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D.C. ^{Constitution}
Ef 3.2.1

A Statement by the Johannesburg Regional Committee on the Situation in the Region and the tasks before the membership - for discussion by the branches.

Every political organisation has its periods of greater and lesser activity and we must at each stage try to keep our activity and membership at its highest level.

It would appear that in Johannesburg activity is at a lower level than previously whereas Cape Town Branch has advanced organisationally and is engaged in more activity. We must frankly admit that in Johannesburg :-

- (i) membership has dropped
- (ii) members are reluctant to do active work
- (iii) finances are strained
- (iv) we are losing some of our initiative in the political field.

What are the reasons for this ?

Since two years ago, when activity in Johannesburg was at its highest, the political scene has changed considerably. We were then the only European organisation who was prepared to work with the liberatory movement. The Congress Movement in general had not yet been consolidated by a political programme and an organisation to back any such programme.

During the period under review we have seen the campaign for the Congress of the People, the formation of the S.A. Congress of Trade Unions, and the Federation of S.A. Women, and the adoption of the Freedom Charter by all the liberatory organisations. Our forces in the struggle have become consolidated, especially the African National Congress, the most vital section of the progressive movement.

We have also witnessed the emergence of numerous anti-fascist organisations such as the Black Sash, Federal Party and more active Liberal and Labour parties. As their opposition to the government has grown so has its attacks upon them. Now not only the Congress movement but also the Black Sash, Freedom Radio and others are being openly attacked by the Special Branch, the courts and the legislature.

The Congress of Democrats has shown these European political organisations that the most powerful opposition to the Nationalists is the Non-European liberatory organisations in alliance with democratic Europeans, and that active co-operation and brotherhood is not a theory but a practicality. This has forced them to recognise that their previous 'go it alone' policy is bankrupt and they are now openly seeking co-operation with the liberatory organisations in the fight against the Nationalists, although they do not yet support the Freedom Charter in toto.

It is in this new position, where co-operation with numerous people who do not support the Freedom Charter, but who are prepared to work with us on specific issues where we have mutual agreement, that our political tasks and thinking become more complex.

We are now broadening actively our contacts with the anti-fascist opposition.

In the more complex situation we have perhaps become a little confused and our difficulties have increased but we must now reactivise ourselves, strengthen our organisation and undertake these urgent tasks :-

Strengthening and consolidating ourselves.

(a) membership.

- (i) We must work actively in those spheres of European politics where we can by our presence contact and influence individuals who can be won over to our policy and membership.
- (ii) We must educate and keep our members. A turnover in membership is inevitable but we must ensure by study, activity, interesting lectures and the urgent sincerity of the way we tackle our jobs that we keep more members than we lose.

(b) Work with other Congress Organisations.

- (i) We must be active in helping all other congresses in those ways in which we can.
- (ii) We must not do this at the expense of our work in COD, which is our primary task. (Refer National Conference resolution)
- (iii) We must strengthen our contacts through the T.C.C.

Working amongst Europeans and their Organisations.

- (i) We must work and co-operate with the Liberal and Labour Parties etc. whenever possible, but each case must be taken on its merits after careful discussion. Obviously co-operation at any cost, or co-operation only on our terms are both incorrect.
- (ii) More canvassing, contacting, literature sales and talking to the general public. We must have contact, active contact with European public opinion.

None of these tasks are mutually exclusive, each task depends on and strengthens our work in the other, and each task must be undertaken in perspective and relation to the others. All this is slow work but necessary and rewarding.

B. 1000.

STATEMENT FOR THE INFORMATION
OF CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATS
MEMBERS

Issued by the National Executive of the Federation of South African Women.)

The adoption of the Constitution at the National Conference of the Federation of South African Women held on August 11th and 12th has aroused considerable interest and in view of the divergence of opinion on this matter, the Federation wishes to clarify the position and particularly the procedure at Conference.

At the first National Conference of the Federation held in April, 1954, two and a half years ago, a draft constitution was read at Conference but not presented for discussion and adoption. That draft constitution was circulated to organisations in April, 1955, when the National Executive Committee of the Federation had invited national organisations to affiliate. At the National Conference of the S.A. Congress of Democrats held in June, 1955, on the eve of the Congress of the People, the request for the affiliation of women members of COD was discussed and Conference decided that COD should affiliate. Although the draft constitution had been submitted to COD with the invitation to affiliate, it was not submitted to that National Conference, nor, in fact, has it been considered at any time by the National Executive or circulated to Regions or branches.

