

22/12/58.

AFRICANISTS: This report is in ~~two~~ two sections, the first dealing with a conversation with Bob Sobukwe, and the second with a conversation with S. Ngendane.

1) Sobukwe: I spoke to him on Thursday, Dec 11. He said that Mathopeng and a second person - whom he did not name - are busy drafting a special constitution for the Africanists. The draft will be ready shortly.

He said the Africanists had been "meeting with great success". They have only begun their campaign of sending people into various areas for recruitment purposes, but have had great responses. Some of their people had gone down to the OFS, and branches were formed in Welkom and Bethlehem. There were 20/30 in each branch. He pointed out that the ANC had never been able to start branches in these areas. A branch is also to be formed at Sibasa (near Louis Trichardt), on Dec 19. No other branches have yet been formed on the Reef.

Bob said they had been collecting money from all possible sources, and had had a good response. They had had many "promises" of cash from African business men. They also hoped to obtain cash from the Bantu Welfare Trust. He said this was a fund set up by the late Mr Donaldson, and it gave money to budding non-white political organisations, whatever their views. The Fund had, for example, given cash to the All-African Convention, and had also paid Dr Xuma's fare when he went to UMC. (NB This is all news to me). He said they had not yet actually applied for a grant, as they had to await the completion of the constitution. To get a grant, all one did was to submit a constitution.

Nkopo (of Nyanga (Cape)) is the big man in the Cape. He was supposed to send an official circular to all interested persons, but for reasons unknown, he had, as far as Bob knew, failed to do this.

I asked whether the Africanists intended going to the national ANC conference. Bob replied that their people in other parts of the country - and especially in the Eastern Cape - had been ~~since~~ "clamouring" for instructions. At first, it was thought a good idea to go to the conference, and to stage a walk-out. But it was then decided not to go at all. There would, however, be three Africanists - one each from Natal, OFS and the Cape - ~~xxxx~~ who would go to the conference in order to hand in the official notice of the Africanists' withdrawal from the ANC. This would be a letter similar if not identical to the one handed in at the Transvaal meeting in November.

Bob said that he had thought of replying to Joe Matthews' letter in New Age, but had decided that it was not worth it. He pointed out that the letter was clear proof of the extent to which Joe had swung over to the Reds.

He said he had done an article on the Africanists for Contact (NB This a suggestion made by Duncan and myself). He had not yet sent it though as it had first to be approved by the Africanists committee.

Bob said t Africanists have been approached by three African Trade Unions which had opposed the stay-at-home strike. These include the Garment Workers' Union of African Women and t African Baking Workers' Union. (NB See New Age of Nov 13, Pg 4 for report on these unions - headlined "Bid to Form African Only TU Body"). Bob said these TU's had broken with SACTU, and wanted to link up with t new Africanist movement. Why? I asked. He replied tt they want to join because they feel they will not be dominated politically. They want to join as a group, but t Africanists are not too happy about this. Bob explained tt t Africanists did not want a block vote within t movement, but preferred to have individual membership.

Bob also told me t following anecdote (NB I give no guarantee about its truth). He said tt when Putini was at Fort Hare, he was horribly anti-Indian, and in fact, he had objected ~~xx~~ strongly to Indian students using the common bathrooms because he claimed they "smelled". Bob said tt recently Mlonzi met Putini in t street in Jo'burg, and this conversation ensued:

Mlonzi: "What's this? you were a fascist before and now you are a communist".

Putini: "It's money, man! They have given me job as a teacher."

Bob explained tt Putini is teaching at t Indian school, and tt t job was arranged for him.

2) S. Ngendane: Secretary of t Africanist movement: I saw Ngendane on Friday, Dec 12. He told me tt t Africanists had a Working Committee at t moment, and tt this would continue until sometime in January, when they hoped to hold their first conference. T venue had not yet been decided, but it would probably be Bloemfontein. He confirmed tt they had set themselves a target of 100,000 members by June 30, 1959. I asked whether he thought they would ~~xxxxxx~~ reach it, or whether t target was merely propaganda. He replied: "Judging from t response, from t youth in particular, it is possible we will exceed even this figure." He said they had been receiving "demands from all" about t new movement. T paid up membership was already "over 5000, and this was mainly from t youth", he said. They had seven branches in t CFS, and this he claimed was "already stronger than t ANC has ever been there". ~~xxxx~~ said there were 1,048 CFS members. Some of t branches mentioned by him were: Ladysmith, Kroonstad, Bloemfontein, Welkom, Odendaalsrus. All t paid-up members had given their annual 2/6 sub.

Describing their policy, he said tt t basic principles were as set out in t 1949 programme of action. He said they were not averse to co-operation with other racial groups, but "on our own terms". "Africans do not need anybody's aid - they are capable of winning t struggle without assistance from other racial groups," he said.

Ngendane said tt one of their chief aims was "discouraging tribalism." He said: "We want to unite t African people as a nation, not on tribal lines or according to ethnic grouping."

I asked him about international policy, and he replied: "At this stage, we are more pan-African in outlook than international."

He continued: "Our concern is to let t African be free in his own country. We do not recognise t artificial boundaries of South Africa. We only recognise Africa - not only t Union of South Africa."

And he quoted t slogan: "Africa from Cape to Cairo and Madagascar to Morocco."

He also said tt "we are not opposed to t Nats as such but to t entire South African set-up. We challenge it." He also stressed t "non-violent" nature of their struggle.

Comment: T points about Africanist policy is of course all old stuff, and there is nothing new in it.. What did, however, interest me was tt Ngendane, off his own bat, and with no prompting from me, made especial mention of t "non-violent" struggle. He might be a bit of a crank in t Africanist camp, but ~~z~~ on t other hand, it might be tt these fellows have now decided to push non-violence as part of their platform. Otherwise, it is all pretty straightforward, and no comment is needed. T facts about Africanists' membership I cannot of course vouch for, but will do my best to check on.

Ngendane I thought to be fair enough. Fairly bright, I thought, but by no means brilliant. A pleasant manner, and no rhetorics or tub-thumpings. As secretary of t movement, and t only one officially allowed to issue statements on his own, he must obviously rank high in t group - and of t little I saw of him, this is to t credit of t movement.

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- **Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand**

Location:- **Johannesburg**

©2010

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.

DOCUMENT DETAILS:

Document ID:- **A2618-Ce14**

Document Title:- **Typed notes: Africanists**

Author:- **Benjamin Pogrund**

Document Date:- **22 December 1958**