



LIBERATION

ONE SHILLING

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THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE OF THE A.N.C.

-By A. DOYLE

Nelson Mandela on THE TRANSKEI



A JOURNAL OF DEMOCRATIC DISCUSSION

LIBERATION

invites contributions in the form of articles on political, scientific, literary and other matters of general interest; short stories, poems; or factual material upon which articles can be based.

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Editorial

BEFORE THE STORM

THE last few weeks have seen the long-drawn Parliamentary dispute over the rights of Coloured voters moving steadily to its climax. This is the issue which, over the past four years, has roused the electorate perhaps more than any other. It is the issue which gave birth to the Torch Commando with its peak membership of fifty thousand, and its series of torchlight demonstrations in all the major centres, culminating in the great demonstration on Cape Town's Parade. It is this issue which gave impetus to the organising of the Coloured people for political struggle, and led to the birth of the S.A. Coloured People's Organisation to join the Congress movement. It is this issue which led the Appeal Court to declare the disfranchisement Act invalid, and thus paved the way for drastic Nationalist reconstitution of the Court. It is this issue which brought European women into organised political activity on a wide scale, through the Women's Defence of the Constitution League and the Black Sash Movement. It was this issue which provided the Government pretext for enlarging the Senate and packing its benches with an unassailable majority of faithful ja-broers and henchmen.

The dispute, centreing round the Separate Representation of Voters Act, has been, on the one hand, the pretext for the most extensive Government subversion of established customary and constitutional rights, and the stage-setting for a rapid advance towards a one-party dictatorship. On the other hand, it has been the mainspring of the most widespread political stirrings and organisation of the electorate against the Government since 1922. And yet, as the struggle nears its culmination in Parliament, the climax is marked not by turmoil, strife and clash, but by an atmosphere of unprecedented calm. There is neither determined, bitter, last-ditch verbal resistance inside Parliament, nor organised, mass, popular demonstration and protest outside it. This strange lull characterises the South African scene today.

THE ROAD BEHIND

Facts must be faced. The Parliamentary Opposition has repeatedly sounded the retreat. It undermined and scuttled the Torch Commando at the height of its power. It compromised on the Senate Act, and retreated from its own former promises to restore the Coloured Voters to the common roll if they are ever removed from it. And now, at the critical moment of decision, it has retreated entirely from the struggle, and has abandoned the future of the Coloured vote to the hands of the new Appellate Division. The United Party retreat has become an abdication. Its decline has reached the point of no return; and with it has declined the fervour, the confidence and the spirit of the European electorate, which, forcefully led and inspired, could have swung the balance decisively in favour of South African democracy.

But the decline has not been confined to the white electorate or its leading party alone. Unpalatable though the fact may be, it must be recognised that a faint echo of that decline has begun in the ranks of the non-white democratic organisations as well. Two years ago, when the Government claimed that a section of Non-European opinion supported their measures of apartheid, they lied. Today, there is a basis, however slight, for that claim. The Transkei Bunga has voluntarily accepted its own dissolution, in exchange for the ephemeral enticements of the Bantu Authorities Act. Traders associations have welcomed territorial apartheid in the specious hope of inheriting the profits of white and Indian traders in Verwoerd's "white spots." The votes cast by chiefs and advisory boards for apartheid candidates in Native Representative elections have risen. A growing army of open collaborators and apologists for apartheid have crept out from under stones to write fulsome praise of Nationalist policy in the official publication "Bantu." This is the measure of the ground that is being won by the Government amongst the non-white people. It is a minority trend, a tiny minority trend; but it would be futile to deny its existence. This is the measure of the decline in the anti-Government resistance of the Non-European people.

THE TIME AHEAD

It is simple to pinpoint accurately and precisely the causes for the decline of the United Party and its opposition to the Government. For

its opposition has always rested on feet of clay. With the Government's basic concepts of white supremacy and non-white subjection it has no quarrel. Its fight has been not on principles, but on methods, not on essentials but on trimmings. The very slogan of its whole fight against the Separate Representation of Voters Act—"Hands off the Constitution"—reveals its basic belief that this "constitution," the Act of Union, which enshrines white supremacy, which entrenches the disenfranchising of the Non-European people, is an immutable and unchallengeable basis for the South African state. A struggle on such foundations is at best a shadow fight, inspiring neither the democratic vitality of the white electorate nor the mass support of the non-whites.

But to find the source of the lull in the opposition of the non-white peoples is less simple. It could, perhaps, be argued that the explanation lies in objective circumstances: in the overwhelming force on the side of Government; in the bannings and banishments of prominent and experienced leaders; in the laws and regulations which have curtailed political liberty and freedom of organisation to a minimum. It could be argued, too, that the amendment or the preservation of the Act of Union, racially oppressive and discriminatory to its very marrow, is not a matter to rouse the passions of those whose fight is for race equality. There is perhaps a germ of truth in all these arguments. But they are too facile to be accepted as the whole truth.

TESTING TIME

When the Women's Federation, in the last months of the old year, organised the spectacularly successful, mass deputation of women to the Union Buildings, exceeding in numbers the wildest expectations of their own supporters, all the same "objective circumstances" existed. But they were mastered by a combination of determination, leadership and correct policy. The test of a movement and its leadership is its ability to master the objective circumstances in which it finds itself, and to turn those circumstances to its own ends.

It is in this light that the Congress of the People came through with flying colours. For here, mastering all the objective difficulties, the four Congresses successfully turned the oppressive measures of the Government into the driving-force for the pouring out of the people's protest and dissatisfaction which has been gathered into the first, united people's programme of liberation in South Africa, the Freedom Charter. Here in the Freedom Charter, for the first time, there is a widely accepted, inspiring programme of the liberation movement, set out in fullest detail by the people themselves—just such a programme as is lacking in the Parliamentary Opposition and whose lack is causing its undoing. If ever there was a real basis for a sharp and sweeping advance of the democratic opposition to the Government it is now, in the days of the Freedom Charter. The policy for advance has been laid down; and everything hinges on leadership and organisation.