At the recent National Conference of the Federation, the draft constitution was presented for discussion and adoption. After a few clauses had been read, a member of the NEC of COD asked permission to move a resolution. She stated that the organisations and groups which constituted the Federation had not had sufficient time or opportunity to circulate the draft constitution for consideration and discussion by the general membership and moved that the adoption of a Constitution be postponed either for six months or until the next National Conference.

The Regional Secretary of the Federation replied that the draft constitution had been circulated to organisations more than 12 months ago, and if these organisations had failed to discuss the constitution or circulate it, this must be laid at the door of those organisations. This, however, should not be allowed to hold up the develop-

ment of the Federation of South African Women. A national conference could be achieved only at long intervals. It was the second time that a draft constitution had been placed before a national conference of the Federation of S.A. Women. If the constitution were adopted today there would be provision for amendments at the next National Conference. The Regional Secretary moved a counter resolution that seeing all organisations had had ample time and opportunity during the past twelve months to circulate and discuss the draft constitution, it should be discussed and adopted as amended at this conference.

Several delegates spoke from the floor, stating that they had not seen the draft constitution and would prefer to take it back to their regions and branches for discussion before adoption. Other delegates felt that this would hold back the development of the Federation and urged that the draft constitution be discussed, amended and adopted at this Conference.

Conference appeared to be divided on this matter and after many expressions of opinion the Regional Secretary offered to withdraw the counter resolution on the grounds that there would not be sufficient time left to discuss the draft constitution. Conference refused to allow the counter resolution to be withdrawn and the resolution and counter resolutions were put to the vote. Conference decided by 291 votes to 79 that the draft constitution be discussed and adopted as amended at this Conference.

During this discussion it had become clear that there were differences of opinion within organisations as to whether the Constitution should be referred back to the organisations or discussed at Conference. Members of each organisation spoke from the floor, ANC women were both

...../for

for and against the discussion and adoption of the Constitution. One COD member had moved the resolution, one the counter resolution. SACPO delegates wanted the constitution deferred; Coloured delegates of the Food and Canning Workers and the Cape Housewives League wanted it discussed and adopted. Nor was there any clear agreement in specific areas. Women from Capetown spoke on both sides; from Port Elizabeth the Coloured leader wanted the Constitution deferred, the African leader wanted it discussed; delegates from the Transvaal spoke for and against the resolution. Discussion on the resolution and counter-resolution took up nearly an hour before the mover of the counter-resolution offered to withdraw it. The voting itself indicated that the Provinces were not unanimous in wanting the Constitution referred back, for although 137 delegates came from the Free State, Natal and the Cape, only 79 delegates in all (including some from the Transvaal) voted for the resolution.

Conference voted by a more than two-thirds majority to proceed with the Constitution, thereby indicating that, although the organisations had failed to circulate it to the Regions and branches, they had confidence that basically the Constitution would be acceptable to their organisations, subject to possible amending at the next Conference of the Federation. Almost five hours were then spent in discussing and adopting the clauses of the draft Constitution.

The Regional Executive Committee of the Transvaal had already considered the draft Constitution and had forwarded amendments to the National Executive, which were distributed at the Conference. Other amendments were moved from the floor. The proceedings of Conference during the discussion of the Constitution were conducted in English, Sesuto and Xhosa; each clause of the draft Constitution and all contributions to the discussion being interpreted into two other languages.

Conference decided to remain in session for the whole afternoon, and

when an appeal was made for volunteers to go to the mass meeting in Sophiatown, difficulty was experienced initially in obtaining sufficient volunteers because the delegates were intent upon full discussion of the draft Constitution. When the Constitution was finally put to the vote it was adopted unanimously.

The National Executive of the Federation is confident that when the Congress of Democrats is aware of the events of the Conference, it will be agreed that the procedure adopted was that decided upon by the vast majority of delegates. Differences of opinion there may still be as to whether it would have been preferable to have postponed the adoption of the Constitution to the next Conference - for indeed 79 women held that opinion. But 291 women did not agree, and were determined that the Constitution should be adopted. Can there really be any question of right or wrong, correct or incorrect procedure? The fact remains that a two-thirds majority, after an hours discussion, decided to consider, amend and adopt a draft constitution, although most of the delegates had not seen it previously. There is provision in the Constitution for amendments at the next National Conference. There is no limitation to any such amendments. There is surely ample time and opportunity for every organisation to circulate and discuss this Constitution and to submit any amendments which it considers desirable to the next National Conference. The Federation in the meantime has a Constitution, a working basis upon which Regions can be correctly constituted, upon which women's organisations can be invited to affiliate and the work of the Federation can go forward.

