



# LIBERATION

ONE SHILLING

No. 18, April, 1956

THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE

OF THE A.N.C.

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Idris Cox on

NKRUMAH and the GOLD COAST



A JOURNAL OF DEMOCRATIC DISCUSSION

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*A Journal of Democratic Discussion*

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### Editorial

## WRECKERS AT WORK

**“People seem to be alarmed at the fact that there may be a so-called Right wing, Centre and Left wing in the Congress. To me it is a healthy sign in any organisation when people freely express their points of view.”**

—President A. J. Luthuli.

**I**T is always necessary to distinguish between constructive criticism of a movement, the criticism of those who wish to help it, and the attacks and criticisms of those who wish to disrupt the movement. The African National Congress, like any other serious political movement, should and we believe does welcome the first sort of criticism whether coming from its own members or from well-disposed observers, for only by coolly analysing its work and heeding useful suggestions can a movement become strong.

When, however, the police or the Native Affairs Department attack the Congress, all politically conscious people are well aware that they do not wish, by their criticism, to improve Congress but to weaken or destroy it. Similarly, all are aware that organisations of the type of the “Bantu National Congress” or the “National-Minded Bloc” are not on the side of Congress in its struggle against apartheid and inequality. On the contrary, they are on the side of the Government, and they seek to

gain the favour of the Nationalists in their fight against Congress. Knowing who such critics are and what they want, we shall be on our guard against distortion, lies and slander, for these are the weapons that are customarily used against the leaders of the people's struggle for liberation.

## *"New" Critics of Congress*

Recently, a whole chorus of critics of Congress has arisen. These critics claim to be friends, or even members of Congress. Their methods, however, as we shall see, are far from friendly. Their methods reveal their real aims.

Let us begin with the letter sent to the annual conference of the A.N.C. in December by Dr. A. B. Xuma, a former Congress President. It is rather remarkable that Dr. Xuma should have sent such a letter. Since the end of his term as President he has shown no interest in Congress at all. During all the bitter years of the Nationalists, in which the movement has gone through one hard struggle after another, in which scores of the most active and experienced leaders have been victimised by the Government, he has maintained inactivity and silence. In the Western Areas campaign, the Doctor, who is a Sophiatown landowner, maintained his own separate landowners' organisation, separate from Congress and not at all co-operative. It is doubtful whether he has attended a single A.N.C. meeting in the past five years, or whether he is even a member of the A.N.C. in good standing any more. We mention these facts not in order to belittle Dr. Xuma's past services to Congress, but in order to show how little qualified he is to comment on Congress **now**, his utter isolation from and ignorance of the movement as it is today. When he writes that he is "alarmed and distressed at certain tendencies that have developed in Congress in recent years," he is speaking not of what he knows, but of what someone else has told him.

## *The Congress Alliance*

Dr. Xuma writes that the A.N.C. has "lost its identity as a national liberation movement with a policy of its own and a distinctly African leadership." "One hears or reads," he adds, "of statements by the Congresses and hardly ever gets the statement of the A.N.C." The suggestion, obviously, is that because Congress has entered into an alliance with other organisations having similar aims, it has somehow "lost its identity." Does Dr. Xuma disapprove of the alliance with the S.A.I.C., the C.O.D., the S.A.C.P.O. and the S.A.C.T.U.? He does not say so. In fact, the beginnings of that alliance date back to the period of his own Presidency. The famous "Xuma-Dadoo Agreement" of the 'forties began that friendly association of the two Congresses which—cemented by the joint struggles of the defiance campaign and other common struggles, and reinforced by the new organisations of democratic Euro-

peans, Coloured people and trade unionists which were stimulated and inspired by those struggles—has developed into the firm comradeship of the present Congress movement. It would be strange if Dr. Xuma would now advocate the breaking up of that alliance.

Is it true that only statements from "the Congresses" are now issued, and none from the A.N.C.? Certainly not. Naturally, when it is necessary and appropriate, joint statements are issued. But the A.N.C. as such continues to issue public statements on a wide variety of subjects. In fact we doubt whether the A.N.C. has ever in its history issued more statements on all sorts of current events than during the past few years. It has its own Bulletin now, and is planning a newspaper of its own.

So, if you examine this charge of Dr. Xuma's carefully, you find that it is vague. He does not say exactly what he is criticising, or what he wants. His allegation about insufficient statements being issued is not very sound, either. He does not specify any issue on which he thinks Congress was at fault in not issuing a statement.