It is in this light that the recent activities of the Congress movement have fallen short of what is needed. In the place of intense and concentrated organisation around the Freedom Charter, and of the

mobilisation of the people to struggle for it, there has been a resting on the oars. Half a year has passed since the Congress of the People, and still the breach that it made in the armory of reaction has not been followed up with organisation. In the last days of the old year, the African National Congress meeting in annual conference at Bloemfontein could devote hours of time to the debate on the admission of the "Bantu World" reporter, and do no better than postpone discussion on the vital task of mobilising for the Freedom Charter to a future conference in April. It is not possible to rouse the country by procedural debates, while the burning issue of the moment is the new threat of passes for women. It is not possible to break through the lull by discussing freedom of the press, while the meagre voting rights of the Coloured people are being destroyed. This way lies disaster. Once the correct policy has been decided, says one of the world's greatest political leaders, organisation decides everything. This is the lesson which needs to be taken to heart and acted upon by all those who seek their liberation.

This is the beginning of a new year. And the correct policy has been decided upon in the Freedom Charter. The first step has been taken. And now organisation decides everything. Organise! Organise! And organise again! This is the message that must be driven home to the whole opposition movement in South Africa. And if it is learnt and acted on, the lull which marked the opening of the new year will prove to be the herald of the storm to follow.

THE ROLE OF CAPITALISM IN SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY

By H. LAWSON

IN SOUTH AFRICA, perhaps more blatantly than elsewhere, the falsification of History has long been used as a propaganda weapon by the ruling groups. Oppression is justified by the liberal use of historical myths. Different "schools" among our historians reflect certain divisions among the ruling groups themselves, each historian acting as an official apologist for one or other of these groups. Thus there is the traditional Imperialist school of Theal and Cory which is still the basis for a lot of racialist propaganda in the schoolroom; for academic purposes the liberal historians like MacMillan are more suitable, because they abhor the crudeness of the old school and replace it with all sorts of pleasant illusions; and finally there is the growing squad of historical scribes in the service of Afrikaner Nationalism who live in a world of myth that is all their own.

To counter the propaganda weapons of their rulers it is necessary for the oppressed people to find out the truth about their own history and to expose the role played by the system which enslaves them. This they must do, not only to oppose the lies spread by their rulers, but also to deepen their own understanding of the historical process of which they are a part.

MERCANTILE CAPITALISM

What is Capitalism?

There is an unwritten rule among our ruling class historians to ignore, or at least play down, the role of economic factors in South African history. This tradition unites the Imperialist, the Nationalist and the Liberal historian. It is always safer for the established order to present history in terms of the clash of policies, personalities and philosophies than to reveal the naked material interests upon which centuries of oppression have been based.

In order that we should gain a correct appreciation of the economic forces at work in our history it is necessary to have a scientific understanding of the nature of capitalism. It is important not to make the same mistake as the Unity Movement historians and to suppose that one can make up by prejudice for what one lacks in scientific understanding.

Capitalism is not a doctrine existing in the minds of certain people, nor is it a 'motive' or 'purpose' as is stated in Unity Movement histories. Capitalism is not a thing at all. It is essentially a system of social relations into which people enter independently of their will and desire. The capitalist starts off with a certain amount of money or capital. He uses this to buy something on the market, some commodity, as it is called. But he buys it, not in order to use it, but in order to make a profit out of it. This he can only do if he sells again to someone else at a profit, thus ending up with more capital than he started with. Capitalism therefore always involves a certain relationship between buyers and sellers of commodities.

It is easy to see that capitalist relations would not have been possible in the tribal societies of southern Africa. Their economy was based on subsistence farming, not on the production of commodities for a market. Moreover, they lacked a convenient medium of exchange to act as money, and the absence of private property in land acted against the accumulation of too much wealth in one hand. Capitalism was therefore not an indigenous growth in South Africa, as it was in Europe; it was introduced from outside. But the transplanted capitalist system could only thrive on the soil of Africa if it destroyed the old order and created for itself the conditions necessary for its own existence. To create these conditions no means were too violent, too barbaric or too bloody.

Mercantile and Industrial Capitalism

In economics it is usual to distinguish between the two spheres of production and exchange. Now it is a historical fact that capitalist relations tend to appear in the sphere of exchange long before they

appear in the sphere of production. The world knew merchants long before it knew manufacturers and industrialists. For a long time goods were produced by tribal, slave or feudal societies, but they were exchanged by the action of merchant capital. These merchants were generally little better than robbers and usually lived by cheating the producers. Such were the traders of Ancient Rome, of Arabia, India, Portugal and Holland.

The most important feature of merchant capital was its parasitical nature. It brought about no improvements in productive technique and so it did not increase human wealth as a whole. It left ancient and inefficient systems qualitatively unchanged. **Capitalism only became capable of revolutionising the world when it took control of production as well as exchange.** When the capitalist began investing in factories, mines and communications the way was open to the development of modern industrial techniques which were destined to destroy more primitive methods all over the world. But it must never be forgotten that much of the wealth originally invested in the new industries had been obtained by the robber methods of mercantile capitalism of which we will shortly quote a few examples.

Arabs and Portuguese

Long before 1652, merchants from Persia, India, Arabia and even China had been engaged in active commercial relations with the peoples of south-eastern Africa. Through thriving and important trading centres like Sofala (near the present Beira) the merchants of the east were in regular contact with African societies south of the Zambezi. The markets of the east provided an important stimulus to the development of the African mining industry which has been described by M. A. Jaspán in *Liberation*, Nov., 1955. On the other hand, the prevalence of the slave trade was always a source of instability and disintegration for the African societies. As early as the ninth century A.D. the economy of certain Arab states had come to depend heavily on the import of black slaves from the east coast of Africa. Towards the end of that century there occurred a serious revolt of the black slaves in the Caliphate of Baghdad which took many years of full-scale warfare to put down and which decisively undermined the social basis of that great state, preparing the way for its downfall.

