

FSAW J

RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT THE CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE
AT KLIPTOWN ON THE 25TH AND 26TH JUNE, 1955.

We who have come from every corner of our land, chosen by our people to meet together in this great assembly, believe that the Freedom Charter we have adopted contains in it the true and most just desires of the overwhelming majority of the South African people.

We proclaim that in this land, where the mass of the people own nothing and know only poverty and misery, this Charter will become the most treasured possession of all who are oppressed and of all who love liberty.

Wherever there are people living or working together, they must be told of this great Charter, so that they may see and understand the sweeping changes that will come from their everyday struggles against indignity, inequality and injustice.

We declare that all true sons and daughters of South Africa will work, from this day on, to win the changes which are set out in the Freedom Charter. Those who are in the forefront of this struggle will forever hold an honoured place in our history. Those who work against it will be isolated and scorned.

We pledge that when we return from here to our homes, we will at once make known to all our neighbours and workmates what we have done here, and we will win support for the Freedom Charter.

We pay tribute to the African National Congress, South African Indian Congress, South African Congress of Democrats and the South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation for the service they have rendered to South Africa in starting and organising the campaign for the Congress of the People and the Freedom Charter. We mandate these bodies to continue to work together and campaign for the achievement of the demands of the Charter and to get the Freedom Charter endorsed and accepted by all democratic organisations and people.

FSAW

A G E N D A

Saturday: June 25th

FIRST SESSION: 2 P.M.

CHAIRMAN: DR. CONCO

1. National Anthem.
2. Prayers: Rev. Gawe.
- 2A. Welcome to Delegates: Mr. E.P. Moretsele.
3. Opening Address: Chief A.J. Luthuli.
4. Explanation of Agenda and Procedure: Chairman.
5. Messages: Dr. R.E. Press.
6. Explanation of "Isitwalandwe": Chairman.
7. Presentation of "Isitwalandwe" to Chief Luthuli,
Rev. Huddleston,
Dr. Y.M. Dadoo
-Chairman
8. Report of National Council of Congress of People: Mr.A.E.Patel

SECOND SESSION: 3.50 P.M. CHAIRMAN: MR. HURBANS.

9. Reading of the whole charter in Zulu, Sotho and English.
10. Preamble: moved by Mr. A. S. Hutchinson.
11. "The People shall Govern": moved by Mr. N.T. Naicker
12. "All national groups shall have equal rights": moved by
Dr. Letele

CLOSURE AND SUPPER

THIRD SESSION: SUNDAY 26TH, 9 A.M.

CHAIRMAN: MR. GEORGE PEAKE

13. "The people shall share in the country's wealth": moved by
Mr. B. Turok
14. "The land shall be shared amongst those who work it":
moved by Mr. T.E.Tshunungwa.
15. "All shall be equal before the law": moved by Dr. A. Sader.
16. "All shall enjoy equal human rights": moved by Mrs. S.Bunting.
17. "There shall be work and security": moved by Mr.L.S.Massina.

LUNCH BREAK

FOURTH SESSION: 1.20 P.M. CHAIRMAN: MR. P. BEYLEVELD
(see over page)

Agenda:

FOURTH SESSION: 1.20 P.M. CHAIRMAN: MR. P. BEYLEVELD

18. "The doors of learning and culture shall be opened":
moved by Mr. E. Mphahlele.
19. "There shall be houses, security and comfort": moved by
Mrs. H. Joseph.
20. "There shall be peace and friendship": moved by Mr. Mayekiso
21. Appeal for donations: Mr. E.P. Moretsele.
22. Report of Credentials Committee: Mr. R. Resha.
23. Whole Freedom Charter - put to vote: Chairman.
24. Resolution: moved by Dr. H.M. Moosa.
seconded: Mr. Adam Daniels.
25. General.
26. Closing Address: Dr. Conco.

N A T I O N A L A N T H E M

FSAW

M E S S A G E S

TO THE

CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE

KLIPTOWN, JOHANNESBURG
25TH AND 26TH OF JUNE, 1955.

