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INTRODUCTION:

At the present critical stage of our struggle for Freedom it is particularly important that the African National Congress should pay attention to the economic needs of the African people. The whole system of racial oppression in this country exists with the purpose of supplying the ruling minority and overseas investors with a docile mass of under paid and grossly exploited non-European labour.

The overwhelming majority of the African people consists of poor labourers in towns and in the country side who have no share in the country's wealth. They will continue to be an oppressed group until the Freedom Charter is implemented and the wealth of the country is returned to its people.

The most important section of the African working class consists of the urban Industrial workers. It is they, above all, who possess the strength and the potentiality of organization to strike serious blows at the system of oppression and exploitation that prevails in this country. One of the most striking features of the development of South Africa over the last ten years has been the great increase in African urban population; a fact which will continue to react favourably on our struggle. This process of urbanisation has been particularly marked in Natal.

According to the latest available census figures the urban African population of the Union increased by 23% between 1946 and 1951, but in Natal the urban population increased by 29% over the same period.

By comparison the rural population remained almost static; increasing by only 5%. For the Union as a whole and by only 2% for Natal. There has been therefore a marked trend for the African people to come to the towns, a trend which is more marked in Natal than the vast of the Union. For the African National Congress this will be a source for strength, provided that we pay proper attention to the urgent needs of our people.

Industrial Workers/.....

INDUSTRIAL WORKERS.

Above all, we must not overlook the tremendous force of the African Industrial workers which now forms more than ~~50%~~ of the total industrial labour force of the country. One of the difficulties which this group has been facing is a decline in real wages. Between 1948 - 1952 the average rise in the wages of African industrial workers was 5.1%, but in the same period the official Cost of Living index rose by 6.5%. In other words the African worker ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ bought less for his money in 1952 than in 1948. This trend has been continuing. In other words there has been an increase in the exploitation of the African workers since the Nationalist Government came into power. This Government is essentially a rich man's Govt and its policy of oppression has no doubt increased the poverty of the non-European people, particularly the African.

MINING.

The role of the African worker in mining is all an-all important one. In the gold mines the African worker forms about 87% of the total labour force, while ⁱⁿ all mining the corresponding figure was ~~was~~ 93% cash wages for African workers - about ~~in~~ £56 per annum, and the average cash wage of the white mine worker was £853 per annum in 1952. At the same time about £24 million were ~~was~~ paid out annually in dividends to ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ holders of gold mining shares. This sum represents a return of 17% of the capital invested. For the whole South African economy no less than £52 million were paid out in the form of dividends to overseas investors in 1953. This robbery of the African people whose labour produces the wealth of this country cannot be allowed to continue against this system of poverty and oppression for our people. We set the programme of our Freedom Charter:

"The people shall share the country's wealth....." Until these provisions of the Freedom Charter are fulfilled the African people will not be able to enjoy the fruits of their labour; which fruits rightly belong to them.

Political/.....

POLITICAL:

We must always bear in mind that there is the closest connection between the system of political oppression and the system of the economic exploitation under which the non-European people of this country are suffering. The Apartheid legislation of the present and the previous Government has had the effect of restricting economic opportunities for the non-European people, and of facilitating the exploitation of their labour power, e.g. the operation of the pass law - prevent the African worker from selling his labour power in the best market; many workers are kept in rural districts at starvation wages so that the white farmers may continue to reap record profits.

In all countries of the world the only hope of the workers has always been his organised strength. Wherever modern industry has sprung up the workers have learnt how to fight for their rights in Trade Unions. The South African Government has done its utmost to prohibit the activity of Free African Trade Unions by such laws as the Native Labour Settlements of Disputes Act. Even in the Industrial Conciliation Act of 1956 the Act excluded the African worker from the scope of the meaning of the term "employee." etc. Thus the African worker is all the more easily exploited by the employers. The I.C. Act which prohibits formation of mixed Trade Unions is another step directed at destroying the possibilities of the workers of this country from fighting for their rights. Moreover such laws as the Suppression of Communism Act, the Riotous Assemblies Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, because of the wide powers which they place in the hands of the police and the Government, make it more difficult for the people to stand up for their rights and demand a fundamental change in the situation.

It is our duty to declare our opposition to these vicious laws without fail and to oppose them with the democratic programme of our Freedom Charter. (Quote Charter).

Organisational/.....

In the organisational field we are faced with the task of co-ordinating the political with the economic struggle, the fight for a share in the country's Government, with the fight for a share in the country's wealth. Co-operation between the African National Congress and the South African Congress of Trade Unions should be increased and regular joint meetings on matters of common interest should be held by the local committee of SACTU and the Labour Committee of the African National Congress. We must also not lose sight of the economic aspect of the Anti-pass campaign which at present is so vigorously being pursued ~~ex~~ all over the country.

There is also a great need for the African National Congress to publicise and to make demands in connection with the poverty of the African people, e.g. the demand for a reasonable minimum wage, the abolition of the colour bar in industry and the repeal of the anti-trade Union laws. Above all these demands must be linked at every opportunity ^{to} the glorious programme for democracy that is outlined in the Freedom Charter.

It is the Charter which is our guiding light in the struggle. It shows us the better society which we all wish to see established in South Africa.

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TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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