

Pan Africanist view of fusion question

TO fuse or not to fuse. The idea is that all the political organisations of the African, Indian, Coloured and White peoples, together with one mixed federal trade union, should merge into one body.

The organisations involved in these fusion talks are the African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Organisation, the Congress of Democrats, and the South African Congress of Trade Unions.

There are two ways in which these may merge. They can all break up and form a new group.

Or there can be the dissolution of all the non-African organisations and the joining of the A. N. C. by their members.

Whichever way this happens, a nucleus for a mixed political body will have been formed. The fusion idea has caught on. The A. N. C. Youth League has even discussed it on a national level.

A brief history of the A. N. C. will show clearly what the fusion move means. In 1912, the South African Native National Congress was born. It styled itself "the mouthpiece of the Native people".

In 1933, it accepted a new constitution which gave it a new name, the African National Congress.

In all its basic literature it spoke of and for "the African people".

In 1937, another new constitution was adopted. It accepted the Kliptown Freedom Charter as a foundation document.

It did not change the name of this body, but it now made it the mouthpiece of "the people of South Africa, black and white together".

African nationalists refused to accept this change. They marched out and the Pan Africanist Congress emerged.

The foundation literature continued speaking of, and for, the African people.

KLIPTOWN CHARTER IS THEIR BASIS

Each of the organisations in the so-called Congress Movement stresses the Kliptown Charter as a basis. Each of them, therefore, speaks in the name and on behalf of the "people of South Africa, black and white together".

The whole of the Charterist movement is beginning to range itself into two groups: the fusionists and the anti-fusionists.

The fusion issue also reflects a new struggle for the control of the movement. The merging groups are the anti-fusionists and the seceding group the fusionists.

To the fusionists there is no point in having five separate

bodies speaking of and for "the people of South Africa, black and white together", when a single organisation can do that job just as well, or perhaps even better.

The anti-fusionists will not form one body with Indians and Whites, because, to borrow their own words, "these communities share, however unwillingly, in all the privileges and opportunities from which Africans are barred".

This point is the Achilles heel of Charterism.

It is for this reason that the Africanists reject the multi-racial alliance and the Kliptown Charter.

They have apparently made their point more effectively outside the Charterist Congresses than they did inside it.

THEY WILL DEFEND

"RESERVED JOBS"

If the fusionists win the day, the African leaders will lose their present job of having to interpret the thoughts, sayings and deeds of the Indian and White leaders to the African rank and file.

These non-African leaders will now be able to do the job themselves.

The anti-fusionists, therefore,



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By
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mentally, which, to them, includes the Coloured people.

Where the Africanists are concerned, all characteristics — black or white — are agreed on a policy of "spoiling the Egyptian".

On the fusion issue the Charterists are becoming hopeless if divided.

Should the anti-fusionists, therefore, play up the fear of competition with the Pan Africanists, and correspondingly pipe down on the fear of losing their job, they are sure to give a "united front" to reject fusion.

Whatever the fate of fusion, the fusionists have a very strong case on the basis of the Kliptown Charter itself.

may be expected to defend their "job reservation clause" to the last ditch.

The coming into being of one mixed political body, whatever its name, will certainly strengthen the cause of the Pan Africanists.

They would then have a clear field as opponents of the oppressed African aim-

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