

# TERMS FOR FUSION

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## STATEMENT

— BY —

Mr. C. W. A. COULTER, M.P.

Mr. J. S. MARWICK, M.P.

Col. C. F. STALLARD, M.P.

Issued at Capetown on 6th  
June, 1934

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Together with Statement by  
Mr. LESLIE BLACKWELL,  
M.P., issued at Capetown on  
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## TERMS FOR FUSION

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The terms on which it is proposed that the South African Party should fuse with the Nationalist Party as agreed on between the two leaders have now been made known to us all through the Press and are to be submitted for acceptance or rejection to the Provincial and Union congresses of the party in August next. The initial publicity given to the statement in which this news has just been conveyed to the people of South Africa makes it almost impossible to put forward suggestions for serious modification of the terms with any hope of success. A public statement of objection to any clause which emanates from one party is calculated to harden the resistance of the other. What might have happened if the proposed terms had first been communicated in confidence to the representative bodies, as for example the provincial executives of the two parties, is another question which it is now vain to pursue. In the end it seems clear that the terms as now published will have to be accepted or rejected en bloc.

### BRANCHES' RESPONSIBILITY.

The power of making this momentous decision therefore rests with the party branches, which will be called upon to send delegates to the Union congresses in August, and the responsibility will lie on the individual members

of those branches, who must choose the delegates to vote on their behalf. It is not possible to gain contact with all branches otherwise than through the same medium as that selected for the publication of the terms, i.e., the public Press, and as the time is short and the issue fraught with the gravest consequences we have decided to issue this letter and appeal to every man and woman in the party to make their weight felt in selecting their delegate.

Owing to the marked difference of opinion between the three of us and the other South African Party members of Parliament who followed Gen. Smuts on the Status Bill, which raised the constitutional position of South Africa in relation to the rest of the Empire, we think it right that we should lose no time in letting our views be known on the issues involved by the acceptance of the terms of fusion.

We view the terms with alarm and consternation. After the Coalition Government had been formed and when our party congresses gave authority for the formulation of proposals for fusion with the Nationalist Party—limited at least in the case of the Provinces of the Cape and Natal by the condition that the principle of fusion itself should be submitted for approval as the proposals themselves were brought forward—we make bold to say that no member of the party contemplated for a moment that our principles might be sacrificed or that we would be called on to surrender ourselves to upholding or even tolerating the well-known principles of the Nationalist Party, which we have fought so long with the deep conviction that they were inimical to the true interests of South Africa.

## FORMATION OF COALITION.

Eighteen months ago our country was in the grip of an economic depression, largely due to bad financial policy, the results of which were so disastrous that the Coalition being proposed was supported in the hope that by calling into being a Government that would be truly national and by leaving constitutional differences on one side while all energies were pooled and devoted to economic reconstruction, the people might be rescued from the straits into which they had been plunged. Coalition was formed, but on the strict understanding that the South African Party remained intact and its principles inviolate. Nothing contained in the points set out in the joint statement published at the time by the two leaders modified this position in any respect.

By its declaration of policy adopted at our party Union congress in December, 1928, the first plank laid down was "Maintenance of the Act of Union and of Dominions Status as declared by the Imperial Conference and adopted by Parliament." In contra-distinction to this the Nationalist Party as a whole proclaimed "Maintenance of our Sovereign Independence," which it contended was implicit in the declaration of the Imperial Conference of 1926. The Free State definitely claimed the right for the people of the Union to secede from Great Britain and complete freedom for republican propaganda as far as the law allowed, whilst the Transvaal section of the party asserted the right of the people to alter its form of government at any time by constitutional means, and

that nobody will be prevented or impeded from giving free expression to his conviction and opinion regarding one form of government or another. Nor was any hindrance placed in the way of propaganda to that end.

#### “APPLES OF DISCORD.”

That was generally taken to mean, and did mean, republican propaganda. The radical difference between the S.A.P.'s and the Nationalists was quite clear—Dominion status versus sovereign independence, coupled with propaganda for a republic. On this broad issue the fight has proceeded all these years. As far back as the hereniging congress in 1920 an attempt to reunite the original South African Party broke down over that very claim, viz., the right to make republican propaganda, while as late as September, 1933, General Smuts, in his speech at Johannesburg, rejected Dr. Malan's efforts to bring into the discussion then proceeding the questions of secession, neutrality and the divisibility of the Crown—those “apples of discord” as he called them, whose introduction would wreck the attempt to unite the two parties.