### *"Disintegrating into Splinters"*

Dr. Xuma's next criticism is that the movement is "disintegrating into splinters." In support of this statement, he points to the so-called "National-minded Bloc" and to the "Bantu National Congress." But surely Dr. Xuma knows that both of these organisations are insignificant, tiny groups, separate from and openly hostile to Congress? What have such pro-apartheid groups as the Bhengu-ites, sponsored by the Government, to do with the Congress? Congress is fighting a life-and-death struggle against the tyranny of apartheid. It can have no place for those who, whether for Judas-money or out of ignorance, support the Government. It is not true that Congress is "disintegrating." Dr. Xuma's statement is based on wrong information.

Dr. Xuma goes on to make a third allegation: fear of criticism and lack of internal democracy. He says: "Many who have dared to criticise the hierarchy have been expelled . . . without a democratic hearing." That is a serious charge. Who has been expelled for criticising the "hierarchy?" Who was denied a hearing? Dr. Xuma does not give a single example. When making serious charges it is better to substantiate them with facts. Otherwise you may be accused of malice and mischief-making.

We have said enough of Dr. Xuma's attack to indicate his methods. He attacks the Freedom Charter without indicating a single clause or phrase with which he disagrees. He attacks the defiance campaign, the Congress campaigns against the Western Areas scheme and the Bantu Education Act. We cannot remember any alternative policies put forward by him at any time, nor does he do so in this letter. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he is "looking for points" in order to attack the present leadership of Congress. The conference did not take his letter very seriously, and quite rightly so. It only becomes important and significant in the light of other things that are being said.

## *"The World"*

"The World" is the new name of the newspaper that was formerly known as the "Bantu World," and which was expelled from the A.N.C. conference in December. Its editor, Dr. Nhlapo, claims to be guided by the principle of "absolute truth." Since December, however, "The World" has been caught red-handed in quite a number of departures from the truth. During the months of February and March alone, it had to publish the following repudiations of its own lies:—

—A letter from Mr. J. B. Mafora, President of the O.F.S. province of the A.N.C. denying the "disgusting" report in the "World" that the Free State A.N.C. had opposed the Freedom Charter. "For the Free State, the Freedom Charter is a lead—we accepted it at the historical Congress of the People which was held at Kliptown."

—A letter from Dr. A. E. Letele, Treasurer-General of the A.N.C., refuting the "World" allegation that he had said there were things in the Xuma letter "best left for the ears of the Executive Committee alone." Wrote Dr. Letele: "One can overlook (sometimes) a misquotation of one's speech, but the appending of a downright fabrication of one's speech is malicious . . . Neither the outrageous statement quoted nor anything even resembling it was at any time made by me."

—A letter from Mr. A. Gumede, Assistant Secretary of the Natal A.N.C. "categorically denying" a statement in the 'World' "that Natal would secede from the A.N.C. if Chief Luthuli were not re-elected as President." The Natal delegation, and President Luthuli himself, were "much aggrieved and damaged" by this statement, wrote Mr. Gumede.

—A letter from Mr. A. P. Mda, refuting a statement in the "World" that he belonged to a "nationalist group" in the A.N.C. "In any event your paper appears to me to be more than just interested in factional groupings in Congress. Why?" shrewdly asks Mr. Mda.

Thus each of the excellent writers of the above letters have stuffed "The World's" lies down its own throat. But the paper did not comment on any of the letters we have quoted. It did not apologise for misinforming its readers. It did not promise not to lie any more. In this, "The World" shows contempt for its readers.

Why did "The World" publish this misinformation? Each and every one of its lies implies that there were "splits" which do not in fact exist. We can only conclude that the newspaper reports non-existent splits because it hopes thus to encourage real ones, and to discredit the A.N.C.

### *Mr. Ngubane*

We now come to Mr. Jordan K. Ngubane, who writes a weekly column entitled "African Viewpoint" in the Natal paper "Indian Opinion." It is difficult to write at all temperately about Mr. Ngubane.

His weekly outpourings show a reckless disregard not only for facts but also for the principles of journalistic ethics. He has recently announced his conversion to the Liberal Party, but it would be hard to find anything more illiberal than his methods and views—prejudices would be a better word. He surpasses Dr. Xuma and even "The World" in the irresponsibility of his allegations, the venom of his insinuations, and the obvious malice which he displays towards the A.N.C.