The appearance of the Portuguese off the coasts of southern Africa was a great calamity for the African people affected by their activities. The Portuguese adventurers came from a completely feudal country. Their society was not economically superior to that of the Arabs and culturally they lacked the achievements and traditions of the great civilisations of the East. Their ruthless methods won them certain initial advantages, but the Arabs soon re-established their position. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were marked by the intense rivalry between Arab and Portuguese traders on the East African coast. Each tried to monopolise the gold exports of the African societies south of the Zambezi. As usually happens in such cases, the commercial rivals managed to buy over different chiefs to do their fighting for them. African satellites of the Arabs and Portuguese began to destroy one another and cause much misery to their people. This had serious reper-

cussions on their social order which declined considerably during this period.

Even more far-reaching in their effects on African society were the depredations of the Portuguese slave traders on the south-western coast of Africa. Here the proximity of the American plantations and mines provided an insatiable market for the human cargoes in which the Portuguese specialised. Basil Davidson in 'African Awakening' quotes the figure of 1,389,000 slaves taken out of Angola between 1486 and 1641, or an average of about 9,000 a year. In the eighteenth century the traffic increased to an average of 25,000 a year. The effects of this gigantic slave trade spread further and further inland. Fugitives from slave raids would drive out the inhabitants of inland areas in order to find a refuge for themselves, and then the new fugitives would displace other people further away, setting up a chain of disorder and migration which had repercussions throughout the entire sub-continent.

In general, merchant capital had a solvent or corrosive effect on the societies of southern Africa. It tended to destroy the stability of the old mode of life without however putting a new social order in its place. Such a new social order could only have been built on a new system of social production; but it is the hallmark of merchant capital that it leaves untouched the systems of social production which it joins by trade.

The Dutch East India Company

The Dutch East India Company was a typical creation of mercantile capitalism. It was a ferocious plunderer which only destroyed and never built. So far from changing the system of slavery which it found in parts of its eastern possessions it only made it far more rigorous. According to Stamford Raffles, one-time Governor of Java, the history of the colonial administration of Holland "is one of the most extraordinary relations of treachery, bribery, massacre and meanness." Wherever the Company operated in the East, devastation and depopulation followed. Banjuwangi, a province in Java, numbered 80,000 inhabitants in 1750 and only 18,000 in 1811.

The most inhuman acts were perpetrated by the Company in the interests of "sweet commerce." The historian Welch writes of Governor van Diemen: "To reap large dividends he felt it necessary to destroy three-fourths of the spice trees by which the Natives lived; lest they should sell spices to the Portuguese or English." As for another Governor, Coen, one historian states: "How Coen considered the Natives is horribly evident from his own report of the conquest of the Banda Islands in 1621, a story of death and disaster surpassing in cold-blooded cruelty anything of the kind." Nor were the highest officials of the Company the only criminals in its service. Governor Coen himself paints a horrifying picture of "the drunken habits of soldiers and sailors, as well as of traders, their mutinies, piracies, mutual murders, their immorality and greed . . ." (Welch). According to Theal, the rank and file of the Company's servants "had a most disreputable name in Europe." Such was the material of the "volksplanting" of 1652 which was to bring the delights of Christian civilisation to the savage African continent!

It would be a mistake to suppose that the plunder gathered by the Company enriched the Dutch people as a whole. On the contrary, the capitalist clique which ruled the state exploited its own people with a viciousness at that time unsurpassed in Europe. According to Vlakke, "the Republic was ruled by an oligarchy of some 10,000 persons who succeeded in keeping all the political offices in their families . . ." One-seventh of the people of Amsterdam lived on charity as did one-third of those of Leyden. The flotation of bogus companies was a favourite technique of the financial oligarchy for ruining yet more of their countrymen. "By 1648," writes Karl Marx, "the people of Holland were more overworked, poorer and more brutally oppressed than those of all the rest of Europe put together." A very important factor in the decline of Holland and the Dutch East India Company was the ingrained tendency of the Dutch financiers to invest their money outside Holland especially in the growing industries of their great rival, England. Throughout the eighteenth century there was an enormous flow of capital from Holland to England, a state of affairs which could only end with the collapse of the Dutch economy. The Dutch financiers were of course running true to type; just like present-day counterparts they were at all times prepared to sacrifice the national interest where it conflicted with the demand for bigger profits.

The Company at the Cape

Wherever it operated, the Dutch East India Company practised methods of obtaining wealth which were indistinguishable from robbery. These methods of "primitive accumulation" provided the capital that was necessary for the subsequent industrial development of western Europe. The industries of Europe were originally built with the loot gathered together from all the corners of the world.

The Hottentot inhabitants of the Cape had two articles of wealth to which the Dutch robbers soon turned their attention, their cattle and their land. Cattle robbing began even before the establishment of a permanent settlement. From the early years of the 17th century Dutch and English vessels had used Table Bay as a resting station, and their reports make it clear that the favourite method of obtaining fresh meat was by robbing the tribes of their cattle. Thus in 1649 two memorialists report to the Council of Seventeen; ". . . when the fleet commanded by Hon. E. Wollebrandt was lying in Table Bay, instead of recompensing the Natives somewhat for their good treatment of those wrecked in the *Haerlem*, they shot down 8 or 9 of their cattle and took them away without payment . . ." When van Riebeeck arrived, a group on the coast which they called the "strandlopers" had already been deprived of all their cattle, a fate which was soon to overtake their brothers further inland.

The ideology of the robber speaks out of every page of van Riebeeck's diary. Apologising to his employers in Holland for his show of friendliness to certain of the local population, he writes: "This we only did to make them less shy, so as to find hereafter a better opportunity to seize them—1,100 or 1,200 in number and about 600 cattle, the best in the whole country. We have every day the finest opportunities for effecting this without bloodshed, and could derive good service from

the people, in chains, in killing seals or in labouring in the silver mines which we trust will be found here." What a charming representative of his civilisation was van Riebeeck! The wealth of the Hottentots in cattle was a continual challenge to him, ". . . it is therefore very vexing to see such fine herds of cattle . . . although, were it permitted, we had this day opportunity enough to take from them 10,000 head . . . and we might make prisoners, without a blow, of many savages, in order to send them as slaves to India, as they constantly come to us without weapons." Such was the morality of "primitive accumulation."