From:
CHOU EN LAI:

Prime Minister, People's Republic of China:

"On behalf of the Chinese people I warmly greet the convocation of the Congress of the People and wish that the Congress will achieve new success in uniting the people of different origins and all sections in South Africa to oppose racial discrimination and to win freedom and democratic rights.

"The Asian-African Conference has solemnly condemned colonialism and racial discrimination. The Chinese people, together with the peoples of other Asian and African countries and the people of the whole world, will continue to support the just struggle waged by the people of South Africa."

From:
U.N. DHEBAR:

President, Indian National Congress.

"It is indeed a great pleasure for us to know that the African National Congress, South African Indian Congress, South African Congress of Democrats and the South African Coloured Peoples' Organisation are jointly convening a great assembly of elected representatives of the people of South Africa for the purpose of drawing up a Freedom Charter on the 25th and 26th June, 1955.

"This united front on the part of the oppressed is really praiseworthy and we are sure this will bring your peaceful struggle for elementary human rights to a successful end very soon.

"You are aware that the people and the Government of India are firmly opposed to the discriminatory policy followed by the South African Government. We believe strongly that this type of thing cannot continue for long in this modern democratic world, and your endeavour is bound to meet a success.

"May God give you patience and mental strength which are the most vital things for carrying on a non violent struggle.

"We extend to you our moral support and wish you all success."

From:
MR. ISMAIL EL AZHAR: Prime Minister, Government of the Sudan.

"It gives me great pleasure to request you to convey to your Assembly our deep appreciation and rejoicing at their noble, gallant move for drawing up a collective Freedom Charter for all peoples and groups in South Africa for the realisation of their national aspirations.

"This is indeed a legitimate right which is commensurate with the Charter of the United Nations and is one which was positively affirmed by the Asian-African Conference. In the name of the Sudan therefore I am pleased to send you our sincerest congratulations and to wish you all the best of success in your deliberations.

Page 2/.... "Assuring

"Assuring you of our whole hearted sympathy and support at all times."

From:

PAUL ROBESON:

United States of America:

"Heartfelt greetings to you all -- African, European, Indian and Coloured -- rallying for freedom at the Congress of the People!."

"The history-making Bandung Conference of Asian and African nations has focused the eyes of the world upon you, and its resolution in your behalf reflected the sympathy and support which your struggles have evoked in the hearts of freedom-lovers everywhere."

"Bandung, where more than half the world's peoples spoke out in united opposition to colonialism and racialism, and for the policy of peaceful co-existence, was vivid evidence that the old order of imperialist rule and white supremacy is doomed. Yes, here was a demonstration to the whole world that this is truly an epoch of liberation."

"That conference of the 29 Asian and African powers has had a profound effect upon public opinion here in the United States, and its meaning was especially noted by the Negro people who are linked with Africa by the bonds of kinship and with oppressed people everywhere by the bonds of common aspirations. This growing interest among our people will surely evoke much greater support and assistance for you, and no doubt those of us who have long been devoted to your cause will be joined in this good work by many others."

"Our struggle here for equal rights for the Negro people continues and grows stronger despite the stubborn resistance of those who once enslaved us and who are determined to maintain the system of oppression and exploitation which has denied us true freedom in all the years since the overthrow of chattel slavery."

"The Supreme Court decision which outlawed Jim Crow schools last year is defied by the rulers of the Southern States, and our people face a long and difficult struggle to gain -- in deed as well as on paper -- the right to unsegregated education for our children. Likewise the struggle for equal rights in employment, housing, political representation and in all other matters continues to be waged by the Negro people and our allies among the common people of America."

"Here, as in your homeland, leaders of the liberation movement are persecuted, and repressive attacks are being made against American supporters of your cause. But despite all difficulties, full freedom shall be won -- in Mississippi, U.S.A., and in South Africa."

"The teachings of Frederick Douglass, great Negro leader of the anti-slavery movement, inspire and guide us."

