

CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE

NIC80

ZKM2

1. ORIGIN: At a Conference of the Cape ANC held at Cradock in 1953, Prof. Matthews ^{delivered the Presidential Address} ~~read a paper proposing~~ ^{in which he suggested the holding of} a National Convention. A resolution was adopted supporting the ^{idea (See ANC (Cape) Resolutions 1953 no 8}

In December, 1953, at its annual National Conference in Queenstown, the ANC adopted a resolution instructing their National Executive Committee "to make immediate preparations for the organisation of a Congress of the People of S.A. whose task shall be to work out a Freedom Charter" ~~The original resolution was moved by Prof. Z.K. Matthews.~~

A88

ZKM 9/10/11

- b) In terms of this resolution, W.M. Sisulu, Secretary-General of the ANC wrote on 1/3/1954 to the Secretaries of the SAIC, SACOD and SACPO inviting their National Executive Committees to attend a joint Conference "to work out the details for the National Convention of the Peoples of South Africa"; ^{the joint conference.} to be held on 20th and 21st March, 1954.
- c) In response to this invitation, delegations from the ANC, SAIC and SACOD met in Natal on Sunday, 21st March, 1954, together with a member of the Johannesburg branch of SACPO whose head office in Cape Town sent a telegram from SACPO President apologizing for his inability to attend. Chief Lutuli presided.
- d) A Memorandum setting out the scheme of the ANC was submitted to this meeting. This memo. clearly shows a certain lack of clarity as to the precise scope and character of the COP; there is for example ^{the} proposal (c) at the end of the memo. proposing "a common roll of voters for the 'COP' to be prepared by the sponsors; and (d) "the appointment of a Delimitation Committee to divide the country into constituencies" which would appear to suggest that the COP

would be of a highly formal character, and akin in some ways to a Parliament. In discussion it was specifically pointed out by several speakers that care should be taken to see that none of our resolutions or statements gave grounds for anyone, either inside or outside our organisation, to get the impression that the COP was intended in any way to be a "government" or a "Parliament" or in any way a body claiming authority of state.

e) After discussion, a Resolution Committee was elected which produced a resolution and press release, both of which were drafted to clarify the character of COP as "a democratically elected" assembly of "representatives of people of all races from all parts of the country" to "frame and adopt a Freedom Charter expressing the will of the people ..." In terms of the resolution a joint planning committee of the four bodies, consisting of not more than five representatives of each of the four organisations, was set up, with headquarters in Johannesburg.

NIC22
C51
C1080
E543
A180
NIC105

2. PROGRESS OF THE CAMPAIGN:

a) The joint planning committee's tasks were to prepare and present a plan of the campaign and a draft "Call to the COP" to the four sponsors. This was done, and both the plan of campaign for the COP and the Call to COP were ratified at a meeting of the joint planning committee of the four bodies held in Evaton later in 1954. The joint planning committee in terms of this ratification was to be named "The National Action Council of the COP". The N.A.C.'s powers were executive only in respect of organising of C.O.P. The precise text of the report to the Evaton meeting is not available, but the general gist of the decisions at this meeting was embodied in a public circular widely distributed and reprinted in "Fighting Talk(June 1954) and distributed to all branches of the Congresses. It must be noted that this document calls on "every Union-wide

--- organisation ---

organisation without exception to support and endorse this call. These organisations who do so will be asked to appoint representatives to the National Action Council (NAC)". Immediately thereafter, circular letters setting out the plan and concept of COP were addressed to Union-wide bodies, TU's, sporting, religious, social and political (e.g. Labour Party, Nats, U.P. etc.) asking them to co-sponsor and join the NAC. No such bodies did so, despite strenuous efforts on our part to meet them; special meetings were in fact arranged with the S.A. Institute of Race Relations, Labour Party and Liberal Party, and with NUSAS, but proved abortive. The "Call to the COP" was printed in thousands of copies in all languages and distributed far and wide throughout the country.

b) Similar committees were to be set up on a Provincial and even an area basis. In fact such committees were only well established on a stable basis in the Transvaal, Natal and Western Cape, where they were, in all cases, formed by election at mass Provincial Conferences of organisations called in each area. These committees generally included representatives of Non-Congress organisations, especially Trade Unions. The Conferences were convened by the local (i.e. provincial or town) branches of the four bodies. The Transvaal Conference was held in Johannesburg on July 25th, 1954, attended by approximately 1300 delegates, and the Natal Conference on 5th September, 1954.