In order that the Cape should fulfil its function as a refreshment station for the Dutch fleets it was necessary that the local subsistence economy be replaced by an economy which was geared to production for a market, that is to say, commodity production. This was the basis for the decision to establish a Dutch settlement at the Cape. But to carry on production certain means are necessary. When the Dutch immigrants arrived they owned neither land nor cattle and they lacked a supply of easily exploitable labour. The indigenous population therefore had to be forcibly deprived of their means of subsistence, their land and their cattle, and reduced to a poverty-stricken labouring class, which could live only by selling its labour. The process of robbery involved here went on all the time, punctuated at intervals by wars to crush the resistance of the local population to their enslavement.

After the first of these wars van Riebeeck reports in his Journal (April 6, 1660): "They (the Hottentots) dwelt long upon our taking every day for our own use more of the land which had belonged to them from all ages, and on which they were accustomed to depasture their cattle. They also asked, whether, if they were to come into Holland, they would be permitted to act in the same manner . . . they complained much that the colonists, and others living in the country, had given them much annoyance, with now and then perhaps stealing a sheep or a calf, taking away from them their beads, earrings and bracelets . . ." Within a few years the tribes near the Cape settlement had been so impoverished that no more cattle were to be obtained from them and "bartering" expeditions were organised to go further afield. These were in fact robbing expeditions, for from the first the Dutch preferred robbery to genuine barter. In a letter of 1659 van Riebeeck urges a full-scale war on the inhabitants "since stock breeding would be so greatly augmented through the seizure of the handsome young cows, little more attention would need to be paid to trading for oxen."

By 1690 the main resistance of the original inhabitants had been overcome; they had lost much of their land and most of their cattle. At the same time commodity production had been effectively established at the Cape which could now play its role in the colonial plans of the Dutch financiers.

(The Second Part of this article will appear in our next issue)

THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE OF THE A.N.C.

By ALAN DOYLE

I MUST confess that I am not among those who hold up their hands in horror because the A.N.C. kicked the "Bantu World" out of its conference. Critics say it was an attack on the freedom of the press. I just don't see it. Congress does not seek to ban this malodourous newspaper, it was merely told it was not wanted at the Conference. As it is quite obvious that the "Bantu World" was sure to distort and twist any report it might publish of the Conference, I cannot see what everyone is getting so excited about. One might of course have expected that the hostile press might have seized upon the incident, it is a pity though that many democrats have fallen for this "freedom of the press" argument. The "World" (yes, since the Conference it has dropped the "Bantu" out of its name) is quite free to publish anything it likes—even lies. But if it prints lies then it can't come into the A.N.C. Conference. Yes, I can hear some of you saying, but then why not exclude the Transvaler, the Rand Daily Mail and the Cape Times? They also print lies and are even more hostile than the "Bantu World." No doubt they do and they are. But unlike the latter they do not specialise in attempting to disrupt the A.N.C. An important difference.

The real criticism that should be levelled against the conference is not that it showed up the "Bantu World"—an exposure was overdue—but that it allowed this and other relatively trivial matters to waste so much time. While orators were expanding on the sins of the naughty scribblers of Industria, precious hours went sliding by, with the result that matters of the utmost importance were crowded off the agenda. That is one of the reasons why it has been necessary to hold an extraordinary special conference in March. I am not at all sure, however, whether this is really a matter for regret. The three items up for discussion at the special conference all merit the most sober, rational discussion, and it may well be that there will be a better atmosphere for such discussion in March, when the temptations to emotional demagoguery, which some people seem to find irresistible at the traditional December 16 conferences, may not be present.

The three items before the conference will be the revision of the A.N.C. Constitution, the Campaign Against Passes for Women, and the endorsement of the Freedom Charter. Another advantage of their being discussed in March instead of February is that it gives a further opportunity to discuss these three matters.

PASSES AND THE CHARTER

About the question of passes and that of the Charter I do not wish to write much. I do hope that the special conference is not going to

repeat previous mistakes and commit the prestige of the A.N.C. to some rigid preconceived plan of campaign against the passes. It is the task and the function of the A.N.C. to give leadership and inspiration to the people in their struggles: **not to give orders.** We make ourselves particularly ridiculous when we issue orders that the people do not (because we have not explained them, or because they are not ready) follow. Let the A.N.C. go out and explain to the women (and to the men) what passes will mean and why they must be fought. Let us organise the people. That is the sort of general tactics on which a conference can decide.

What must be done then can only be decided immediately by the leadership on the basis of reviewing from day to day all the factors in a situation which is constantly changing and developing. I believe the special conference must beware of being carried away by the strong emotions which this shocking imposition of passes upon African women inevitably arouses. Let it instruct the executive to fight the passes by every possible means. But let it not appoint some "great day" which may merely make an April Fool of the A.N.C.

THE FREEDOM CHARTER

From the day that the Congress of the People was decided on at the national conference of the A.N.C., the enemies of South African freedom have been busy trying to prevent or abort this brilliant conception of drawing up a common programme for democracy in our land.

Everything was done to smear the Congress of the People; the Special Police through its chief, General Rademeyer, told the newspapers it was a Communist plot; every effort was made to frighten the people away from it. But nobody—except a few Right-wing leaders who had at first sponsored the idea but then stood aside—took fright. The people, massively, sent their demands and their delegates in to Kliptown on June 25 and 26. At the Congress itself the delegates behaved magnificently. They refused to be intimidated. In the midst of a vast raid by thousands of armed police they adopted the Freedom Charter—a great and noble statement of the future South Africa. Congressmen throughout South Africa are proud of this great achievement which was fathered by the A.N.C., and determined to fight until the Charter is won. The first step to winning it is to make it the official programme of the A.N.C. by endorsing it at Conference: and I am sure that the timid confusions of a handful of muddled intellectuals will not prevent the Conference doing that by a great majority.

