

undated

The President General,  
African National Congress,  
Johannesburg.

The African National Congress stands for national liberation of Africans within the framework of a "Democratic South Africa."

The "Democratic South Africa" is a misnomer because 80% of the population is debarred from "democratic rights."

It was in order to secure the democratic rights for the Africans that the African National Congress came into being, and waged, since its inception, an incessant struggle in that direction.

The A. N. C. is therefore, looked upon, and regarded by the broad masses of the African people as a national liberation movement for Africans in South Africa. Its existence is inevitable as long as the policy and the structure of the laws of our Country are based on oppression of a national group, by those who regard themselves as a dominant race. Here, a special stress has to be made, in recognition of the fact that, it has seemingly become of necessity, and ostensibly inevitable, - in any Country where national oppression is the order of the day - that those who writhe under the heel of national oppression, find themselves naturally coerced into the position of forming a national liberation movement

The above goes to indicate that it is not accidental that we have, in this Country a national liberation movement for the Africans, but, on the contrary, it is an obvious need in the political life of our people; a need which has to be pursued with the utmost courage and determination.

It should be further recognised that, in its fight for national liberation, the A. N. C. is consistently confronted with national and economic

factors, particularly the latter, which makes it easier for the Africans to be exploited as a national group, and thereby economically depressed and suppressed in any manner possible.

It is therefore, of paramount importance that the A.H.C. takes up the dual oppression as a whole, marching side by side with African Trade Unions, in order to be able to present a real united front in the struggle.

I am strongly mindful of the fact that Africans and their Trade Unions have no semblance of democratic rights - such as, the vote, free movement, and the provision of a flexible machinery whereby they can collectively bargain for their labours, as is enjoyed by the other sections of the Community. That being our position, we are inclined to think that the most important field is the "Industrial Arena", wherein African Trade Unions have been, and are waging a fairly promising fight.

The only drawback in that phase of the struggle is that African workers in a particular industry fight as an isolated group. It is therefore incumbent upon the A.H.C. to cooperate with the Trade Unions and <sup>fight</sup> the issue as a whole, i.e. if one industry is affected, others should express and register their sympathy concretely, and never to forget that such fights are subordinate to the <sup>main</sup> struggle for national emancipation, which is, or should be, the objective of all national conscious Africans.

The task of the A.H.C. therefore, is to foster a spirit of national consciousness, to propagat<sup>e</sup> the necessity of all Africans in industry to join Trade Unions and the national movement.

I recommend the following suggestions for the consideration of the A.H.C.

1. National Industrial Committee:

In order to keep the A.H.C. informed of the activities and the growth of African Trade Unions in this country, I suggest that the A.H.C.

should consider the advisability of appointing a special Committee styled, "National Industrial Committee", a committee fairly representative of the four provinces, consideration also given to the various districts and regions where Congress and Trade Unions exist.

The above named Committee to be charged with the task of:-

- A. Investigating conditions under which the masses of the African people are working
- B. Finding out the workings, and as well as the weaknesses of Trade Unions operating in their respective districts or regions, and, if possible, cooperate with them, with a view to combating such weaknesses. In fact where facilities are available, provision should be made for the necessary training of Trade Union Officials.
- C. Assisting the Trade Unions and the masses at large in every possible manner, in order to promote the spirit of concerted action

"The National Industrial Committee shall periodically report to the A.N.C. on its activities, and the difficulties encountered."

## 2. Mining Industry

The above named industry is very important as far as the economic structure of South Africa is concerned, and here I feel the A.N.C. has a very important role to play.

The labour of this industry is recruited primarily from the Protectorates and the various Territories. It is an unstable labour force, composed comparatively of raw country folk, who are still suspicious of Trade Unionism.

Nevertheless, owing to the importance of the industry which constitutes the back-bone of the Country;

I suggest that the A.N.C. should set itself the task of securing men in the Protectorates & Territories, i.e. - members of Congress - who should quietly,

4

but very effectively prepare the minds of these folks, in order to prepare the soil for Trade Union organisers here in towns where these workers are employed.

### 3. Unorganised workers.

In the Witwatersrand and in many other bigger centres, a fairly good attempt has been made in organising workers into Trade Unions, more particularly in the big industries. The whole snag in the forward march has always been, and still is, the non-recognition of African Trade Unions. Workers in the smaller industries are seriously neglected. The following industries reflect such a negligence: Rope & Canvas, Broom & Brush, Market & Commission, Tea Room and Box & Trunk industries. The workers in these industries are either deserted by their officials, because of their small membership, or have been in the unfortunate position of not finding reliable people to lead them, and thereby falling under the category of dissolved unions. Although some of them would still be prepared to resuscitate their unions, but the vast majority are believed to be discouraged.

I suggest:

That the A.T.C. should, in cooperation with the Council of Non-European Trade Unions, give the best possible assistance to the organising of the unorganised, by attempting to bring together those workers employed in the neglected industries, and if possible assist to build them into proper unions, which can rightly take their places among the organised labour.

D. Shoone.

**Collection Number: AD843**

**XUMA, A.B., Papers**

***PUBLISHER:***

*Publisher:-* **Historical Papers Research Archive**

*Location:-* **Johannesburg**

**©2013**

***LEGAL NOTICES:***

**Copyright Notice:** All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

**Disclaimer and Terms of Use:** Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of the archive of the South African Institute of Race Relations, held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.