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CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF SOUTH AFRICA.

CHRISTIAN RECONSTRUCTION.

FINDINGS of the Fort Hare Conference, June 30th - July 3rd 1942.

- NOTE:
1. A comprehensive printed Report of the Conference is being prepared. It will contain the main addresses in full, with summaries of other addresses and discussions, together with special articles, findings and resolutions. Full particulars respecting cost etc. will shortly be published.
 2. It is urged that these Findings be made the subject of study by groups this year. Special material will be made available for study work in 1943.

FINDINGS.

I. THE FOUNDATION OF FAITH.

1. We affirm our belief in the Sovereignty of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ as the sanction for the supreme value we attach to human personality and the ground of our concern for social reconstruction.
2. We believe that God's purpose for men, as revealed in Christ, is (a) universal in scope, (b) redemptive, (c) corporate, (d) eternal; i.e. as wide as life itself but not confined to the temporal order.
3. We believe that the challenge of Christ is, in the first place, to Christian people, individually and corporately. The example of genuine Christian behaviour is the most potent of all Christian influences without which mere words will be ineffective.
4. We believe that if the Christian faith and way of life are to prevail in the modern world, they must be commended by rational persuasion as well as by zeal and fervour.

II. THE FAMILY.

1. Believing that a high quality of family life is essential for the wellbeing of a community, we maintain that Christians should do everything possible to improve and safeguard family life.
2. The rapid disintegration of family life demands, among other things, better preparation of young people for marriage, and increased facilities for adult education.
3. The Conference considers that a wage-earner supporting a family requires a much higher income than a single person without dependents, and that this should be assured, either by a system of family allowances, or by some other equally effective method.

III. RACE RELATIONS.

1. We believe that Christians should ponder the implications of the Prime Minister's statement that the population of South Africa is ten millions and not two millions.
2. The relations between racial and other groups in South Africa should be those of mutual respect and service, and should not be based on claims of superiority, or accusations of inferiority, which are contrary to the mind of Christ.
3. Any naturalistic teaching of racial or national superiority is incompatible with the teaching and example of Christ and the implications of the Gospel.
4. To combat the temptation to generalise about other race groups, we urge the importance of personal contact between Christians of different races. Though separate worship may normally be advisable by reason of language and other causes, we believe that occasional joint worship is a helpful practice.
5. A valuable contribution to the solution of the race problem can be made if masters and servants of all races will consider each other's welfare in the Spirit of Christ.

6. We believe that the true interests of white and black races in South Africa do not, in the long run, conflict. Trusteeship should be the spirit in which Europeans should act towards the more backward non-Europeans, bearing in mind that the ward is coming of age and then trusteeship must become partnership.

7. In the matter of segregation and the colour bar, we urge that every Christian should examine his own conscience in relation to race prejudice; should seek to understand the causes of such prejudice in himself and others; and further, that dispassionate study of the whole problem is necessary with immediate action on matters on which there is general agreement.

8. We gratefully commend the work of Joint Councils and of the Institute of Race Relations.

9. We feel that the time is ripe for Africans, Coloured people and Indians to be given increased responsibilities through representation on Town, City and Provincial Councils, and in Parliament.

10. Recognising that South Africa is an economic unit, in which it is essential to the welfare of the country that all races should make the fullest contribution of which they are capable, we hold it to be contrary to Christian principles that one race should seek to hold another in permanent inferiority of status, or make arbitrary and discriminating conditions of progress.

IV. SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SECURITY.

1. We believe it is incumbent upon all Christian people to work for the establishment of social security for all.

2. We believe it is the duty of every Christian to work for the removal of distress and poverty in South Africa, remembering that the abolition of poverty will mean very heavy sacrifices on the part of the more privileged sections of the community.

3. We believe it should be the concern of the State to see that exploitation of labour and arbitrary restrictions on employment are abolished; that opportunities of progressive work and service are open to all; that together with a living wage and adequate housing, national health services are available to all; that opportunities of social life and recreation are provided; and provision against unemployment, sickness, disability and old age secured.

4. Believing that the true end of economic activity should be the welfare of all the inhabitants of the country, we hold that the wellbeing of the employee must be a primary concern in any business; that encouragement should be given to the development of a sense of partnership between the employer and the employed, both in the conduct of the business as rendering a common service to the community, and in the sharing of the profits of the industry; that while our present capitalistic system prevails, free right of combination should be accorded to all groups of workers, as to the employers.

5. We believe that an organised effort should be made immediately to secure higher wages and better conditions of living for native and coloured servants and native and coloured farm labourers, and also for mine-workers and municipal and government employees; further, that wage determination for semi-skilled and unskilled workers should be aimed at and enforced in all areas. Moreover, amongst Africans in particular, there is need for the encouragement of thrift.

6. We consider that private interests of whatever kind must be subject to the condition that they do not conflict with the public welfare.

V. EDUCATION.

1. We maintain that educational facilities should be available for every child of whatever race in the primary stages, and thereafter for every member of the community for such training and instruction as may suit his individual capacity, and prepare him for the highest service of which he is capable for his fellowmen.

2. We are of the opinion that the present system of financing native primary and secondary education in the Union, notwithstanding the substantial increases in appropriations in recent years, is inadequate in practice and unsound in principle. We urge the adoption of some more scientific and equitable system such as that of per capita grants payable, as far as may be necessary, from general

revenue, which would enable the appropriations to keep pace with the necessities of the situation. We must not stop short of nation-wide elementary education.

3. We urge that steps be taken, with the co-operation of farmers, to provide suitable educational facilities for the children of farm-labourers of all races.

VI. OUR FURTHER CHRISTIAN DUTY.

1. We urge upon Christians working for social reconstruction in South Africa, the need of a realistic understanding of the past and present history of the country, with patient persistence in working with others toward what they believe to be the mind of Christ for South Africa.

2. The Church must busy herself with creating the creators of a Christian society.

3. Legislative and administrative reform can never relieve the individual Christian from the responsibility for alleviating particular hardships with which he comes into contact.

4. Believing that it is in the present generation of scholars that we must lay the foundation of a more Christian order and that the education of young people in South Africa is at present largely irrelevant to the problems which confront us, we maintain that it is a matter of urgent importance that the Church should devote herself to the promotion of an education basically Christian and socially relevant.

5. This Conference calls upon its members in their several localities to form study groups to consider the various problems which have been discussed, with a view to such action as they may find possible.

6. The widely prevalent interest in Communism, particularly in view of the spirit displayed by the Russian peoples in the war, constitutes a challenge to Christian people to study dispassionately and seriously that ideology in its relation to the truths of the Revelation in Jesus Christ to which Christians stand fast.

7. As a practical step of very great importance in working for social reconstruction in South Africa, we urge that English-speaking people should consider whether it may not be a Christian duty for them to learn Afrikaans so that they may at least be able to understand that language.

VII. ORGANISATION.

Among the resolutions and suggestions passed for action to the Executive of the Christian Council are the following :-

1. That one of the results of the Conference should be the appointment of a permanent Sub-Committee of the Christian Council to give attention to political-economic questions, and to seek to make Christian ethics effective in their determination; and that such a Sub-Committee should arrange for local groups in the principal centres of population to act as corresponding and locally executive bodies.

2. (a) That an Information Service be set up to lead to social reconstruction on a Christian basis by creating an enlightened and informed public opinion; first, inside the Churches; secondly, inside other idealistic bodies such as Toc H, Rotary, Scouts; thirdly, among the general public.

(b) That, as a challenge to immediate, fearless, organised action, the Christian Council present a minimum programme of reform to the Churches and other bodies here represented.

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