The ignorant, or malicious scribblers of such newspapers as the "World" and the "Golden City Post" have tried to make out that there is some sort of conflict or contradiction between the Charter and the so-called "Programme of Action" adopted by the 1949 Conference. That this is absolute nonsense will immediately be shown by comparing the two documents. The Freedom Charter is a statement of the people's demands. The 1949 resolution is merely a statement of intention to boycott certain colour-bar institutions, as a matter of tactics.

Whatever our views on the wisdom and effectiveness of such boycotts, in today's changed circumstances, we can and must all unite around the glorious aims of the Freedom Charter.

THE A.N.C. CONSTITUTION

For several years now, successive annual Conferences of the A.N.C. have decided that a revision of the Congress Constitution should be carried out. There has been a widespread feeling that Congress organisation has lagged behind the marked development in the strength and stature of the movement which has taken place in recent years. Hence, it is argued, we need a new constitution which will remedy our organisational weaknesses. Unfortunately, it was never made very clear exactly where the present constitution is lacking, or precisely what new organisational principles the new constitution should embody.

In general, it must be said frankly, that while every organisation should aim at perfecting its constitution, it is quite fallacious to believe that serious organisational defects, of the type which have been criticised in the executive reports to the past two annual conferences, can be eradicated through constitutional changes. **A high standard of efficiency; the raising of the level of activity and political understanding throughout the organisation; the implementation of previous resolutions and plans to build Congress branches of a new type, based upon blocks and streets; the elimination of petty personalities and small-minded provincialism; the creation of a fine spirit and discipline**—all these aims can and must be accomplished by means of thorough discussion of each problem, in all its aspects, the taking and carrying out of practical decisions in each case, on every level of leadership and membership. The conception that a national conference can legislate the necessary changes into being by means of a new constitution, however fine, is impractical idealism. A constitution defines, describes, provides a framework for an organisation; it does not fill it with the living content of work and understanding which is our outstanding need.

This is not to say that the present constitution is perfect, or that it does not need changing, or that we should not discuss changes. But we should beware of any illusions as to what can be accomplished by such changes. And we should bear in mind that a healthy discussion can only take place about the **principles** of the changes that are required. It is precisely because no such discussion has taken place that this matter keeps getting deferred from year to year, that abortive drafts keep being referred back. What's the good of appointing draftsmen to prepare documents when we have not instructed them what they are required to do? Many people may want the constitution changed. But ask them why, and what they expect of the new one. You are likely to get twenty different—and often contradictory—answers. First make up your mind, on principle, what you want. Then draft it. Until Congress adopts this procedure, it is likely to keep referring back unsatisfactory drafts to writers who themselves are not in the least to blame. Or, worse still, a conference will some day get so fed up with repeated delays of this matter that it will hurriedly adopt a constitution which may well turn out to be inferior to the present one. For, make no mistake about

it, the existing A.N.C. Constitution has many solid merits which should not be overlooked. It has served Congress well over the past ten years. It may sound odd, but one of the measures of the soundness of the A.N.C. Constitution is that so little is heard of it, and most of its critics have not even studied it themselves. It is simple and straightforward. That is why, since its adoption in 1942, the endless Constitutional wranglings that used to disfigure A.N.C. meetings have almost disappeared. It is also fundamentally democratic, a quality that has not always been present in some of the drafts presented over the past few years.

Prior to the adoption of the present Constitution, the A.N.C. bore little organisational resemblance to the Union-wide mass liberation movement, capable of leading militant struggles of the people, into which it has developed. It must not be forgotten that at the time of its foundation in 1912, the A.N.C. was little more than a loose federation of the separate organisations which had grown up in the four colonies of the Cape, the Transvaal, Natal and the Orange River Colony, in the years before Union. These organisations consisted exclusively of Chiefs and middle class and professional men, who tended to regard the Congress as a sort of Parliamentary debating society. There were no Congress branches. For them the main activity was the annual conference: it was designed to conform more or less with Parliamentary procedure. The President, having been elected, chose his "Cabinet"—consisting of "Ministers" of Justice, Land, Labour, etc. Other features of the old constitution showed the same tendency to "play at Parliament"—e.g. the offices of "Chaplain," "Speaker," etc. Again, prior to the Xuma constitution, the Provincial organisations of the A.N.C. were largely autonomous: Congress was not really a unitary organisation, and the national conference rather took on the form of "negotiations" between the "Transvaal African Congress," "Cape African Congress," etc., as the provincial bodies were then called. All these backward features were preserved in the former constitution. But the surge into the Congress movement of workers, peasants and militant African intellectuals who identified themselves with the working class, had transformed the nature of Congress itself into a mass movement, demanding full democracy. **Hence the old constitution acted as a brake on development.** It was the historic merit of the present constitution that it removed that brake and allowed the A.N.C. to develop into a popular people's organisation, based on live branches in towns and villages throughout the country.

We should think very carefully, therefore, before we decide to throw this constitution on to the scrap-heap. We must ask ourselves very soberly, "What is wrong with it?" And when we have answered that question, we must ask, further, "Cannot we put right what is wrong by means of amendments, instead of a completely new document?"

THE PROVINCIAL SYSTEM

The most radical of the proposed changes in the Congress is one which would abolish altogether the system of separate Congress organisation based on the four provinces. Let me say at once that there is a

tremendous amount that can be said in favour of such a proposal. Provincialism in the A.N.C. is and always has been a curse; and, often enough, a cover for thinly-veiled tribalism. What, it may be asked, do the divisions into Cape, Transvaal, O.F.S. and Natal mean to the African Congressman? Nothing at all: they correspond merely to past disputes between rival groups of white conquerors and colonisers, and not at all to natural administrative divisions on the basis of linguistic or geographical areas. Granted that it is efficient for branches in a large national organisation to be grouped into regional bodies, why should these bodies correspond with the present provinces? As a writer in the Eastern Cape says:

“the unitary structure of the ruling class governmental system was bound to affect the nature of the national liberatory organisation The development of the Union into a totalitarian state, in which every part of the country follows a uniform policy and practice in the oppression of the people, has called for changes in our own system.”

