

THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ANTI PASS PLANNING  
COUNCIL TO THE MASS NATIONAL CONFERENCE HELD  
AT JOHANNESBURG ON 30TH MAY, 1959

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FSAW 43  
Cb. 3.3

Mr. Chairman and Friends,

The National Anti Pass Planning Council was appointed by the National Executive of the African National Congress in terms of the following resolution of the Annual Conference of the ANC held in 1959.

"The year 1958 has seen heroic and inspiring resistance of womenfolk against the further extension of passes, a law which has become a symbol of white domination, exploitation and oppression. Conference is aware of the fact that the pass laws are the very roots of South African slave labour system, without them the whole structure of cheap labour, apartheid and white domination would be seriously shaken.

"It is therefore of the utmost importance that every Congressman should be aware of the dangers of creating the illusion that every demonstration and protest will make the pass laws crumble. The enemy facing us is strong and will not readily make concessions on the pass laws. We must therefore prepare ourselves and the people for a long and bitter struggle against the main pillar of our oppression and exploitation.

"The intensification of the struggle against passes, demands of Congress that it takes active steps to rally and organise the people. In this way we can only succeed if our organisational and propaganda machinery is sharpened and our whole membership is inspired by the urgent need to implement the organisational tasks which we have placed before us.

"CONFERENCE URGES THAT THE FORMS OF STRUGGLE AGAINST PASSES ~~MUST BE DETERMINED~~ STRICTLY ON THE BASIS OF THE CONCRETE WORK DONE AND THE STRENGTH OF THE ORGANISATION IN CONFORMITY WITH OUR STATEMENT OF POLICY ON THE PASS CAMPAIGN IN ORDER TO AVOID FAILURE AND DISILLUSIONMENT. HARD WORK AND EFFICIENT ORGANISATION IS THE KEY TO OUR SUCCESS.

"Conference further resolves that the incoming National Executive appoints a Planning Council to study, recommend and report on the measures to be taken to prosecute the struggle against passes for women and men and the whole pass system generally. In furtherance of such recommendation Conference resolves that a Mass National Conference takes place before the 1st of May, 1959, to discuss the report of the Planning Council, if conditions permit. Conference urges that the Mass National Conference should be preceded by Mass Regional Conferences throughout the country."

The Council examined this resolution and noted that it declares that the struggle against the pass system is in fact a struggle against the very roots of the entire system of cheap labour exploitation and oppression of the African people, against which there can be no short cut to victory. The proposals of the Council are therefore based upon this fundamental fact.

What is the political and economic situation within which



the Council had to study and recommend "measures to prosecute the struggle against passes"?

### POLITICAL SITUATION

The political situation in our country is deteriorating. Despite vehement protests from a wide section of the people of South Africa including some Nationalists the Nationalist Government is passing the so-called "Bantu Promotion of Self Government Bill". This fraudulent measure has been introduced to deceive the world into believing that genuine steps were being taken to extend political rights to the Africans, it is in fact designed to achieve the direct opposite. By abolishing "Native Representation" in Parliament it destroys the very principle of the rights of Africans to representation in Parliament. It is a retrogression and the Africans are worse off than they were more than a hundred years ago in 1852 when they had the franchise in the Cape Parliament without colour discrimination.

The Government is continuing to remove tribes in rural areas and communities particularly the Indian community in the urban areas (under the Group Areas Act) without regard to the interests of those tribes and communities. The right to live where one pleases, the right to property have been completely destroyed by the Nationalist Government.

The Government is using its autocratic powers to attempt to silence all those who fearlessly opposed their immoral acts. Deportation orders, banning orders, arrests and loss of employment are the Government's replies to the demands of the people.

Meetings of more than ten Africans have been banned in all rural areas and some urban areas.

The African National Congress has been banned in two reserves, Zeerust and Sekhukundland.

The police use their batons without discrimination in peaceful meetings of the African people.

The Government is resorting to new forms of persecution against popular resistance. Mass arrests, lengthy trials have become the



Government's stock reply to the demands of the people.

### THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

It is no longer possible for the Government to hide the economic crisis in this country. The rising number of unemployed people, the closed factories, tight credit facilities, insolvency, are the eloquent symptoms of depression. Now are Jan de Klerks all considered schemes of subsidising industry going to alleviate the plight of the workers both black and white. The situation will deteriorate, because the majority of the people of the country are denied the right to contribute and share fully in the wealth of the country.