Here is a sample of Mr. Ngubane's technique. He wants to "prove" that Congress is "split" (his favourite theme) between the "Centre" and the "Left," and he takes as an example of the Centre the President-General of the African National Congress. We should remark here that—we are sure without permission—Mr. Ngubane constantly makes free with the name and the alleged opinions of Mr. Luthuli.

Now, Mr. Ngubane speculates that "if he got a passport and an invitation" to go to Britain, Mr. Luthuli would accept and go. Then he goes on to speculate that "the Sisulu wing" would **most probably** decline an invitation from the West." It is "**quite possible,**" he writes, that "they" would "turn down an invitation to visit India." "**I think,**" he continues, "they would go to Bucharest, Moscow and Peking." Then, in the next sentence, this extraordinary journalist goes straight on, after this series of guesses and speculations of **his own creation:**

**"That shows** how divided Congress is at the moment." (Our emphasis throughout.)

On the contrary, all it **shows** is how illogical and confused Mr. Ngubane is "at the moment"; how this new recruit to the Liberal Party mistakes his own sick fancies for real facts. Nor is this untypical of Mr. Ngubane's methods.

### *Red-Baiting*

He keeps repeating and insinuating that the African National Congress is "dominated by the Left," and moreover by unspecified persons or organisations outside Congress. In "Indian Opinion" of February 17, he wrote: "My own view is that Dr. Xuma's letter was treated with contempt because the leaders of the African National Congress and their followers are no longer the real masters of the movement."

This is an extremely grave allegation, as injurious as it is insulting to the leaders of Congress, and not least to the President, of whom Mr. Ngubane affects to be so great an admirer. What proofs, what revelations, what facts has he in support of this grave charge? Not one. It is "my view." That is all.

And he repeats it again and again. The A.N.C. he writes, in the same article, "is not controlled by the African people." It is "little more than a front serving the aim of its temporary masters." Who are then in control of the A.N.C.? Mr. Ngubane's answer will not surprise those who know the technique of the smearing red-baiter. "The direction Congress is taking will lead straight to Moscow."

Of course, we have heard this before. General Rademeyer, in spite of the fact that his special branch of the police have taken drastic steps to ban alleged Communists from the Congresses and from all political activity, last year accused the Congress of the People organisers—that is, the leaders of the Congresses—of running a “Communist plot.” Having made the allegation, he sought to produce evidence to prove it by means of constant raids and other police activities, before, during and after the Congress of the People. So far the lack of any prosecution would indicate that they failed to find any such evidence. Yet Mr. Ngubane continues to parrot these allegations—which if they were true, would in this unhappy South Africa of ours be matters not for debate in the “Indian Opinion” but for suppression by the police.

When a man starts writing in this unbalanced way, flinging around the gravest allegations without a jot or tittle of evidence, then you must know he is not out for serious discussion or constructive criticism, but purely and simply to make mischief.

### *Driving a Wedge*

Mr. Ngubane never tires of trying to drive a wedge between President Luthuli and his colleagues in the National Executive of the African National Congress, and there is no mean insinuation to which he is not prepared to stoop in these endeavours. Perhaps the lowest depths were reached in an article in the “Indian Views” of February 3, in which he wrote that the Congress leaders had deliberately sabotaged the campaign against the Western Areas removal in order to discredit the President!

“The whole campaign (against Western Areas Removal) was a cynical move to make Mr. Luthuli’s leadership of the A.N.C. look ridiculous in the eyes of the world . . . the whole thing was a Leftist trick to undermine Mr. Luthuli’s hold on the movement.”

Just think what he is saying. That the leaders of a great people’s movement like the African National Congress, of set purpose, went and caused the failure of an important campaign. That their purpose was to discredit themselves, because by so doing they would at the same time discredit their own President, whom, says Mr. Ngubane—and nobody else but Mr. Ngubane—they want to get rid of. Have you ever heard anything like it? No sane and rational person could believe such stuff: it is the raving of a mind clouded by prejudice.

Does Mr. Ngubane himself solemnly believe this fantastic rubbish? If he does, then it is a pitiful example of what anti-Communist prejudice and red-baiting can do to the mind of one who has shown himself on other occasions to be an intelligent man and an able writer. We wonder whether “Indian Opinion” imagines it is furthering the cause of Indian-African unity by giving currency to this type of baseless slander against the elected leadership of the A.N.C. And we might remind them of the words of the illustrious founder of “Indian Opinion” concerning the aims of that very paper:—



“In the very first month of **Indian Opinion**, I had realised that the sole aim of journalism should be service. The newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, so an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy.”