It is absurd, he says, to bandy about “ghosts of the past”—Transvaal, Natal, etc. at Congress national conferences, “as if the problems discussed are not those of a single Union Government and its laws.”

While much sympathy must be shown for this point of view, we should not forget that some administrative divisions must exist in any national body if it is to work properly: a national headquarters will never be able to exercise adequate control and leadership over thousands of branches scattered throughout the country. That is not centralism, but chaos. And since we must have divisions, why not maintain the traditional ones which everyone understands, rather than invent new ones? One must admit that the Cape Province, as large as all the rest put together, is a ridiculously big administrative division. Why not divide it then? Can we really defeat the **spirit** of petty provincialism and parochialism by means of a mere organisational change? Doesn't this spirit spring from political backwardness: and must it not be dealt with on a political level? These are the questions that the opponents of the provincial system have to answer.

In any case, two points are perfectly clear to me. Firstly, that it is not necessary to have a completely new constitution in order to substitute new administrative regions for the present provinces. Secondly, that it would be quite wrong suddenly to abolish the provincial basis of A.N.C. organisation without full debate of this very issue on its own merits, throughout the A.N.C.

SOME OTHER ISSUES

What other issues arise now in connection with the revision of the Constitution? Here are a few:

A number of the proposed drafts provide for inclusion of the Congress Youth and Women's Leagues as integral parts of the organisation with provision for their representation at A.N.C. conferences and on leading committees. This, in my opinion, is a grave mistake. If we want these Leagues to have any life and strength of their own, then

they must be independent bodies free of external organisational ties. Congress must exercise its leadership through its political correctness; not by constitutional rules and regulations. The proposal would merely perpetuate the unhealthy position of the A.N.C.Y.L. as a separate political grouping with its own platform, instead of becoming a mass youth organisation supporting Congress. It could easily lead to the absurd position of a young woman delegate to conference exercising three votes: from her A.N.C. branch, from her W.L. branch, and from her Y.L. branch. It seems to me that no constitution is truly democratic unless it provides for **equality** for all members. All delegates to national conference should be equally mandated. They should be elected only by Congress branches, regions or provinces.

On the same grounds I also believe that the whole of the national leadership should be elected by the national conference. No-one (and that should go for provincial presidents as well) should be ex-officio on the national executive or working committee. Anything else is undemocratic, and makes a farce of the supremacy of the national conference.

The present constitution provides for "affiliated members" of the A.N.C. In fact this clause has been a dead letter. It was clearly envisaged that the A.N.C. might develop as a federal body, but it has not done so. Instead it has taken the path of an individual membership body. I think that the federal survivals might well be removed for the sake of simplicity. And simplicity, may I point out again, is a very great merit in a Constitution, as older A.N.C. members who suffered under the old complicated and ambiguous one will agree.

Finally, there is the question of membership subscriptions. The present constitution provides for 2s. 6d. a year. Since the time when it was adopted the value of money has lessened greatly. Also, the idea of the annual subscription derives from the old concept of the annual conference as the main Congress activity, and ignores the regular branch meeting. I think that monthly subscriptions should be introduced and the amount should be decided annually at conference, not laid down in the constitution.

Now. Let the branches discuss these and similar matters. Let them submit specific amendments for the next annual conference, in December. Let them send these in at once so that they can be circulated three months before then. That is the democratic way to amend a constitution. Let us put an end to this business of appointing sub-committees to draft constitutions up in the air without any mandate from the rank and file.

It is precisely this conception of leadership from above, without proper full discussion by the members, that leads to irresponsible demagoguery at conferences, and undemocratic practices. No conference should take place in future unless all reports have been discussed throughout the country first in the branches—and in the press too for that matter. Let me point out too that the present constitution (clause 15) provides that 3 months notice of amendments must be circulated. The special conference, therefore, should discuss principles, make recommendations, and initiate a union-wide discussion of the constitution.

TRANSKEI RE-VISITED

By NELSON MANDELA

THE Transkeian Territories cover an area of more than 4,000,000 morgen of land, exclusive of trading sites and towns, with an African population of over 3,000,000. In comparison with the other so-called Native Reserves, this area is by far the largest single Reserve in the Union and also the greatest single reservoir of cheap labour in the country. According to official estimates **more than one-third of the total number of Africans employed on the Witwatersrand gold mines come from the Transkei.**

It is thus clear that this area is the greatest single support of the most vicious system of exploitation—the gold mines. The continued growth and development of gold-mining in South Africa brought about by the discovery of gold in the Orange Free State calls for more and more of this labour at a time when the Union loses about 10,000 workers a year to the Central African Federation.

This labour problem compels South African mining circles to focus their attention more and more on the Reserves in a desperate effort to coerce every adult male African to seek employment on the mines. Recruiting agents are no longer content with discussing matters with chiefs and headmen only, as they have done in days gone by. Kraals, drinking parties and initiation ceremonies are given particular attention and kraal-heads and tribesmen told that fame and fortune await them if they sign up their mine contracts. Bioscopes portraying a rosy picture of conditions on the mines are shown free of charge in the villages and rural locations.

But just in case these somewhat peaceful methods of persuasion fail to induce enough recruits, the authorities have in reserve more draconian forms of coercion. The implementation of the so-called Rehabilitation Scheme, the enforcement of taxes and the foisting of tribal rule upon the people are resorted to in order to ensure a regular inflow of labour.

TO CREATE MIGRANT LABOUR

The Rehabilitation Scheme, which is the trump card of both the mining and the farming industries in this sordid game of coercion, was first outlined by Dr. D. L. Smit, then Secretary for Native Affairs, at a Special Session of the General Council of the Ciskei held at King-williamstown on the 8th January, 1945. According to the Secretary's statement the Scheme had two important features, namely, the limitation of stock to the carrying capacity of the land and the replanning of the Reserves to enable the inhabitants to make the best possible use of the land.

