

LIBERAL CONFERENCE CALLS FOR UNITY IN STRUGGLE AGAINST APARTHEID

CAPE TOWN

THE Liberal Party will associate itself with other progressive organisations on specific political issues, and "generally in furtherance of its ideals". This was unanimously decided by the 3rd National Congress of the Party, which met in Cape Town last weekend.

The Congress affirmed a decision taken at the Natal Congress of the Party in October to support fully the call of the IDAMF Conference for a multi-racial conference on resistance to apartheid.

About 80 delegates of all races and from all the provinces attended the Congress. Mr. Alan Paton was re-elected National Chairman and Prof. Leo Kuper and Mr. Peter Brown were re-elected Deputy Chairmen.

CONSTITUTION

A draft constitution for the future of South Africa was presented to the Congress, providing for: Equal protection of the laws to all without discrimination; protection against arbitrary arrest, detention or exile; freedom of residence and movement; the right to own property; freedom of opinion and expression; freedom of assembly and association; the right of equal access to the public service on merit.

This draft constitution, which has not yet been made public, will be considered by a special committee of the Party during the coming year.

POLICE ASSAULTS

The Congress protested strongly against "the increasing number of assaults by members of the police force, particularly against non-whites, and the failure of the authorities effectively to suppress the use of unlawful violence by the police", "the existence of an increasing number of petty statutory offences for which an increasing number of Africans are arrested, fined or imprisoned", and the "continual disparity between sentences on whites and non-whites".

A further resolution called on all members of the Liberal Party to render vigorous support to the Treason Trial Defence Fund.

Another resolution expressed the desire of the Party to establish closer relations with working-class men and women of all races by actively co-operating with trade unions, enrolling workers as party members.

The Liberal Party decided that it would contest seats in the next General Election. The number of seats fought would depend on the amount gathered by a special fundraising drive to be launched soon by the Party.

SECRET SESSION

It is almost impossible to assess the significance of the Liberal Party conference since all the proceedings, except for a public meeting at the opening, were held in camera.

It is believed, however, that there was serious disagreement on the franchise question. Delegates from the Cape were adamant on a qualified franchise, while the Transvaal and Natal favoured equal franchise rights for all. To avoid a possible split in the Party, no final decision was reached at the plenary session of the conference. The "draft constitution for the future South Africa", quoted above, does not appear to contain a franchise clause.

Natal delegates, it is believed, wanted the deletion of the clause in the party constitution dealing with "totalitarianism", but no decision

was reached on this point either.

Suez, Hungary and other international affairs were not even discussed, as far as can be gathered, and the Liberal Party has issued no statement on foreign policy.

THE TURNING WHEEL

Let's get that heavy wheel a-turning,
Rolling down on Freedom Road;
Roll along towards the future,
Let that wheel take all our load.

Look ahead, look ahead,
Now my heart is lifting.
Pull your share, pull your share,
Now that wheel is shifting.

The road goes uphill, comrades,
Up the hill of sorrow.
Count them, comrades, every
whip-lash—
We'll remember them tomorrow.

Look ahead, look ahead,
Now my heart is lifting.
Pull your share, pull your share,
Now that wheel is shifting.

That wheel is mighty heavy,
brothers,
But once it moves it can't be
stopped;
Many on the road will join us,
All rememb'ring those who've
dropped.

Look ahead, look ahead,
Now my heart is lifting.
Pull your share, pull your share,
Now that wheel is shifting.

(Congress of the People song from
Port Elizabeth.)

Union Leader Subpoenaed

PORT ELIZABETH

Miss Lily Diederick, a trade union leader, has been served with a subpoena to appear before the local Magistrate on January 19, at the request of the prosecutor, to give evidence in order to assist the prosecutor to bring a charge against Raymond Mhlaba and others under the Suppression of Communism Act.

For several weeks the Special Branch have been interrogating people about a meeting at which it is alleged Mhlaba and others spoke.

Failure on the part of a person subpoenaed to give information may lead to imprisonment for a period of eight days, thereafter the person may be brought before the magistrate again, and again committed for a further period of imprisonment if he refuses to give information.

East Cape ANC Regional Report

PORT ELIZABETH

At a recent regional conference of the African National Congress held somewhere in the Eastern Cape discussions took place on the effect of the high treason arrests on the organisational efficiency of the branches.

The regional conference also discussed some of the resolutions of the Queenstown national conference.

The conference declared its support of the arrested leaders and delegates pledged themselves to step up the drive for the FREEDOM DEFENCE FUND. It also discussed at length methods of improving organisation.

BUS BOYCOTT STILL SOLID

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PUTCO has issued propaganda leaflets justifying the fare increases on the grounds of their increased costs. But the people quickly recognised inaccuracies. For example the leaflets claimed that drivers earn £9 per week, but only a few are paid that amount (about 6 out of 150). The average wage is £6 14s. a week.

PUTCO's pleas of poverty have been countered by facts circulated among the people by the People's Transport Action Committee, uniting the ANC with other organisations in the townships.

For example, according to the S.A. Financial Year book (1956), PUTCO's profits rose from £75,000 in 1953 to £101,000 in 1955 — a return of 15.9 per cent on its issued capital of £637,500. PUTCO directors are not doing badly — they include Mr. Raymond Steyn, also director of 62 other companies, Mr. J. M. Beveridge, a director of 40 other companies, and Mr. P. R. Botha, who has 28 other directorships.