" 'If there is no struggle', he declared, 'there is no progress. Those who profess to favour freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, and it never will.' "

"Certainly the great victories of our times -- the rise of a free and mighty China linked with the great Soviet Union and the new democracies of Europe, the winning of independence by India, Burma, Indonesia and other former colonies -- are living proof that the peoples' demands, backed by their united strength, must be granted."

"Claimed by her people, liberated Africa shall soon -- yes, in our day -- rise to greatness in the world; and the flowering of her culture from the ancient roots of glory, shall enrich the culture of the world.

"Brothers and sisters of the Congress of the People -- with the deepest admiration for your courage, I salute you. With all my love, I clasp your hands."

From:
LUIGI GRASSI: Secretary, World Federation of Trade Unions:

"The World Federation of Trade Unions is deeply concerned at the increasing restrictions on trade union and democratic rights in South Africa and has repeatedly undertaken actions of protest against such restrictions and of solidarity with the workers fighting against them. The World Federation of Trade Unions has always stood and still stands for full freedom of trade union rights for all, without discrimination against any race or section.

"The World Federation of Trade Unions therefore sends the Congress of the People its best wishes for success in its efforts to unite the South African people in struggle against anti-trade union and anti-democratic laws, against racial discrimination and for the advancement of the standard of life of the people."

From:
JOE NORDMANN: General Secretary, International Association
of Democratic Lawyers:Brussels

"The International Association of Democratic Lawyers sends its warm greetings to the Congress of the People gathered in view of drawing up a "Freedom Charter" for all the people in South Africa, and best wishes for a successful work.

"All the democratic and peaceloving lawyers are concerned in the preservation of the furtherance of civil liberties and human rights everywhere."

From: World Federation of Democratic Youth: WARSAW

"In the name of 86 millions yours warm fraternal greetings to your Congress and wish you every success stop Thirty thousand youth from all countries will gather in Warsaw at the end of July for the fifth Festival of Peace and Friendship. We assure support for your just struggle for peace, freedom, peoples' rights and a happier life."

From: MR. KNOBLICH: General Secretary, International Organisation
of Journalists: Prague:

"The International Organisation of Journalists which is the spokesman of progressive and democratic journalists from 44 countries sends your meeting its most sincere greetings and wishes it great success.

"It was with great pleasure that the International
Page 4/....

Organisation of Journalists learned of your forthcoming meeting because it too supports freedom and mutual understanding among the nations.

"We firmly believe that your Congress will help to bring about an improvement in the conditions among the South African population."

From:

HOWARD FAST:

United States of America:

"The announcement of the Congress of the People of South Africa, joining together the many mass organisations of coloured people, is an event of worldwide importance - and it extends hope to all the people of the earth who love freedom and cherish the dignity of man.

"One of the unique features of the times we live in is the action of people in their own organisations against war and for peace and democracy. We are now witnessing the mighty concourse of peoples' representatives assembled at Helsinki in response to the call by the World Council of Peace. Again and again we have seen the people of the earth stretching out their arms across national boundaries asking for international solidarity, for unity in the face of fascism and tyranny. This could not be otherwise, for we are now entered into the period which marks the beginning of the unity of mankind -- a unity in which we will build the kind of life and civilization that good men have always dreamed of.

"In the light of this your Congress takes on enormous significance; and to us in America it has a particular, a special importance. We have long said here in the United States that the treatment of the Negro people and the response to such treatment is the measure of a man's conscience. Thus it is that many of us entered into the struggle for Negro rights and for the unity of black and white almost at the time when we were able to think. For myself, a lifetime of such struggle lies behind me, and I have come to realise ever more deeply that the process of this splendid worldwide struggle is the process of the liberation of mankind.

"Now I can talk to you only with my voice; but let me assure you that thousands of other Americans stretch out their arms toward you and open their hearts to you. You meet in no narrow cause but in the name of the noblest aspirations of mankind. All honour to the coloured people of South Africa in their struggle for liberation! All honour to the unity of black and white against fascism! Your cause is inevitable and your triumph though difficult is a part of man's life and man's history! With all my heart I salute you!"