The main object of replanning, the statement continued, would be to demarcate residential, arable and grazing areas in order that each portion of land should be used for the purpose to which it is best suited.

Rural villages would be established to provide suitable homes for the families of Africans regularly employed in industrial and other services and, therefore, unable to make efficient use of a normal allotment of land.

In point of fact, the real purpose of the Scheme is to increase land hunger for the masses of the peasants in the Reserves and to impoverish them. The main object is to create a huge army of migrant labourers, domiciled in rural locations in the Reserves far away from the cities. Through the implementation of the Scheme it is hoped that in course of time the inhabitants of the Reserves will be uprooted and completely severed from their land, cattle and sheep, to depend for their livelihood entirely on wage earnings.

By enclosing them in compounds at the centres of work and housing them in rural locations when they return home, it is hoped to prevent the emergence of a closely-knit, powerful, militant and articulate African industrial proletariat who might acquire the rudiments of political agitation and struggle. What is wanted by the ruling circles is a docile, spineless, unorganised and inarticulate army of workers.

Another method used to coerce African labour is the poll tax, also known as the general tax. When Cecil Rhodes introduced it in the old Cape Colony he openly and expressly declared that its main object would be to ensure cheap labour for industry, an object which has not changed since. In 1939, Parliament decided to make all African tax defaulters work for it and the then Minister of Finance expressed the view that farmers would benefit through this arrangement. The extent of this benefit is clearly revealed by reference to Statistics. According to the 1949 official Year Book for the Union, 21,381 Africans were arrested that year for general tax. Earlier John Burger had stated in "The Black Man's Burden" that something like 60,000 arrests were made each year for non-payment of this tax. **Since the Nationalist Party came to power these arrests have been intensified. In the Reserves, chiefs, headmen, mounted police and court messengers comb the countryside daily for tax defaulters and, fearing arrest, thousands of Africans are forced to trek to the mines and surrounding farms in search of work. Around the gaols in several parts of the country queues of farmers are to be observed waiting for convicts.**

REVERSION TO TRIBALISM

Much has been written already on the aims and objects of the Bantu Authorities Act and on the implications of its acceptance by the Transkeian Bunga. Here we need only reiterate that reversion to tribal rule might isolate the democratic leadership from the masses and bring about the destruction of that leadership as well as of the liberation organisations. It will also act as a delaying tactic. In course of time the wrath of the people will be directed, it is hoped, not at the oppressor but at the Bantu Authorities who will be burdened with the dirty work of manipulating the detestable Rehabilitation Scheme, the collection of taxes and the other measures which are designed to keep down the people.

It is clear, therefore, that the ruling circles attach the greatest importance to the Transkeian Territories. It is equally clear that the acceptance of tribal rule by the Bunga will henceforth be used by the Government to entice other tribal groups to accept the Act. As a matter of fact this is precisely what the chiefs were told by Government spokesmen at the Zululand and Rustenburg Indabas. **Yet by a strange paradox the Transkei is the least politically organised area in the Union.** The Transkeian Organised Bodies Association, once a powerful organisation, is for all practical purposes virtually defunct. The Cape African Teachers' Association is dominated by a group of intellectual snobs who derive their inspiration from the All-African Convention. They are completely isolated and have no influence whatsoever with the masses of the people.

Recently when the African National Congress declared for a boycott of Bantu Education and advocated the withdrawal of children from such schools, the A.A.C. fought against the withdrawal and placed itself in the ridiculous position of opposing a boycott it had pretended to preach all along. This somersault completely exposed their opportunism and bankruptcy and the volume of criticism now being directed against them has temporarily silenced even the verbal theatricals for which they are famous.

Nevertheless, it is perfectly clear that the people of the Transkei are indignant. Isolated and sporadic insurrections have occurred in certain areas directed mainly against the Rehabilitation Scheme. Chiefs and headmen have been beaten up by their tribesmen and court actions are being fought. The Chief Magistrate of the Transkei, Mr. J. J. Yates, in addressing the Bunga at Umtata on the 22nd April, 1952, referred to organised opposition to the Scheme. On page 32 of the Report of the Bunga for that year he said:

“Unfortunately, our rehabilitation work has not been free from difficulties, and I regret to say that organised opposition is being fostered by agitators in some of the districts. I wish to repeat what I said at an earlier session that the Administration is determined to carry out the Government's policy of rehabilitating the Reserves and will take whatever steps are necessary against agitators who attempt to lead their misguided followers into conflict with authority. We look to you as the real leaders to warn your people against those who seek to foster a spirit of non-co-operation.”

But in the absence of an organised peasant movement co-ordinating these isolated and sporadic outbursts the impact of this opposition will not be sharply felt by the authorities.

Once more, the problem of organisation in the countryside poses itself as one of major importance for the liberatory movement. Through the co-ordination of spontaneous and local demonstrations, and their raising to a political level, the beginnings will be found of opposition to the policy of oppressing and keeping backward the people of the Transkei. Then we can look forward to the day when the Transkei will be not a reserve of cheap labour, but a source of strength to build a free South Africa.

ON THE IDEOLOGICAL FRONT

By PHEPHENG

THE Native Affairs Department might well pat itself on the back for hitting upon the idea of "an informal publication" labelled "Bantu." Mr. C. W. Prinsloo, chief information officer, is chairman of the Editorial Committee of "Bantu," on which are also represented the Divisions of Bantu Education and Bantu Areas.

The thing is presented in magazine form changing the cover colour from month to month, so that those Africans among whom it circulates mostly should not be scared away from reading it because of an unpleasant official odour it would otherwise have in abundance.

But make no mistake about it. It is unashamed State propaganda straight from the shoulder. It has no distinctive Nationalist Party flavour about it: it represents the whole attitude of white South Africa towards the intelligence of the African—the attitude of contempt.