Those of the Africans who are still fortunate to be employed receive low wages. This is now generally admitted since the Alexandra bus boycott.

A very small percentage of the employers have made increases but these are as yet inadequate. The Wage Board Inquiry has recommended wages which are lower than the wages which are being paid by employers. It is now popular facts that a scientific survey of the Institute of Race Relations established that an African family requires a minimum of £23-15-0 to survive. That was in 1954. Today the cost of living is much higher and that minimum has gone up to £27-10-0. Is the Congress movement unreasonable when it demands a national minimum wage of £1 a day? We say clearly not. We call upon all others to join us in our campaign of demanding this living wage for our people.

The implementation of the Group Areas Act was designed to bring economic ruination to the Non European peoples and particularly the Indian community. This iniquitous act has rightly been condemned as an act of legalised robbery, by all those South Africans who have a conscience. In the face of these protests the Government proceeds to implement this act stubbornly.

Friends that is the political and economic situation in which the Council had to study the pass laws and the methods of prosecuting the anti pass struggle. It is a situation in which the minority of our country has assumed autocratic control over every aspect of the lives



the lives of the people. And opposition and resistance to that control is met with sanctions, proscription, arrest, banishments and bans. The Council had to examine its tasks in an era when fascism in our country was attempting to muzzle the people politically and ruin them economically. It is of such a system today, that the pass laws are a backbone.

#### BACKGROUND TO THE PASS SYSTEM

In 1760 the pass system was introduced to the slaves in the Cape Colony in order to make the movements of the slaves impossible without the permission of their masters. It shackled the slave to his master. In 1797 passes were introduced to bar Africans from land which had been captured from them by settlers. Cecil Rhodes used the pass system to "drive the young natives to the Kimberley mines to teach them the dignity of labour".

In terms of Act No 27 of 1889 of the Cape Colony "an owner of or lawful occupier of land, or his representative can apprehend as an idle and disorderly person and take before the Magistrate, any person found without his permission wandering over any FARM or loitering near any dwelling house, shop, store, kraal, or other enclosed place or loitering upon any ~~road~~ crossing such farm".

This act demonstrates the arbitrary powers given to farmers and settlers over the lives of Africans. What is idle and disorderly about any of the things mentioned in this section?

#### EFFECT OF THE PASS LAWS

What have the pass laws done to the African people? Why do we say they are a slave measure?

The pass laws have been bitterly resented by the Africans because the passes have retained a form of slavery for them. They have ruined the Africans economically, and restricted his freedom of movement.

It is through the pass system that the African is forced to take up employment and remain in employment despite low wages and bad working conditions. The freedom to sell his labour where he



pleases and at the price he chooses does not exist for the African because of the pass system.

He remains with his employer because without employment he has no right to be anywhere in his country, he can be hunted down like a wild animal, arrested just like a thief and robber and sent to prison. In our country the lack of a pass is regarded as a crime as serious as robbery.

Through the pass system the Africans are arbitrarily herded from one area to another; their families are arbitrarily broken up. The pass system can only be operated on the assumption that the African is not human. And that he exists merely as a labour tool which can be pushed hither and thither according to the needs of the user.

The whole right to exist of the African has been made dependent upon this document.

Is it surprising that the passes have corrupted the whole life of our people both black and white and the officials; bribery and corruption are rife and the Africans are bribed by organised gangs of racketeers who hold out the hope of life by promising salvation through their passes.

#### WHAT HAS THE REACTION OF THE AFRICANS BEEN

The African people have expressed their rejection of the passes in various forms of struggle at different times; they have burnt them, organised strikes against them, passive resistance, protests, demonstrations, defiance campaigns, and refused to pay taxes. From 1913-1959 the African men and women have consistently struggled against the pass system.,

#### WHAT HAS THE REACTION OF THE GOVERNMENT BEEN

The Government has since 1903 appointed no less than six commissions and committees to investigate the pass laws, but although some of them have condemned them and recommend their repeal of these vexacious practices of the system, it has been retained, because the rulers are aware that the pass system is the very pivot of oppression and exploitation of the African people.



