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(A.N.C.)

The Re-Organisation of the African National Congress

POLITICAL ASPECT

N2.24

[in next paper
see Atlantic Charter]

In tackling the item - Political aspect - it is necessary to realise the complex problems confronting ~~the~~ humanity in general and South Africa in particular. The present war is determining the future of mankind. If that is so it is during this war that the future of our people too, is being decided. Knowing what fascism means in terms of the brutal and merciless subjection of other nations we have to recognise this, otherwise our voice will have no weight after this world conflict at the bar of international public opinion and human justice.

War is the continuation of politics by forceful means. It is in this war that the nations are playing their part for the future system of government. Looking at the part played by our people in this war we can safely say that we are not found wanting in the struggle against the common enemy and in contributing towards the building up of a new society for which we all are fighting, in spite of the fact that we are tied hand and foot by the numerous colour legislations.

LET US STAND ON OUR OWN!

Let us all admit that there is no power other than our own that will be able to bring pressure to bear upon the peace conference after the war. Therefore there is one political aspect which overshadows all other aspects of our national life. ~~Here we are inclined to over-emphasise an explicit political aspect at the expense of other important aspects of our life~~ and that is the question of unity and consolidation of the African forces into one mighty African National Congress. This is our only hope. Therefore it is essential to recognise our defects in organisational spheres and to find a remedy for them. Organisationally we can say that we are not worthy or capable of raising our voice as a national body. The provinces ~~is~~ are working as if there is no mother body, the African National Congress. The leaders are continuously impeding the progress of the people by petty squabbles.

I have devoted my essay to the question of organisation because I am convinced that no matter how comprehensive a statement on the life and conditions of our people may be, nor how politically correct the demands put forward, all issues are dependent upon organisation. Political pressure cannot be brought to bear upon the government of this country ~~nor~~ can we have great political influence, unless and until we can back it up by powerful organisation. We have tried flowery speeches and wordy memoranda in the past and they have brought us nowhere. By all means let us have a clear programme and policy ~~to~~ to put before the country and the world. But let us put behind that policy the organised strength of our people. Let us have a million Africans organised in active Congress branches. Then things will begin to move.

THE AFRICANS SUPPORT CONGRESS.

The Africans all over the country are clamouring for the Congress, but the Congress has been failing them because of the lack of consistent day-to-day leadership and practical work. The would-be branches mainly consist of scattered ~~at~~ individuals, members who unless something is done immediately, will remain ~~at~~ only ideological supporters of the Congress and not its active members. The fact that there are no offices of the Congress anywhere, where members could bring their grievances and pay their dues, is a glaring example of a very bad state of affairs. Until recently, even public meetings have been very irregular and there is practically no propaganda. On the whole this, the only national movement of the Africans, is in a state of chaos. Nor does lack of funds justify this state of affairs. Funds can be found if the organisation is active and this has been proved in the early days of the Congress.

WHAT IS THE REMEDY?

Every devoted member of the congress is asking: What is the way out of this political deadlock? It can only be overcome if the various provinces come to some understanding that the President General and his Executive are not only theoretical leaders, but also practical leaders from whom directives for the carrying out of the congress work must come. It is by this means that the policy and platform of the A.N.C. which have been unanimously accepted, can be carried out practically. Political discipline, without which no organisation can ever progress, must be enforced. It is true that some may consider political discipline a dictatorship, but such people lack political education. They do not understand even the A,B,C, of politics. While they have our sympathy, they should not be taken seriously and allowed to ~~debar~~ bar the progress of the movement.

POLICY IS NOT EVERYTHING.

Theoretically the policy and platform of the A.N.C. put forward by the President

/General....

General provides for the whole of South Africa a guide for what the organisation stands for and what should be done. It has a hundred percent support from the Africans throughout the country. But organisations are not only judged by the policies they put forward, but also by the practical efforts to carry them out. The long and complicated constitution of the A.N.C. must be done away with. It has been proved that it merely adds to the confusion of some of the leaders, who are not politically advanced. A simple constitution, understandable to all, should replace it. In addition to opening congress offices, organisers must be employed on a full time basis, men who are sincere and honest and will devote themselves heart and soul to building up the organisation of congress throughout the country. Branches of the Congress must be put on a functioning basis by electing branch leaders who will give regular reports to and be responsible to the provincial head offices. These are the immediate questions which stand in need of rectification.

~~The long and complicated const~~

THE LIFE AND CONDITIONS OF THE AFRICANS.

South Africa, being an agrarian country, the most burning question is the land question. On this issue the A.N.C. can mobilise millions of agricultural Africans, the majority of whom live in the congested Native reserves, adjoining protectorates, in Crown and Trust lands, and some are scattered all over European farms as labourers and squatters who are poorly paid.

While we recognise this, however, let us not forget the great changes which have come over South Africa since congress was first formed. More and more it is becoming an *role* industrial country. And the African urban workers have a more and more important role to play. Moreover they are the most easily organised and most advanced section of our people. A leading place must therefore be found in our ranks for the town workers on the basis of the fight against the colour bars in industrial and municipal life. And finally there is the important question of African intellectuals, traders and businessmen and professional men whose claims must be met in the congress.

m ORGANISATION OF THE PEASANTS.

Some rural areas are already organising themselves into different agricultural bodies. Whilst these may be good organisations they should not be permitted to drift away from the National Congress. They should be encouraged to affiliate to the A.N.C. Such organisations are: Z.C.A., Pietersburg Farmers' Congress and the Witziesshoek Vigilance. These are the bodies which if properly led will strengthen the congress morally and materially and they will spread all over the country. In this way the A.N.C. will be able to speak for the Africans both in town and country.

WE HAVE LEADERS.

The Atlantic Charter sub-committees which have been carefully selected by the leader of the A.N.C. from the four provinces of the Union of South Africa, members of the Congress show a force which, if it goes all out for a million members, which is our target, cannot only restore the Congress to its former position but will undoubtedly appear above its former level. If this is done we shall not only force by pressure the government to repeal many of the oppressive laws under which we live and labour, but also our voice will be heard and reckoned with and the Atlantic Charter will have to embrace the Non-Europeans of this country. This is not only the starting point, but is ~~the~~ the fact which must be considered jointly with all these good plans and preparatians for post-war periods.

APPENDIX.

The main organisational steps hinted at above are the following:

1. Constitution. Scrap the present constitution and replace it by a simple and brief constitution creating a centralised and disciplined congress.
2. Offices. Open a central head office at once and move towards the opening of provincial offices.
3. Organisers. Employ capable and honest organisers to set about the task of winning "a million members" for congress.
4. Finance. Keep strict control over congress finances and build up a big fund.
5. Propaganda. Make a plan for the spreading of systematic propaganda amongst all sections of the African people, about the aims, policy and organisation of congress. We cannot think of it immediately but must again have in mind the printing of a congress newspaper.

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