When Parliament met in January, 1934, this radical difference still remained. Then came the Status Bill. It is entirely wrong to suggest that this was merely a reaffirmation of the pre-existing constitutional position. It was not. By the Status Act the questions of secession, neutrality and divisibility of the Crown were answered as Dr. Malan had desired. By the Status Act the sovereign independence of our country and the supreme legislative authority of the South African Parliament have

been declared, and the executive power divested from the King and again vested in the King acting on the advice of his Ministers in the Union. When, therefore, we are asked to extinguish our own party and to confide ourselves to a new party, whose programme includes the formal statement in Clause 2 (c), that "the maintenance is affirmed of the existing relationship between the Union and the British Commonwealth of Nations and co-operation with its members," it must be remembered that we are in effect being asked to pledge ourselves to maintain not the Dominion status but the sovereign independence of the Union.

#### INDEPENDENT OF EMPIRE.

Assuming this legislation to be constitutionally effective, it will be perceived that the changes brought about are fundamental and render the Union, as General Hertzog claimed even before the Erasmus correspondence, a State independent from the Empire in the internal sense. It is now clear that the way has been prepared for converting the title of British subject into Union national as soon as it may be convenient politically to do so. Dr. Malan said quite recently at Bloemfontein "that the fight about citizenship was still to come."

Now let us consider the remaining part of Section 2 (c) of the fusion terms, from which it appears that the maintenance of whatever may remain of the attenuated relationship between South Africa and the Empire is not unqualified. The section provides that it is subject to "there being no derogation from the status of the Union and



no assumption of external obligations in conflict with its interests." In 1921 our party asserted the position that the Union should not accept obligations or responsibilities towards other parts of the Empire which were contrary to the interests of South Africa, but the extravagant claims of the Nationalists for independence and secession induced the party in 1928 to re-state its constitutional position in simple adherence to dominion status. Before the passing of the Status Act our party had accepted the position that the neutrality of South Africa in the time of war was impossible. Now, however, it will be clear that the Status Act having supplied the legal machinery for making the issue of war or peace a matter reserved for domestic decision this declaration of policy affirms that in future South African neutrality in time of war will be determined by the political exigencies of the moment and not by the course the rest of the Empire may pursue.

#### REPUBLICAN PROPAGANDA.

But this is not all. If further proof is required of the startling change to which we are asked to give our sanction it can be found in Sub-section (d) of Section 2, which provides that "while the party (the new party) stands for the maintenance of the present constitutional position no one will be denied to express his individual opinion about or advocate his honest convictions in connection with any change of our form of Government."

If these words are compared with the Nationalist Party programme quoted above, it will be seen that republican

propaganda is now to be allowed without even the limitation formerly provided in the Nationalist programme. That law as it stood prior to the passing of the Status Act must not be transgressed. Now anyone will be free to advocate the substitution of a President for the King, and Dr. Malan and his friends seem bent on doing so. Every branch of the new party and every activity of its members may be penetrated with these doctrines without the right of any member to complain, and a candidate advocating republicanism once adopted by a branch must naturally be supported by all its members.

It will doubtless be said that we rely too much on our own interpretation of the Status Act and that others do not agree with us. It must be remembered, however, that Dr. Malan, a clear thinker and consistent propagandist, has given it just the same meaning that we have, and further, that General Hertzog is to be the leader of the new party and that his community of purpose with Dr. Malan has been abundantly shown in the terms of his correspondence with Mr. Erasmus in the early part of the session. The Prime Minister's silence throughout the debates was unbroken and significant. Since those debates concluded, General Smuts himself in his speech at the Rotary Club in Capetown on May 5, 1934, said: "Do not let us continue to think in terms of legal bonds—they do not exist any more."

#### "SURRENDER."

For the fusion of the parties without the sacrifice of principle there is much to be said, but the terms proposed in-

volve more than even a compromise of principle — they constitute surrender. We at any rate refuse to subscribe to the new programme. Is it too late to attempt to preserve the continued entity of the South African Party? We hope not, as it is still open to members to return delegates to the congresses pledged to secure the rejection of these fusion terms. It is in the hope that they will do so that these words are penned.

# STATEMENT BY Mr. L. BLACKWELL, M.P.

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**M**R. LESLIE BLACKWELL, M.P. for Kensington (Johannesburg), has issued a statement through Reuter's opposing certain aspects of the terms of fusion agreed to by General Hertzog and General Smuts which make it impossible for him to accept fusion. The statement is as follows :

This is a time of doubt and difficulty for all of us, and the declaration by Messrs. Stallard, Marwick and Coulter may be taken as the first shot in the coming battle inside the South African Party ranks on fusion. Our constituents and the country at large have a right to know at the earliest opportunity where each of us stands. I hope to meet members of the party in my constituency at an early date, but in the meantime I feel that the time has now come to drop the S.A.P. policy of silence and to express my views.