An editorial in the Rand Daily Mail presents the central issue fairly and squarely.

"When men are prepared to walk eighteen miles a day to register a protest of this sort no one can help being impressed," it writes. "... To a man who earns from £3 to £5 a week (and the average is about £3 10s.) an increase of 1s. a week, plus an increase in the fare of a wife who goes out to work, is a disaster of the first order..."

"You insist that I live ten miles from my place of work," he says. "Very well. You cannot increase my transport charges."

PEOPLE'S UNITY

That is the basic question, and the suggestions in the news-columns of some newspapers that the people are intimidated by tsotsis and pickets is too fantastic to warrant a moment's consideration. In fact pickets are hardly to be seen. They are hardly needed. The unity among the people is overwhelming.

Never was a great boycott organised with so little trouble and fuss. In fact, to anyone who remembers the storms, squabbles and dissensions of the Alexandra bus boycott a decade ago, the present extraordinary demonstration is a wonderful illustration of the new spirit of unity that is abroad among the African people in this year, 1957—a portent of great things to come.

EMPLOYERS CONCERNED

Johannesburg employers are se-

riciously concerned at the continuance of the boycott. A joint committee has been established representing the City Council and the Chambers of Commerce and Industry. The committee interviewed representatives of PUTCO, and its chairman, Dr. Boris Wilson, met the African boycott leaders who told him the people were determined to refuse to travel in buses until the fourpenny fare was restored.

The committee met the Road Transportation Board on Monday, and was seeking to interview the Minister of Transport on Wednesday. The deputation to the Minister includes the Presidents of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Meanwhile mass meetings in Alexandra, Sophiatown and other areas affected by the increases unanimously resolved on Sunday to continue the boycott. Amid loud cries of "Azikhelwa", the meetings applauded speakers expressing unyielding opposition to the PUTCO increases.

NATAL DEFENCE FUND LEADERS CHARGED

DURBAN

Six Natal leaders of the Civil Liberties Defence Committee were last week issued with summonses to appear in the Durban Magistrates Court on January 28, on charges of unlawfully taking part in or attending a meeting or assembly of Africans without the prior consent of the Mayor of Durban, as required by a 1933 provincial notice.

The charges arose out of a meeting on December 6 last when individuals from all walks of life attended a meeting of the Civil Liberties Defence Committee, called to consider means of assisting those who had been arrested.

The persons charged are: Adv. H. E. Mall, Vice President of the N.I.C.; Dr. M. K. Hathorn, Chairman of Natal C.O.D.; Miss Florence Mkize, Secretary of ANC Women's League; Mr. Selbourne Maponya, Acting Secretary of ANC; Mr. Alan Paton, National Chairman of Liberal Party; and Prof. L. Kuper, Natal.

"THE PEOPLE ARE WALKING BECAUSE THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY"

By Tennyson Makiwane

A YOUNG man sits back on an office chair, thoroughly enjoying himself. He is a former cleaner who had been employed by the Public Utility Transport Corporation but has now come as a member of a deputation sent by the Alexandra people to interview the management of the company about the rumoured bus fare increases.

He confronts his former boss with this statement, which he repeats three times: "But, Mr. Frith, the workers cannot afford to pay." Mr. Frith replies, "You are all wearing suits." His former office cleaner retorts: "Do you want us to wear sacks?"

In a nutshell he expressed the feeling of the thousands who have decided to boycott the buses and endure great hardships rather than pay increased fares. The slogan "Asinimali" (we have no money), together with the slogan "Azik-

helwa" (we don't ride the buses), is on the lips of everybody.

DETERMINED

As the mass of men and women, young and old, flow out of the townships in one mighty stream they have determination written all over their faces. They walk, cycle or use whatever object has the slightest semblance of conveyance—anything but the P.U.T.CO. buses.

One cannot but be moved by the spirit of old women with blisters on their feet joining in the boycott. "They keep digging out money from us when they know full well that we receive low wages," said the old woman walking along with us. She told us she had meant to board the municipal buses operating between the European suburbs and the town, but she changed her mind and decided to walk all the way.

Your fears that exhaustion

might compel these boycotters to give in are soon dispelled. When we first settled in these townships, they tell you, we walked to and from our work places and we are prepared to do so now rather than pay any more money.

NO GOING BACK

There is no going back, the people say. That, said one man, would be like winning £1,000 today and throwing it away tomorrow.

The argument that the fare increase only amounts to a penny is dismissed by the people with contempt. "We don't sleep in town," they say, and that means an increase of twopence a day, which is a lot.

Old grievances against the general inefficiency of the P.U.T.CO. service have cropped up. The P.U.T.CO. makes us stand in queues like prisoners for hours. "We must have more buses," runs

the argument.

Hardly anyone believes the story that the service runs at a loss. The people point out that luxury cars are being used by the company for its inspectors to travel up and down the route. Moreover, they say the P.U.T.CO. has done away with conductors and bus fares are collected by the drivers.

GOOD TEMPER

So far the boycott has been characterised by the people's good temper. There has been virtually no need for pickets and no hostility has been shown to P.U.T.CO. employees. Crime in the township has been curbed as a result of the political enthusiasm.

Tempers rise only when buses stop next to groups of walkers and invite them to ride. The people ask how much the fare is and when the reply comes: "5d." they blurt out: "Drive away."

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