3. VOLUNTEERS:

a) A call was made by Chief Lutuli for 50,000 volunteers to organise for COP. The purpose and character of this volunteer corps was fully explained in a pamphlet specially produced by the NAC for the use of volunteers and those who organised them - i.e. "Welcome Freedom Volunteer".

--- Volunteers ---

E355/6
E29

C51
C1080
NIC105

E26
C81
C288;
NIC23
C95
C93

NA69
B31.

See
C51/1080
and par.1
of A32.
C287.

Volunteers were to be more than just Congress members. They were to be people who placed their time and energies at the disposal of the Congresses for work as and when requested in active organisational work. For purposes of organisation of the volunteers, a Volunteers Board was set up to consist of the Volunteer-in-Chief of each national organisation. This organisational set-up was duplicated at provincial level.

NIC19

C89?
NIC65/71

b) A form of pledge to be taken by volunteers was drawn up by _____ but was not widely used. Volunteer corps were in fact started in the Cape, Natal and Transvaal, but only reached significant proportions in the Eastern Cape. In other areas the Volunteer corps only existed on paper. It should be noted that the V.C. in Eastern Cape adopted a uniform which was worn by most of the volunteers.

4. PUBLICITY:

a) The NAC issued a bulletin irregularly - "Speaking Together" for distribution to Congress branches and local COP committees. Posters, pamphlets and leaflets were also issued from time to time by the NAC. In addition, several provincial bulletins were produced e.g. "Forward to Freedom" by Transvaal COP Committee.

D10;
C1086

b) The symbol of the four-spoked wheel was adopted for the COP, symbolic of the four sponsoring bodies united for progress. The slogan, "Let us speak together" in various forms was used throughout the campaign.

c) The lecture notes series (3) "The World We Live in" etc. were not official COP publications, but were produced by a group of volunteers during the campaign for use in political education of volunteers. At no time were the contents *vetted* and approved by the NAC, *at the request of the NAC.* The advice that they be used by volunteers and even Congress workers *or any of the Congresses.* did, however, appear in *NAC E* Provincial Committee statements *and some Provincial Congress circulars.*

E24/25
NIC76/77
NIC92/93
A84/86
C53/54
NA71/72
C1086
A121

and can perhaps be regarded in the same light as the advice to read "New Age", "FT" etc. *In any case, these lectures did not amount to policy statements but were intended only to promote*
5. THE CHARTER: *discussion.*

ZKM 14.

a) In July, 1954, the further meeting of the joint executive was held at Tongaat for the purpose of reporting on progress and taking future decisions. *liberal party representatives attended.* This meeting was raided by the police acting under warrant, and all present were searched and documents seized. *A resolution proposing that an appeal be made for financial assistance from overseas was specifically rejected.*

NIC28

b) Early in 1955, the decision to hold COP on June 25th was taken by the NAC, and the venue of Kliptown was decided upon for reason of its being an area open to all racial groups without permit restrictions. The site was formally leased from the owners by the NAC. During these months of 1955 the work of collecting in demands for inclusion in the Charter was speeded up, and hundreds of separate demands began to arrive at the NAC offices. An NAC sub-committee set to work about May, 1955 to classify, sort out and codify the demands. This sub-committee, it must be stressed, did not draft the Freedom Charter except in respect of its language and preamble. It merely took the demands and generalized them into comprehensive categories.

NIC11
NIC13

G87

c) A draft agenda for COP was drawn up by the NAC and submitted to the Congresses for ratification. Finally, on the eve of COP, June 23rd, a meeting of the ~~joint executives~~ *N.A.C.* met in Johannesburg, considered and approved the final agenda, and approved of the text of the draft Freedom Charter. This was the first time that anyone associated with COP other than the drafting sub-committee had seen any text of the Freedom Charter whatsoever, and also the first time that the four bodies involved had any inkling as to what had come out of the people's suggestions.

H55
H22
H54
H14/
H23/13/16

"The Call", it should be noted, did not contain any demands as such, but only indicated topics of discussion. This outline of topics was the only lead given to the people in their formulation.

H32 d) An exhibition of a representative selection of the original letters etc. with demands from which the Charter was compiled was displayed at the COP, and ^{seized} signed in the raid.