From:

CANON JOHN COLLINS: London:

"I assure the non-Europeans of South Africa of my continuing support in their struggle for freedom and justice.

"My admiration of their fortitude, patience and determination in place of oppression and provocation. My respect for their devotion to the principal of non violence.

"I promise to continue my efforts here when my health is restored. Best wishes, hopes and prayers for the Congress from myself and the Christian Action Council."

From:

LAI JOYU:

President, All China Federation of Trade Unions: Peking.

"On behalf of the Chinese working class we extend warm congratulations to the South African Congress of the People.

"The Chinese workers and entire people express deep sympathy and concern to the South African people for their just struggle against colonialism and racial discrimination.

"We wish the Congress new success in uniting the South African peoples in the fight for fundamental human rights, democracy, freedom and world peace."

From:

SECRETARIAT:

Antifascist Committee of Soviet Youth: Moscow:

"Ardent greetings to the participants of the Congress of the People of the Union of South Africa.

"We wish the peoples of the Union of South Africa and their youth best success in their struggle for freedom and democratic rights and for a bright future for your young generation."

From:

SECRETARIAT:

National Assembly of Women: London.

"Women send their warmest support for the elimination of racial discrimination. Sincerest wishes for the success of the Congress."

From:

SECRETARIAT:

American Labour Party: New York.

"Greetings and success to your inspiring, historic Conference."

From:

R. PALME DUTT:

London.

"Democratic opinion throughout the world is looking with confidence to the Congress of the People of South Africa to voice the true aspirations of the South African people against all racial discrimination and oppression, and for the fulfilment of human freedom without distinction of race or colour.

"The heroic struggle of the African, Indian and Coloured peoples of South Africa against oppression, together with the European democrats who have had the courage to stand by their struggle against the revival of Hitlerite tyranny, has already been demonstrated and won the admiration of the world during these years of heavy trials, and will assuredly reap its harvest.

"As Hitlerism, after all its crimes and boasts of a thousand years of power, fell in ruins within twelve years before the advance of the liberation struggle of the peoples, so no less certainly will the puny disciples of Hitler today meet their just end.

"The Bandung Conference of Asian-African peoples representing the majority of mankind, has sounded the call to all the peoples of Asia and Africa for the ending of colour and

racial discrimination, for peace, and the victory of national freedom and human rights.

"All good wishes for the success of your Congress and the achievement of the aim you have set yourselves to form a Charter of Rights of the South African people and lead the way forward in building up the indissoluble unity of the people which will guarantee the future victory.

"We in Britain pledge our solidarity with you in your struggle. Your cause is the cause of freedom throughout the world.

"With warm fraternal greetings."

From:
SECRETARIAT: CZECHOSLOVAC UNION OF YOUTH: PRAGUE.

"Dear Friends, Our organisation has accepted the report concerning your Congress with a great interest and feelings of profound sympathy. Czechoslovak youth pay a great attention to the aims of South African people and youth to achieve better conditions of living and wish the full success to your meeting."

From:
CO-CHAIRMAN: CONNECTICUT NON-PARTISAN COMMITTEE FOR
NEGRO REPRESENTATION

"We, in the independent and anti-colonial tradition of the United States of America, are inspired by and support the unity movement of the majority of the peoples of Africa as embodied in the National Action Council of Congress of the People. Your dedication to the idea that the majority of the people have the right to govern democratically the lands they inhabit serves the best interests of humanity.

"Our nation, we are proud to say, led the world in a war which fought to establish the right to self-determination by all peoples and to destroy the nazi concept of race superiority. We pray and hope that the peoples of Africa will soon reap the benefits of the victory in that war.

"Further, we look upon the democratic federation of the African peoples as setting a high and noble example of brotherhood. The principle of unity of all peoples around a common program for freedom, peace and prosperity is the best assurance we know "for the better and happier life" all of us seek to enjoy."