Only time can determine whether this Constitution can meet fully the requirements of the Federation. The amendments that were adopted at Conference arose out of the experiences of the past two and a half years. It may well be that the experiences of the next year will demand further amendments, possibly drastic ones. The Federation is young and must be flexible, but at the same time it requires a framework within which to function, a foundation on which to build. It needs a Constitution, a need which was accepted by a more than two-thirds majority of delegates at Conference.

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SOUTH AFRICAN CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATS

P. O. Box 4088

JOHANNESBURG

16th September, 1954.

~~The Editor,~~

PRESS STATEMENT

Bewysstuk No.
Gekry by... *S.A.C.C.D.*
Deur... *W. J. van der Merwe*
Te... *Box 4-110, Jherol*
Datum... *27-9-55*
Verw... *?*

~~Mr,~~

The arbitrary order served on Mrs. Rica Hodgson, ordering her to cease her employment as full-time National Secretary of the S. A. Congress of Democrats, without any notice whatsoever, clearly exposes the vicious Hitlerian character of the Suppression of Communism Act, and the use which Minister of Justice Swart is making of his sweeping powers.

The Minister's refusal to grant Mrs. Hodgson even 30 days in which to wind up her affairs in that organisation proves beyond doubt that the Minister is aiming equally at the disruption of the affairs of the S. A. Congress of Democrats and at victimising a staunch opponent of Nationalism, who served during the war with the South African armed forces.

The Minister is using the Act not only to persecute individuals for their refusal to kow-tow to apartheid, But is also wreaking petty vengeance on an organisation which has upheld the democratic liberties of South Africa by successful courtroom challenge of the former, unrestricted ~~admission~~ entry of the Minister's police agents to private, non-Nationalist meetings.

--- This ---

B. 756

This latest Ministerial decree does not stand alone. There have been, simultaneously, a large number of equally sweeping bans issued to people whose names do not and cannot appear on a list of former members or supporters of the Communist Party. There have been, also, a series of vicious and malicious press statements made by senior police officers unsupported by any evidence, seeking to create a hysteria to brand outspoken opposition to apartheid as "high treason". These are the steps already under way, which undoubtedly prepare for the banning of the newspaper "Advance".

All these actions make it clear that the Minister is not seeking to suppress Communism, but rather to terrorize, victimize or outlaw all who vocally and courageously oppose him and his party. Only drastic and serious public opposition and protest will enable South Africans much longer to claim: "This is not yet a police state."

Reyhuel

National Chairman

S.A. Congress of Democrats

J. A. 9.

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P.O. Box 700,

Durban.

21st May 1955.

The Editor,

The Sunday Tribune,
Field Street,
Durban.

The Natal Daily News,
Field Street,
DURBAN.

The Natal Mercury,
Devonshire Place,
Seith Street,
DURBAN.

Sir,

I enclose a statement on the Senate Bill by the
Durban Branch of the Congress of Democrats.

Yours faithfully,

12
P.P. D. Shanley,
Secretary.

The Durban Branch of the Congress of Democrats regards the Senate Bill as a treacherous move by the Government against the whole population of South Africa.

While it is an attempt by the Nationalists to end equality between the white groups by destroying the existing parliamentary opposition, the Non-European people must not fail to realise that the immediate aim of this law is directed at them for it is primarily designed to remove the Coloured voters from the Roll.

It is clear that if the fight against this Bill is to be effective, the maximum opposition to it must be organised within and without parliament.

In the past the Nationalists have succeeded in introducing their reactionary laws because there has been no united action by all the anti-nationalist forces, European and Non-European, the only certain ~~xxxxxxx~~ method by which the Nationalists can be defeated.

There is only one course of effective opposition to the Senate Bill and that is ~~the~~ the uniting of all sections of the community to express their determined opposition to, and refusal to accept, this dangerous attack on the Constitution of South Africa.

A joint struggle against this Bill must therefore include the Non-European people. There can be no talk of fighting for democratic rights, ~~if~~ or the preservation of democracy, if we refuse to allow three-quarters of the population ~~to be ignored~~ *in the present crisis*. On the other hand, the Non-European Liberatory Movement must not make the mistake of regarding the present struggle as one between Europeans only. The Non-European people must become a part of the struggle against the packing of the Senate.

We suggest an immediate meeting between the leaders of all the Anti-Nationalist forces to set up a joint action committee to co-ordinate a ~~full~~ campaign involving all sections to prevent the Bill from becoming a law.