THE COP:

C87 JK19 EML9 H21 H51 a) The COP itself followed approximately on the lines set by the agenda, although it is likely that there were certain minor variations from it. Special duties were set to volunteers. It is not intended here to set out the actual happenings at COP itself, which will be fully covered by police evidence. As a result of the police search of people present, there are no Minutes of the gathering, nor are there in existence, ^{except in court exhibits} any original notes used by the speakers from the platform in their speeches, except the written message sent to COP by Lutuli. A special roneoed directive warning speakers not to contravene the law was issued to speakers at COP.

H18 H19 A134 b) At the conclusion of COP, the Charter was put and adopted unanimously by show of hands, together with a draft resolution prepared by the NAC. This resolution ^{mandates} the four congresses "to continue to work together and campaign for the achievement of the ^{demands} ~~ideas~~ of the Charter and to get the F.C. endorsed and accepted by all democratic organisations and people". It was tacitly accepted by all the organisations that the COP campaign was over, the NAC had fulfilled its task and that the organisational machinery could now be wound up.

NIC78 C90 C312 A146/7 A137 c) Some time after the COP, therefore, the NAC submitted its final conclusions and report to the joint executives. It proposed the ^{winding} up of the NAC and the launching of

a campaign to get 1 million signatures of endorsement of the Freedom Charter. It proposed that a Standing Joint Committee of the four executives be set up which "would not only serve to co-ordinate the Freedom Charter campaign, but will in addition be an effective machine for the co-ordination of any other joint activities which may be decided upon from time to time." This joint committee subsequently brought into being was the National Consultative Committee (NCC) ^{empowered to consult on common matters - report based to the various executives.} and was paralleled in some places by a Provincial Consultative Committee. It should be noted that SACTU became a fifth ^{member} of NCC and, at certain stages, representatives of the S.A. Women's Federation were also present at NCC meetings, ^{in an advisory capacity}

d) The signature campaign was put in operation by the NCC who produced signature forms. Various techniques were used, including tables in the street, door to door canvasses, appeals at mass meetings etc. These NCC continued to function up to the time of this case, and dealt inter alia with a campaign against passes for women, the attack on Egypt, etc. etc. For detailed comment on its powers, authority etc. see reports C975 etc.

PERSONAL:

The following information is given for the guidance of counsel:

- 1). Joint Executives: The personnel of these meetings varied slightly from time/time, due not only to internal changes in the organisation but also due to the large number of people banned from congress affairs or from meetings during the course of the campaign. It is not proposed therefore to give a list, but it should be noted that the persons who were present at the meeting raided at Tongaat were not necessarily the same people as those at other times present.

- 2). Joint Planning Committee: So far as is recalled, this body only met once and its personnel is not on record. An article in "Fighting Talk" (June, 1954) however gives an eye-witness account of "How we heard the Call" - which does not make any specific reference to the Evaton meeting, but mentions the names of A.J. Lutuli, Debi Singh, Oliver Tambo & Joe Slovo.
3. The National Action Council: The remarks made in regard to personnel of the Joint Executives applies fully here. The NAC met regularly in Johannesburg, and all its personnel were thus Johannesburg people.

Letters on behalf of the NAC were signed mainly by Y.A. Cashalia (not accused) and W.M. Sisulu as joint secretaries; often by P. Beyleveld, and often, especially in regard to technical and routine work by Moosa Moola, who was employed by the NAC as a clerk-organiser. Cashalia was, however, banned from gatherings from _____ and so did not attend committee meetings after that date. W.M. Sisulu was banned from gatherings from 23.7.54 and later, was also banned from participation in Congress affairs.

4. Secretariat: Between meetings of the NAC, work was carried on by a secretariat whose precise personnel was never disclosed, but on whose behalf most of those in the paragraph above signed letters.

5. The COP Banking Account was operated by E.P. ^{re}Moatsele and P. Beyleveld.

6. Organiser: T.E. Tshunungwa was appointed ^{paid} ~~first~~ national organiser of the COP. He travelled to various areas for the NAC, but the bulk of his work was done in the Eastern Cape. At no time did he serve as a member of the NAC, but may have attended joint executive meetings.

See 2KM.14
TET 45/49?

7. National Consultative Committee: Personnel of this Committee also changed from time to time, but the main signatures of correspondence were one or all of M.Moolla, A.E. Patel, R. Resha, who signed as joint secretaries in September, 1955.
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NIC24.

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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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