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THE INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION ACT

The Industrial Conciliation Act, 1956, was published on the 11th May 1956. This Act has been introduced by the most reactionary government our country has ever had - a government representing the interests of mine-owners, industrialists and wealthy farmers.

Their aim in introducing this Act is to divide the workers so that their trade unions should be weakened, smashed and unable to fight any attacks of the boss class. This Act with its apartheid, white baasskap, its bans on strikes and political action in unions, is contrary to the very principles of trade unionism - to trade union democracy. Trade unions are the elementary organisations which unite the workers irrespective of colour, race, politics and religious beliefs, into one organisation.

The first 1924 Industrial Conciliation Act of the Labour-Nationalist Pact government introduced a colour bar by the exclusion of pass-bearing Africans. It is this colour-bar provision of the Industrial Conciliation Act and its acceptance by the registered unions that has weakened our trade union movement. It excluded Africans from the trade unions. It introduced racialism in the trade union movement which resulted in the inability and even unwillingness of the South African Trade Union Council and other racialistic trade union centres to oppose this new anti-trade union law.

For many years the progressive and militant section of the trade union movement was pressing for the amendment of the Industrial Conciliation Act, to cover African workers and thus to enable all workers to unite in Industrial trade unions.

The Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956, is a piece of fascist-like racialism, aimed at all workers and in particular against the Coloured, Indian and African workers.

The government introduced this Act because it fears and hates trade unions. They fear and hate them because trade unions are workers' organisations and a weapon against oppression and exploitation.

Clause 77(6) of the Act is one of the most vicious, discriminatory and oppressive provisions of the Act. Just as the notorious colour-bar regulation in the mining industry excludes Non-Europeans from doing skilled trades on the mines, so this Act contains provisions allowing the Minister to reserve any kind of job for members of a racial group.

This Clause reads:

"Reservation of work in the undertaking, industry, trade or occupation concerned in the specified area and any portion thereof or in any specified type or class of premises in the specified area for persons of a specified race or for persons belonging to a specified class and the prohibition of the performance of such work by any other persons."

This means that the Minister of Labour can exclude racial groups of workers from certain occupations. The Coloured and Indian workers are facing a most serious crisis. Never before has there been such a deliberate and cold-blooded attempt to oust the Non-Europeans from skilled work and force them into a position of labourers.

Just as the previous Act and the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act aimed at splitting the unions by excluding Africans, so, the present Act aims further splitting the unions by separating Indian and Coloureds into separate unions from the Europeans, and provides for splits on racial lines and a division of the funds and other assets of the Unions.

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Clause 4(6) reads:

"After the commencement of this Act, no trade union shall be registered under this section in respect of both white persons and Coloured persons."

The government claims that the Act upholds the principle of collective bargaining. But the Act will make real collective bargaining impossible, because whilst the employers are centred in one single association, the workers ranks will be divided by two or more trade unions.

Section 8 of the Act strikes a blow at unity, destroys the freedom of workers to meet on an equal basis and is a corner-stone of Nationalist fascist apartheid insanity. Let us for a moment consider this clause:

"If membership of a registered union is open to both white and Coloured persons its constitution must after not more than 12 months from the date of the Act enforce separate branches, the holding of separate meetings by these branches for white and Coloured persons respectively and an all-white executive committee. No Coloured person shall after the expiring of a period of 12 months from the commencement of this Act attend or take part in any meeting of the executive committee of such union."

This is not Trade Union democracy BUT White baasskap!

The strength of the workers lies in unity of all workers irrespective of race or colour.

The duty of all workers, in particular the white workers, in this matter of the race splitting of the I. C. Act is clear. They must stand by the principle of working class unity, denounce the Act and its hated colour bar clauses. Refuse to operate them and stand firm by the Coloured and Indian and African workers. Class and not race interest must prevail!

We call upon trade unionists in this country and throughout the world to protest against the act which is a fascist measure aimed at the destruction of free trade unionism.

S.A.C.T.U. stands for:

1. The right of workers irrespective of race to combine into free trade ~~mix~~ unions.
2. Free democratic election of officials and leaders without state interference.
3. Freedom of occupation without restriction on grounds of race and sex.
4. The right to withhold labour in support of demands, for improved wages and protection against exploitation.
5. Freedom of organised trade unions to achieve their aims through political action.

S.A.C.T.U. declares that the I.C. Act denies to the workers these basic rights and liberties, the act threatens to destroy the foundations of the free trade union movement built up in the past through the struggles and sacrifices of the workers here and elsewhere. The Act violates the principles of the Charter of Human Rights and repudiates the standards adopted in the most progressive countries for the protection of workers' conditions.

S.A.C.T.U. pledges itself to work unceasingly for the repeal of this measure and for the establishment of inter-racial industrial trade unions to lead the struggle for progressive and democratic industrial legislation that will ensure to all workers irrespective of race, freedom of trade union organisation and employment.

We call upon all trade unionists to see that their unions take part in this struggle against the I. C. Act and affiliate to S.A.C.T.U.

S.A.C.T.U. calls upon all trade union members and all workers organised and unorganised to join hands in this important struggle to safeguard their trade unions and for the right to establish free and democratic trade unions which will be capable of defending and advancing the workers' interests.

Repudiate the I. C. Act!!

No White Baasskap!!

Fight for united Industrial trade Unions of Africans, Coloured, Indian and Europeans!!

Long Live Unity of All Workers!!

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RECORDS RELATING TO THE 'TREASON TRIAL' (REGINA vs F. ADAMS AND OTHERS ON CHARGE OF HIGH TREASON, ETC.), 1956 1961

TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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