"Yours for Brotherhood"

From:
THEODOR CHRISTENSEN: Chairman, Studetersamfundet: Copenhagen:

"Being only a small organisation of progressive students we cannot speak in the name of all Danish students. Still it can be stated that there is no doubt that the Danish students are against race discrimination, against herrenvolkism, and against police state methods. This has been expressed by different groups of Danish students on different occasions - also especially regarding the conditions in South Africa. A small but palpable sign of this attitude is the yearly subscription organised by the International Committee of the National Union of Danish Students, among other things for the benefit of the neglected scholarships for coloured students in South Africa.

"As far as Studetersamfundet is concerned, we

are fully aware of the contemporary dangerous trends of neo-Fascism. We oppose them wherever they manifest themselves; thus also the present regime in South Africa.

"We are in favour of the democratic rights including the equality of rights for white and non-white people. We welcome, sympathise with, and support and endeavour to maintain these rights. The efforts in South Africa, where conditions surely are very difficult, to get these rights respected have our full sympathy."

From:

B. BRANDSEN:

General Secretary, Eenheidsvakcentrale:
Amsterdam:

"We address ourselves to you in the name of all progressive Dutch workers and in particular of the members of our organisation the "Eenheidsvakcentrale" (Unified Council of Trade Unions.)

"We are able to inform you that the Dutch workers and all respectable Dutchmen have in great indignation taken cognizance of the fascist, discriminatory measures, which in particular in the recent time, have been taken by the South African government.

"The Dutch people always have felt a great disgust against the fascist so-called "race-theories", a disgust, which was demonstrated very clearly by the fight, which the Dutch people, with the working class as its vanguard, delivered against the Nazi-gangs, which occupied our country from 1940 to 1945.

"Every year large parts of the working class and of other strata of the population take part in commemorating the general strike, which was held in February 1941, as a protest against the deportations of the Jewish part of the Dutch people by the Nazis.

"With great respect, we follow the courageous fight of the South African people for freedom and justice, against fascism and racism. Consequently, we express our great satisfaction on the fact, that the democratic forces in South Africa are forging their unity, that they irrespective of race and colour, together are composing a Charter of Freedom.

"We are convinced, that this Charter and the fight for its realisation will put an end to reactionary racism in South Africa, will be a contribution in establishing unity, the principal condition for success in the fight for freedom, equality of rights and a life in accordance with human dignity for all workers.

"Long Live the fighting South African people!"

"Long live the friendship between the South African and Dutch peoples!"

From:

JANET JAGAN:

SECRETARY, People's Progressive Party:
British Guana:

"The Executive Committee of the People's Progressive Party of British Guana sends its sincerest greetings to the assembly of representatives of the people of South Africa who are attending the historic Congress of the People. We await with deepest interest the results of your meetings of the 25th and the 26th of June and realise the significance of the drawing up of a Freedom Charter.

"The outstanding/.... Page 8

"The outstanding activity of your people in opposing all the various forms of oppression in South Africa has been like a beacon light to the rest of the colonial people fighting for liberation. The people of British Guiana have for years been watching the South African situation with intense interest - your sorrows have inspired our people."

"Our fraternal greetings to your people. Success to the Freedom Charter. Long Live the movements to end colonial domination and misery."

From:
SECRETARIAT: All China Federation of Democratic Youth:
Peking:

"On the occasion of the convocation of your Congress on behalf of the Chinese youth we extend warmest greetings."

"The Chinese youth deeply sympathise with and support your struggle against racial discrimination and national oppression. We wish the South African people further success in the struggle defending world peace for democracy, freedom and rights."

From:
SECRETARY: Universala Ligo: The Hague:

"We wish to congratulate you on your initiative in convening an assembly of representatives of the people of South Africa for the purpose of drawing up a Freedom Charter on the 25th and 26th June."

"We hope sincerely, that your congress will be a stepping stone to the solution of your problems in the spirit of the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights".