The Durban Branch of the Congress of Democrats regards the Senate Bill as a treacherous move by the Government against the whole population of South Africa.

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We suggest an immediate meeting between the leaders of all the Anti-Nationalist forces to set up a joint action committee to co-ordinate a campaign involving all sections to pre-empt the ill-fated law.

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22nd. Oct., 1953.

A new organisation the S.A. Congress of Democrats advocating full equality for all South Africans and basing its policy on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was formed at a National Conference held in Johannesburg earlier this month.

The Conference was convened by three organisations : the Congress of Democrats, the Springbok Legion and the Democratic League of Cape Town. In all 88 delegates from Johannesburg, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and other centres attended.

The Conference was opened by Manlvi I.A. Cachalia, leading official of the S.A. Indian Congress who declared that the new body would "forge bonds of democratic unity between Europeans and Non-Europeans".

The main objective of the organisation will be to win support for its policy amongst those sections of the population not catered for by the Congress Movement. It will strive for the closest unity and alliance with the Congress movement in all its political activities.

The constitution of the new organisation states :

"1. PREAMBLE

We South African citizens, united by a common belief in the right of all people to freedom and equality, proclaim our support for the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation.

We are against all forms of inequality and discrimination and we repudiate as false the doctrines of racial inequality, of White Supremacy, "Apartheid", trusteeship and segregation.

We proclaim our conviction that racial conflict and national oppression are linked with international conflict and war which threatens the advancing standards of life and liberty of all mankind.

We therefore found this association to advocate the principles of equality and the brotherhood of man, to strive for the maintenance of world peace and the ending of national discrimination and oppression, and to win South Africans to support a programme of extending rights and liberties for all our people.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTS

(a) The Association shall work to secure for all South Africans, regardless of race, creed or colour, the rights laid down in the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", with particular reference to:

(i) Equal civil liberties:

the freedom of thought, speech and press ;
the freedom of movement and assembly ;
the freedom of organisation and religion :

(ii) Equal political rights:

the right to vote in and to stand for elections to state and local law-making bodies on the basis of Universal and Equal Adult Suffrage.

(iii) Equal economic opportunities without discrimination based on race or colour.

to qualify for and engage in all trades, crafts, occupations and professions ;
to acquire and own land and property, and to freely form, join and administer Trade Unions.

(iv) Equality of social status

in every field of state and administration, public activity, education, culture and recreation, and the preservation of family life with no interference which would lead to its disintegration.

(b) The Association shall work to secure friendly international relations based on the equality and independence of all nations, and negotiation to secure a prolonged era of world peace. "

The Conference condemned "the Nationalist Government which is trying , with the tacit and sometimes open support of the United Party, to smash popular organisations, especially Non-European organisations, and thus weaken all effective opposition to them.

In particular Conference condemned

(1) the orders to trade union and other leaders banning

them from carrying on their work in trade unions, the peace movement, national organisations, and other bodies; orders banning these leaders from attending gatherings, and from moving about freely

(2) The Group Areas Act which the Government is now trying to implement. The Congress condemned the act on moral

/and economic

and economic grounds and condemned further the grossly unfair and discriminatory manner in which the act will evidently be put into effect. The Congress pledged its support for the campaign to oppose the Western Areas clearance ^{scheme} in Johannesburg.

- (3) The Separate Representation of Voters' Bill and the manoeuvres by which the government is trying to make this Bill law. The Congress called for the immediate extension of "Votes for all"
- (4) The Congress expressed its total opposition to the principle of the Act and further condemns the removal of the previous safeguard which existed at least in theory that separate facilities had to be equal.
- (5) The Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Bill, which is an attack firstly on African workers and through them on all other workers, because it inter alia rejects the concept of collective bargaining and outlaws the strike weapon.
- (6) The Conference condemned the action of the British Government in deposing by armed force the elected government of British Guiana. It described this action "taken solidly on the grounds that the political views of the Guiana Government are unacceptable to Whitehall" as a flagrant violation of democratic principle. Conference expressed its solidarity with the people of British Guiana in their struggle for democracy and demanded the withdrawal of British troops from Guiana.

Mr. P. Beyleveld was elected President of the new organisation. Mr. L. Warden Vice-President and Mr. P. J. Hodgson, National Secretary. The headquarters of the body will be in Johannesburg.

P. J. Hodgson
National Secretary.

Dr. Steenkamp, at his meeting in Hillbrow, is reported in the Rand Daily Mail of August 31st., to have said that the Congress of Democrats is supporting Dr. Friedman's fight against the United Party, together with the "Congress of the People".