WHAT HAS THE REACTION OF THE WHITE PUBLIC BEEN

Except for a few Europeans, the whole pass system and influx control has been an issue on which there is general agreement between the Government and the European public. This is an aspect which naturally, adds to the bitterness of the African people. The Europeans and the Government have attempted to salve their consciences and justify the pass laws on the following grounds:-

- a) The Pass laws are for the benefit of the African because it affords a protection to the rural illiterate African who comes into surroundings which are new and strange to him;
- b) It is necessary for identification;
- c) It prevents crime;
- d) It prevents desertion from farms and other forms of employment;
- e) It prevents the wholesale influx of Africans into towns;

These are the arguments for the retention of a mediaeval form of slavery. It is to retain these benefits that one million Africans, almost ten percent of the population must be sent to jail every year.

The European public will be well advised to study the remarks of the Hon. F.E.T. Krause who said:-

"Anyone who has the least acquaintance with the causes of anti social conduct or crime knows that the possession or non-possession of a piece of paper has and can have no bearing on conduct which is criminal. Passes also are easily forged - there is no causal connection between crime and the carrying of a pass! If there had been then Europeans should also have been compelled to carry passes. Let the Government do its duty by the natives and then some causes of crime will be eliminated as far as the natives are concerned. See that your native population is uplifted and educated, that their standard of living is raised, that they receive a wage according to the value of the services rendered, that colour bar legislation is repealed and that the natives are allowed to develop industrially, that housing and health conditions are improved because as slums breed disease so they also foster crime. Not abolition, but retention of the pass system has resulted in the increase of crime and certainly the increase in our prison population."

And finally the Hon. Krause said:-

"When one considers that, in order to secure over  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a million convictions under this iniquitous pass system at least a million and a half natives must have been stopped and their passes examined then one must realise what the f



feeling of law abiding, peaceful and respectable natives must be and what feelings of hatred, and ill will we Europeans are storing up for ourselves this circumstance alone should make us pause and think - we are heading for a precipice of disaster and hatred! "

The European public has had 15 years to pause and think since Judge Krause made his warning. Have they thought?

THE NATIONALIST GOVERNMENT

With characteristic deception in 1952 the Nationalist Government introduced the so-called "Abolition of Passes and Co-Ordination of Documents Act". This act did not abolish the passes but extended them to women. It multiplied the evils of the pass system.

The Labour Bureaux has become a modern slave market where the African is sold to the farmer who refuses to pay competitive wages.

TODAY THE AFRICAN PEOPLE HAVE BEEN DRIVEN TO DESPERATION BY THE PASS LAWS. At least 1,000 Africans are arrested per day in the Union for pass offences.

EXTENSION OF PASSES TO WOMEN

The pass system is being extended to African women by the Government. Many Europeans are co-operating with the Government in extending this iniquitous system to African women. The women have in many parts of the country conducted a heroic resistance campaign. But because of the alliance of the white employers, particularly the white housewife and factory employer, the women have been compelled to take the passes. In the locations the threats of Superintendants that unless women take the reference books they will lose their houses has added to the intimidation. It is here that it can be clearly seen how the pass dictates where an African can live, how long, where he can be employed and for how long. The whole life of the African is at the mercy of this cursed document.

THE PASS SYSTEM AND FARM SLAVERY

The pass system creates a slave system both in towns and the countryside. Until recently the European public has paid little



attention to the consistent protests by the Africans against the manner of their recruitment and the shocking conditions under which they live and work on the farms. We should here congratulate those particularly the "New Age" reporters/and the attorney Mr. J. Carlson for stirring the conscience of white South Africa by exposing the wicked system which has been prevailing for years. We also welcome the work done in this connection by the Black Sash and the Committee which has recently established.

These labour bureaux are naked slave markets, and unless the pass system is repealed these degenerate practices will persist. How can anyone expect good morals when the whole economic system is pivoted on such an immoral system? The passes are bound to contaminate every aspect of our lives in South Africa. It is hoped that this Conference will bring it sharply to the notice of the country that nothing short of the repeal of the pass laws will uplift the moral standards of our country.

The low wages of the 'voluntary' farm workers who are harnessed to the farmers through the pass system will continue to be £10 per capita per annum, unless the pass laws are abolished and the farmers retain their labour by paying competitive wages and not through pass restrictions. Let the farmers pay a living wage and give decent conditions of work to their labourers and their families and then they will have no deserters.