What are the fundamentals in the present state of political flux and confusion? Firstly, it is clear that the fate of fusion itself is hanging in the balance, yet in almost every way it would be a tragedy if it were to be shipwrecked. This country has a chance which may never recur of readjusting its political creed and divisions on a non-racial basis. If we let this great opportunity slip, if we went back to the party-cum-racial division of two years ago, it would be a national disaster.

## SPIRIT OF PATRIOTISM

Secondly, despite the "We told you so" re-affirmation of Colonel Stallard and his friends, the overwhelming majority of South African Party members and the solid bulk of the English-speaking section of the South African people whom they represent accepted and still accept the Status Bill with all its implications in a spirit of the purest South African patriotism, believing as we do that it simply expresses the existing constitutional position, that it would strengthen not weaken the ties which bind us to the rest of the Empire, and that it would scotch if not entirely kill the republican movement. None of us were prepared to take second place to Colonel Stallard and his friends in pride in our British citizenship and our determination to maintain it unimpaired, and in our belief that the best interests of South Africa and its people demand the closest and friendliest co-operation with the rest of the Commonwealth. But we feel also that this was in no way inconsistent with the complete love of and loyalty to our own country, South Africa, and "South Africa First," and the desire that it should enjoy the highest possible status and the fullest measure of freedom, both internal and external.

### "ANTI-BRITISH"

Thirdly, it now seems that despite the example the English-speaking section has given in this matter, the militant section of Nationalists is now more aggressive and provocative, more undisguisedly republican and anti-British than ever. The recently issued manifesto of the Hoof Bestuur of the Nationalist Party in the Cape is throughout not only an impossibility but an insult, for example, where

it demands that the Englishman shall become naturalised (save the mark) before he can become a citizen of South Africa. These gentlemen, so far from accepting the hand of friendship held out to them by the English-speaking section in their generous acceptance of the Status Bill, have spurned it. Instead of looking upon the Status Bill as a settlement of all our constitutional problems and difficulties, they seem to regard it as the starting point for a new set of demands and propositions, each more impossible than the last. Their whole bias is unashamedly republican and anti-British. The ideal of closer co-operation with the rest of the Commonwealth so nobly and eloquently set forth by General Smuts is to them anathema.

### TIME TO SPEAK

It is therefore time to speak out plainly and to tell my constituents what all along I have told my leader and colleagues—that for me at any rate there is no fusion if the new party includes Dr Malan and his followers. Mr Erasmus and I can never lie under the same political blanket, but if they stay out of the fusion party are my difficulties ended? By no means. It seems to me, as I shall attempt to show, that in framing that programme the leaders have attempted the impossible; they have sought to reconcile the irreconcilable and to fuse the infusible.

I ask myself this plain question: Is there any room for me in the same party as the man who not only holds, but actively propagates, republican and secession ideals? And I answer no. I have no quarrel with the purely theoretical republican, but I cannot even appear to condone the use of the party for republican propaganda. And if this is and always will be my answer, would I be

honest in sinking my principles and pretending that it could be otherwise? And the answer is again no.

We have been told that we must accept the programme as a whole without amendment. My answer is that I cannot accept it so long as it contains Section 2 (d). To any plain, straightforward man it must seem a hopeless contradiction in terms to say in one breath that a member of the new party must pledge himself to the "maintenance of the existing relationship between the Union and the British Commonwealth of Nations and co-operation with its members," and in the next breath in equally express terms to allow him to be free not only to believe in the disruption and negation of that ideal, with one hand upraised to swear fealty to the King keeping the other hand hidden to stab him in the back.

#### "CANNOT BE DONE"

It simply cannot be done, and therefore at the South African Party Congress I will press for the deletion of this provision. If I fail I must then decide what my political future will be, even if it means parting with my leader and many of my friends. It is idle to cry "Peace, peace," when there is no peace, and there comes a stage when it is no longer honest to attempt to solve difficulties by ignoring them.

I believe that the great majority of the South African Party support the idea of fusion, and I know that we long most intensely to end once and for all the era of racial strife and division; but even to achieve that great end many of us—among whom I number myself—are not ready to swallow all our principles and to enter into fusion wherein, as I see it, we go over in effect to the Nationalist Party and adopt its principal ideals. We were

entitled to believe and expect that on our acceptance of South Africa's "sovereign independent status" moderate Nationalists at any rate would shed the remnants of their republican ideals. If they have, then there is no need for Section 2 (d). If they have not, then how can they expect us to betray our ideals by fusing with them and accepting a programme which contains the provision designed and intended to preserve and enshrine the republican ideal?

So long as Section 2 (d) remains fusion is not for me.—Reuter.



P1087

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