The S.A. Congress of Democrats is an independent organisation which now, as at all other times, advocates a policy of equal rights for all races in South Africa, as the only safeguard and guarantee of democracy. While the Congress of Democrats is advising the voters to vote for Dr. Friedman as a protest against the many failures of the United Party to uphold its democratic principles, it is nevertheless critical of both the U.P.'s and Dr. Friedman's limited "Europeans only" concepts. The Congress of the People is not an organisation, but was a national inter-race assembly held in June of this year at which a statement of democratic beliefs - The Freedom Charter - was adopted to guide the policies of all who speak for liberty. The S.A. Congress of Democrats supports the ideals of the Freedom Charter, and urges the people of Hillbrow - and of all South Africans - to seek an alliance with the non-white peoples of the Congress Movement, for the aims of the Freedom Charter which is the only way to halt the Nationalist Party's march towards a fascist republic.

Neither Dr. Friedman nor the United Party has, as yet, accepted the democratic aims of the Freedom Charter, and neither can therefore claim the support of the Congress of Democrats or to have the solutions to the problems of fascism which beset South Africa.

We enclose copies of the leaflet and Freedom Charter referred to, and we challenge Dr. Steenkamp to, interpret them in any other way than as stated here.

Bewysstuk No.
Gedry by... *Ruth Lust*
Dati... *1945*
Te... *Progress Geboue*
Datum... *27/9/45*
Verwysings No. *4*

P. Blyveld
P. Blyveld.
National Chairm. an

Ef 3.2.1 SACOD.

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B.757

PRESS STATEMENT.

The South African Congress of Democrats has received yet another set back in the banning of Ruth First, a member of its National Executive Committee.

It is **ironical** indeed that Ruth First has just returned from a two months' visit to China, and a month in the Soviet Union, imbued with the desire to address meetings about her impressions of these countries, and is now prevented from doing so by the ban placed on her. Where, we may well ask, is the Iron Curtain? Who is afraid of the truth, the Chinese, the Russians, or our Nationalist Government?

Miss First is a journalist by profession, and not being able to attend ~~gatherings~~ gatherings is a serious handicap to her work. To those who value integrity and understanding in reporting this is sad indeed.

The S.A. Congress of Democrats will miss Miss First's services in all fields of its work, but particularly her ability as an inspiring speaker and her journalistic contributions towards our fight against discrimination and towards freedom.

Why, it may be asked, are protests made about acts which are commonplace by now. The reply of the S.A.C.O.D. is that no matter how often these inhuman acts are served, they will never be accepted by this organisation without resistance, without determination to make ~~xxx~~ people see just what it means - forbidding people the right of social contact with each other, carrying on legitimate activity, and confining their movements.

To cease to cry out against such injustices, would be tantamount to losing the cause for democracy. Despite all Mr. Swart's bans this will not happen. The determined might of the people is just something Mr. Swart cannot ban.

Gekry by..... S.A.C.O.D.
Deur.....
Te.....
Datum..... 27-9-55
Verwysings No 5

N196 SACOD.

B. 484

SOUTH AFRICAN CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATS

(7)

PHONE 33-0975

Position No.
 Country by *S.A.C.O.D.*
 Date *27-7-55*
 Te. *101 8/110*
 Datum
 Verwysings No. *1.*

HEAD OFFICE:

5, SOMERSET HOUSE,
 110, FOX STREET,
 P.O. BOX 4088,
 JOHANNESBURG.

19th July, 1955.

PRESS RELEASE.

The S.A. Congress of Democrats welcomes the stand taken by the Covenanters in their fight against the violation of the Constitution by the present Government, but is of the firm conviction that democracy in South Africa can only be safeguarded by extending it to all races. It is unrealistic to imagine that liberty can be defended while it is limited to a minority of the people.

The Congress of the People, held in Kliptown, on the 25th and 26th June, laid the foundation for a free South Africa. The principles, embodied in the Freedom Charter drawn up at that Conference, which was attended by people of all races, are the only basis on which the Nationalists can be defeated.

The agitation for a National Convention by the Covenanters, we feel will merely touch the problem of opposing the Nationalists effectively. We believe that if it is their intention to limit the proposed Convention to registered voters, thus excluding the masses of the people, the Covenanters are only repeating the mistakes of the present day Parliamentary opposition, by failing to recognize that the Nationalist Party and its policy of racial discrimination and "Baaskap" for a

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small section of the people can only be defeated by the unity
of all South Africans irrespective of race or colour.

P. Beyersveld
P. Beyersveld

National Chairman.

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:

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