For instance, the June issue—No. 6—begins with an editorial on the recent decision taken by the Transkeian Bunga to disband and adopt Bantu Authorities instead. **"It is also significant,"** says the editor, **"that this decision was freely reached by the leaders of the Bantu people . . ."**

We all know the political blackmail that has driven the Bunga to take this step. If they didn't "choose" Bantu Authorities, how could the chiefs even hope to have their voice heard by the Government. Not only is the Bunga a toy provincial council which the chiefs have wearied of, but the Government was already worried that their Bantu Authorities scheme would not be uniformly applied while the Bunga existed. But we are told that the Council made a free choice!

The very next feature in this issue of "**Bantu**" makes a double fisted attack on Hertzog's Native Trust and Land Act of 1936. It has failed to provide the material and moral benefit Parliament advertised in 1936. The reason for this failure, says the writer, is due to the fact that the Trust has been administered from above—from the N.A.D. "and not from within the Bantu themselves." He goes on to sing praises to the Bantu Authorities Act as "sound constitutional organisation, which is based on the background, culture and traditions of each race." It is true, as it was in the days of Goebbels, that the propagandist must never get tired of using cliché or worn-out phrases!

One of the celebrated speeches of the deputy paramount chief of the Bantu, Mr. M. D. C. de Wet Nel, member of the Native Affairs Commission, is reported. He is selling Bantu Authorities and their local councils. Sandwiched between the paragraphs of this speech is an extract from "Die Vaderland" of April 23, which bears the caption

“Ommeswaai ten opsigte van Regering se Bantoe-beleid”—Swing over to the Government’s Bantu Policy.

Another extract—quoted from “Die Transvaler”—says the Bunga’s decision is a “triumph for the Government and the policy of apartheid” and for a system of government based on ethnic grouping.

“But I say to you: you must love your enemies . . .” This Biblical text introduces an Afrikaans feature on Dingaanstat mission station, which is in Natal. In bold type the writer says that during the unveiling of a monument to Piet Retief and his 70 followers in 1922, “who were so cruelly murdered,” a certain minister, A. J. Louw, said: “Come, let up put up a mission station here and teach the Zulus never to strike a death blow again.”

The reader is subjected here to sanctimonious sentimental twaddle about the implied breach of faith in Dingaan’s order to have the Boers killed. This, according to the writer’s reading of history, happened before a contract was to be signed ceding vast tracts of land to Piet Retief.

Under an Afrikaans headline which means: “The road which lies behind and the road ahead,” comes the speech delivered by Mr. Prinsloo, information officer, to a gathering that met recently to celebrate the centenary of Kroonstad.

In his outline of the historical events that surrounded the entry of the Voortrekkers into the Free State, Prinsloo tries to make out a case for his forefathers. According to him they came in just when the Free State Africans were in utter distress after the armies of Tshaka and Mzilikazi had “plundered and destroyed” villages. The implication is that the white man’s entry was providential. Moshoeshe, he complains, did not help Moroka, the Borolong Chief, and the Boers who joined hands to drive out Mzilikazi.

One of the things that are never given the prominence they deserve, says Prinsloo, is that the Africans in the Free State acquired education and a knowledge of the Bible from the Boers on the latter’s farms. Here we have in Prinsloo’s speech a political sermon on the Mount, in which he virtually numbers the blessings the white man brought us.

Elsewhere in this issue, the reader sees a large finger pointing at the stolid faces of tired men and women at Witzieshoek meeting. The finger is that of Verwoerd. As if he were talking to a bunch of boys and girls, he tells them that it is the duty of their chiefs and authorities to plan for the better use of the land they have before they ask for more. This is used as an introduction for a feature that preaches the message of self-help among Africans.

There is a news item headed “Untouchability in India,” which states that there are about 50 million Untouchables in India. A comment by Mr. Govind Point, the Indian Home Minister in New Delhi is quoted: “With what face can we demand equality for all peoples, races and communities if we do not sustain the principle of human dignity in our own land . . .?” The item stops at that. The object is obvious. Deliberate omission is made of the laws of India passed making discrimination against Untouchables illegal—as distinct from South African laws that **create** a class of untouchables.

There is a series of articles—"Know Africa"—running in "**Bantu.**" These articles put on the cloak of innocent objective travelogue, in which the geography and history of various parts of Africa are given. But the writer cannot resist the temptation to put in a paragraph on the Asiatic policy of Mozambique, the subject in the number under review.

"Although race does not count here," says the writer, "Portuguese Indian immigrants to Mozambique are accepted without question while British Indians cause greatest official concern. The function of these Indians as traders in remote Native areas is now-a-days often taken over by Portuguese immigrants who contribute more to the development of the country, leave their children in the country, and do not carry the earned money away when they retire. The strictest control, however, cannot prevent rich Indians from sending their money somehow to India."

One cannot end such a review without mention of contributions from Africans who are selected from the crowds that are enchanted by the music of the Pied Piper of Bantustan—Verwoerd. One sings a praise in Zulu to the Hlubi clan (Bantu culture) another says with pride that the Vendas have accepted Bantu Authorities; another asks the editor to include more news in Sepedi because "**Bantu**" contains delectable stuff.; Mr. R. Cingo, headmaster of the Kroonstad Bantu United School, urges in Bantu fashion that his people should take more to handwork and manual labour, because there are too many teachers.

An African with misplaced poetic inspiration writes verse in praise of Verwoerd as if he were a god. The substance of this is too nauseating to review here. A white agricultural officer, perhaps sick of the smell of manure, brings up the rear with a verse tune that tells a story about stock culling, in which the African "sirs" the white official to immortality—all to the purpose of selling the rehabilitation scheme.

Pick out any number of "**Bantu**" at random and you will realise the obtuse, and perhaps for that reason, efficient manner in which the Government dishes out its propaganda. The Information Office is prepared to do this by flattering chiefs and other simple-minded people, always with sickening paternal mawkishness and the superior familiarity of an old-fashioned Calvinist evangelist.

IT'S UP TO YOU

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