IT IS FOR THESE REASONS THAT THE PASS IS FOR THE AFRICANS  
PUBLIC ENEMY NUMBER ONE.

What can be done?

Some people think that the only way of fighting against the pass laws is by destroying the passes. This in the view of the Planning Council is not the only way of struggling against the pass system nor is it necessarily the most effective way.

In the history of our struggle against the passes there are instances when the resentment of the Africans against the passes has been so high that they have burnt them, but sooner or later the passes have been reimposed and disillusionment followed.



It is not the document itself towards which we must exclusively direct our attention and devise a form of struggle but the role of the document in the whole structure of our country. In order to end the pass laws which are the root of our oppression, we require COURAGE, ENDURANCE, AND DETERMINATION and the skillful use of the power WHICH IS AVAILABLE TO US TO DEFEAT THE GOVERNMENT.

Wherein does the power of the African lie?

It lies in our economic power. We are in fact the greatest economic asset of our country.

What is our economic power?

It is:

a) The power of our LABOUR. The methods we can use are industrial action in its various forms, strikes and go slow strikes.

b) Our PURCHASING POWER.

The Africans spend approximately £400 million per annum. By withdrawing our purchasing power from certain institutions we can as Chief Luthuli said "punch them in the stomach". This is Economic Boycott.

The Economic Boycott in South Africa has unlimited potentialities. When our local purchasing power is combined with that of sympathetic organisations overseas we wield a devastating weapon.

In the view of the Council the Economic Boycott weapon can be used effectively in our struggle against the pass laws. The Boycott has the additional merit that it is not a defensive weapon, we are on the offensive and we are fighting on a battlefield chosen by ourselves, based on our strength and not by the enemy.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

The Council has recommended to the ANC which has decided that the economic boycott of products of Nationalist controlled institutions should be embarked upon as from the 26th June, 1959.

Why the Nationalists?

It is important to understand that the economic boycott weapon will not be directed against the Nationalists only. It is



important to understand that the economic boycott will not be confined to the Nationalists. It will be used at appropriate times against any institution which infringes upon the rights of the people.

The situation in our country is moving to a point where you must choose between supporting the Nationalists, the apartheid and race discrimination on the one hand, and the anti Nationalists who demand equality and freedom for all in South Africa. The middle course is vanishing. Even those in the United Party will have to make their choice sooner or later.

The Nationalists have been selected because they are the spearhead of oppression and exploitation and they are a Government which is the most vicious in the history of our country. It is important to select your enemy and to deal him a telling blow.

#### JUNE 26TH

Apart from launching the economic boycott, the Council recommends that June 26th should be observed as a day of self denial by the oppressed people and freedom fighters.

What does it mean?

It means that in various areas Africans must decide what form this self denial will take. The following forms are suggested:-

- a) No buying of any sort should take place on that day.
- b) Nobody should go to any place of entertainment eg. cinemas and beerhalls.

The merit of such forms of self denial would be to test THE DISCIPLINE, ENDURANCE, AND DETERMINATION OF THE PEOPLE.

A disciplined person is one who does what he is told whatever sacrifice it might involve and even though he might think that what he is asked to do has no immediate value. In the prosecution of our struggle against the passes we require the highest form of discipline.

On the 28th of June mass meetings should be held throughout the country.

This might appear to be a small beginning but anyone who



has understood our political situation will realise how essential it is that we should begin in a manner that will ensure success and pre pare the people for more effective forms of struggle against the passes. This beginning must be worked for so that it may snowball and gain momentum.

The Planning Council is convinced that our ultimate success against the notorious pass system will depend on building a powerful organisation, capable of surviving severe and trying battles against a cunning and ruthless enemy. Such an organisation must embrace town and country, men and women and the youth. It must select its mass action not on motion but skillfully on the preparedness of the masses and the concrete work done. Our action should take different forms in different areas based on local conditions. In this way we are confident that we can eradicate the hated pass system and ultimately uproot our exploitation and oppression, despite the fact that almost all the forms of our struggle are now illegal.

Signed:

D. NOKWE.

SECRETARY-GENERAL.

"AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS."

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**FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN 1954-1963**

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