

Some people who are aspiring for leadership ^{are} ~~are~~ talking about forming a new National movement in the Transvaal; apparently these are green self-seekers and careerists who are hoping to build their own names rather than help their own people. If the African leaders and the would-be leaders fail to start where their fathers left, how can they hope to be successful if they begin a new movement? Any new organisation is doomed to failure.

PLATFORM AND POLICY OF CONGRESS.

The President General of this organisation has hammered out what is known as the platform and policy of the A.N.C. which has been acceptable to all sections of the Africans. Those who want to test their ability have a place on this platform. This does not by any means mean that all is well in the Congress. There are shortcomings of a gigantic magnitude. The constitution of this organisation might have been good 32 years ago, but certainly not today. It is confusing and meaningless. It should be replaced by a simple one. There are no offices of this body, and no full time organisers. The financial position of this organisation is bad. All these things can and must be rectified and put in order before the A.N.C. can be what we expect it to be, and the forthcoming National Conference must once and for all decide these important questions on the lines to be put forward by the National Executive as decided by the meeting of the Executive which met recently in Johannesburg. The Africans will be well advised if they stop talking about new organisations, but close their ranks and put their national movement in order. Any new organisation posing as a National movement should be opposed tooth and nail, and be buried before the attempt is made to form it. Our disabilities are so great, and our people so disunited that any further petty squabbles for leadership can no longer be tolerated. Only the enemies of the Africans; the tools of oppression can be interested in these petty quarrels which are harmful to our progress, even if they themselves are Africans. These can always be seen by their persistence to make efforts to divide people under false excuses of building up the movement while in reality they are disorganising the Africans.

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