"With our best wishes for a successful meeting, we remain, yours sincerely."

From:
R. PINTO: Hon. General Secretary, The Kenya Indian Congress: Nairobi

"My Committee warmly congratulates you on this inspiring and singularly progressive step and begs to send its feelings of deep sympathy and good wishes on the occasion."

From:
SECRETARY: Rhodesian Industrial Commercial Union:
Salisbury:

"Wishing you success of the meeting. We are behind you in greetings."

From:
MUSTAPHA SAADOUN: Secretary, Democratic Algerian Youth:

"It is with great happiness and confidence that we heard about the session of the 25th and 26th June, of the C.O.P. whose aim is to establish the line of action of the South African people, and to give a new impulse to their common fight."

"We young Algerians who are engaged in a merciless fight against foreign imperialists who oppress our country, salute with fervour the important successes which you will attain in your

just action. We are sure that that great assembly of South African people will be a decisive step in the courageous battle that you are waging.

"Our beautiful country is occupied since 120 years ago by French colonialists, but the Algerians who have resisted for many years against the invaders will not bend before oppression. The strength of our national movement is increasing every day, and today our enemies are becoming maddened and call for help to their American, British and other fellow travellers.

"A ferocious repression has fallen on our people and above all on our youth; villages have been burnt by French troops, summary executions have taken place, tortures and condemnations are multiplying, prisons are full and concentration camps are being opened. But nothing will prevent us from liberating our country and governing it as we desire it.

"Because our situation has so many similarities to yours in spite of the distance, we follow your battle with interest and applaud with all our hearts your successes. We know that you are fighting under difficult conditions because of the repression and the racial segregation ruling over your country.

"At the present time our own fight is harder because of the fact the the French colonialists are doing their best and sometimes succeed in rising against our national liberation movement. The European minority which is quite an important group of our population (12%). But we are conducting the battle on all sides and without neglecting our patriotic action we are doing a patient and important work to bring to our side that European minority, mainly composed of workers, who although they came to Algeria following the conquest of Algeria have the same interests as the masses of our people.

"We are fighting with confidence and faith in the future because we know that whatever they will do the imperialists will not prevent the whole of Africa from North and South, already rising beneath their yolk, from liberating itself from the slave oppression.

"We know that nothing will prevent Algeria from becoming an independent and happy nation and at the same time South Africa from becoming a free country governed not by a profiting minority but by and for all the elements that compose it.

"We wish your Congress the full success of its actions, we wish all South Africans and especially the young ones - Africans, Indians and European Democrats, an ever growing success in the liberation action!

"Long live the friendship and solidarity between the Algerian and South African people, and mainly between the Algerian and South African youth!

"Long live the common battle of all the African people, integral part of the world battle for peace and progress!

"Long live the friendship and solidarity between all the African people, between all the people, between all the young people of the world!"

From:

SECRETARY:

Indian Association: Mombasa

"Congratulations on your noble endeavours. We are certain that the Charter will prove a source of inspiration

to all South Africans and constitute a milestone in the hard march of oppressed men. We wish you all success."

From:

PROFESSOR ROBERT M. MACIVER: DR. ALBERT SIMAR: BORIS GOUREVITCH:
The Union for the Protection of Human Persons:
New York:

"The Union for the protection of human persons by international, social and economic co-operation sends its greetings and cordial wishes to the Congress of the People.

"Only by insuring the equality of opportunity in education, work and social life for all citizens can a nation develop its spiritual resources and rise to the summit of human culture.

"Every individual should be judged on his merits and not on the colour of his skin or on his origin. Great destiny awaits the country founded by noble men who sought political and religious freedom.

"If this country will implement the great principle of brotherhood of men and reject all calls for interracial or class struggle for the Union."

From:

DESMOND BUCKLE: London.

"It is with the deepest admiration for your efforts to advance the frontiers of democracy in South Africa that I send most cordial greetings to the Congress of the People.

"The convening of this great Congress marks the kindling of a flame which shall ensure that South Africa marches forward with the rest of Africa and does not remain the only part of the continent justifying the title: "Darkest Africa".

"All over our vast continent the light of freedom, lit by the peoples, is shining with an ever brighter glow. And, guided by its beams, the peoples are planting their feet firmly on the road that leads to a worthier and more decent existence.

"I am confident that there is no force capable of preventing for long the people of South Africa from taking this road.

"Victory awaits your cause."

From:

LESLIE PLUMMER: Member of Parliament, London:

"I have much pleasure in sending a message to your Congress which is meeting this month.

"I hope that your Congress will succeed in drafting a Declaration of Human Rights for the people that you represent and will at the same time tell the world of the struggle which you are putting up against the racial intolerance of the South African Government.

"In this struggle you have my sympathy and support."

From:

FENNER BROCKWAY:

Member of Parliament, London:

"I am very glad to send a greeting to your Congress. I regard it as one of the most hopeful developments of recent times in South Africa.

"Often you must feel depressed but you should be inspired not only by your own strength but by the support which all who believe in liberty and democracy are giving you throughout the world.

"With very best wishes."

From:

LEO GALLAGHER:

Attorney, United States of America:

"Greetings to the Congress of the People.

"You have great tasks before you, and the progressive forces of the world support your programme.

"May you be successful in your efforts and advance your programme for equality of all peoples, regardless of race, colour or religious affiliation."

BWA 10 A

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ENGLISH
CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE.

PRICE- 3d.

.....
The Freedom which the Capitalists Class fought in its revolutionary days was the Freedom to exploit man and soil. Political power was to stay in the hands of the rich, for whom freedom would be a class monopoly, not until the workers organised and struggled, did they gain Political rights.

A hundred years after the English revolution, in about 1750, there were six million people in England and Wales, but only 245, 000 had the right to vote. In country district only land-owners but not the tenants had the vote, and not more than one in every twenty voters could freely use his rights without fear of oppression from the rich.

In towns only small groups of property owners and old residents could vote. Electoral or voting areas were called "rotten" and "pockets" boroughs names which shows that votes were bought and election were controlled by some other rich family.

In 1830 this population had grown to 14 million, but Parliament was still elected by the same class of property owners. Big new towns had grown up which had no members in Parliament: industry and trade had made great advance, but factory owners and shop-keepers as well as workers had no say in Government. Capitalists and workers joined hands in a bitter struggle for Parliamentary reform, and in 1833 forced the ruling class to pass the reform Act. This gave the vote to tenant farmers in country districts and to occupiers of houses valued at over £10 a year in the towns, In other words, the industrialists had been given the vote, but not the working people, who had done most of the fighting for a change.

The workers now saw that they would gain nothing by following leadership of the Capitalists Class. They began to build up a seperate movement known as the Chartist movement, the first political working class organisation in the world. Their charter of programme had the following demands, the vote for every man over twenty- one- years; every one rich or poor, to be able to stand for Parliament; secret voting; the same number of voters in all election areas; a new Parliament to be elected every year.

To implement these demands, great mass demonstrations were held. Big meetings took place all over England, and three petitions demanding the vote were put before Parliament, in the years 1838 to 1848. The entire state machinery was turned against the leaders, by the Government breaking up the meetings, sending soldiers against demonstrators, and arresting the leaders.

After a long struggle laws were passed in 1867 and 1884 that gave many workers the vote. By 1900, all men over (21) twenty- one- years had the vote. As women were excluded in the fight for democratic rights they took up the struggle, in which many of their leaders were also send to prison. At last, in 1918 after the war, they won the right to vote. England has now universal suffrage, and every one over twenty- one- years, has the vote.

At every stage, as we see, democratic rights have had to be fought for against the will of the ruling class. Only when people are organised, united and clear in their mind as to what they want, can they throw off their chains. Freedom is never given to a people; it must be won through struggle.

Kliptown

JOHANNESBURG.

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FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN 1954-1963

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