—M. K. Gandhi, “Autobiography” Vol. II.

## *What Are They After?*

The methods of these “new” critics of Congress preclude any sort of reasoned discussion with them at present. For they never commit themselves to criticising a single decision, statement or action on its merits. They never quote a Congress document, statement or resolution. Instead, they spread wild, airy generalisations, they invent fantastic plots and conspiracies, they make irresponsible statements.

This sort of “criticism” does not aim at honest discussion. Its real aims are clear enough. They are:

Firstly, to create disunity and dissension in the ranks of the African National Congress, and to isolate the left-wing working-class element in Congress;

Secondly, to separate the African National Congress from its allies—the Indian Congress, the Coloured People’s Organisation, the Congress of Democrats and the Congress of Trade Unions;

Thirdly, to oppose and belittle the Freedom Charter as the common programme of all these organisations.

The main weapons on which the critics rely are also very clear. They rely on African chauvinism and the spirit of racial exclusiveness. They rely on red-baiting and anti-Communist prejudice. Is it a coincidence that these are also the favourite weapons of the Nationalist Party?

We believe that these efforts at disruption will fail, and that the unity of the African National Congress and the Congress movement is more firmly based today than it has ever been.

## *The Struggle for Unity*

But that unity has only been achieved in the process of constant struggle, and it can only be maintained and strengthened by means of continued struggle against all, whether inside or outside the Congress, who seek to wreck and disrupt it.

What do we mean by Congress unity? Do we mean that a single philosophy and outlook should be imposed on the whole movement? No: as a national liberation movement there is room within the A.N.C. and its sister organisations for men and women of all shades of political and religious belief. We are in full agreement with the statesmanlike and broadminded view expressed by Congress’ President in the quotation that stands at the head of this article.

Does Congress unity imply that the A.N.C., for example, should become a political party composed of and representing a single class? No: the struggle for national emancipation brings together many classes: workers, peasants, business and professional men—despite the deep cleavages between them.

Congress unity, then, does not imply a uniform ideology, or a homogeneous class composition. But it **does** mean the subordination of differences in the common struggle. The alliance of the Congresses does not mean their merging into one, or the loss of their separate identities. But it does mean their close brotherly association against the common enemy: monstrous White domination, and for the achievement of a common programme: the grand, inspiring Freedom Charter.

The people's alliance which has grown up in our country has an extraordinarily difficult and dangerous task before it. Its adversary, the South African ruling class, is a formidable one. It is backed by and closely linked with foreign imperialism. It is armed and ready to use violence, and it will stop at nothing to retain its oppressive and unjust rule. It is ruthless, cunning and desperate. This dangerous adversary will be defeated, and the people shall govern, for the tide of history is running for freedom. But how soon that victory will be won, and how costly it will prove, will depend largely upon how speedily and effectively the Congress movement, at the head of the freedom-fighters of South Africa can accomplish their great tasks:— to rally and organise the overwhelming majority of the people, African, Indian, Coloured and European; to spread clear thinking, unity and courage among the masses; to win the people's understanding of and devotion to the common aims and aspirations emblazoned in the Charter; to inspire the masses with determination to win the Charter.

Those who seek to divide the ranks of the people, to sow discord and to spread confusion, are—whether or not they realise it—holding back the advance of freedom and helping the enemies of the people to perpetuate apartheid and minority domination. The so-called "Africanists," the Xumas and the Ngubanes, should honestly and self-critically re-examine their position in the light of the endorsement of the Freedom Charter by the African National Congress in special conference at Easter. The struggle for freedom is on. Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of the Congress—and we are sure a friendly welcome awaits all who now come forward to help, whatever their position might have been before the Easter Conference. We are sure, too, that the movement will know in what light to regard those who, despite the overwhelming majority decision at Conference, call themselves Congressmen yet continue to belittle the Charter and try to split the people's alliance.

\* \* \*

It was with much gratification that we noticed, in a recent issue of the progressive Cape journal "Isizwe," a tribute to our December editorial on Bantu Education. It proposed that the article be translated and republished in pamphlet form. We regret that our present position

makes it impossible to act upon this suggestion. But we have no objection to any progressive group translating and reprinting, with due acknowledgment, material from this magazine.

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We wish to congratulate Mr. Duma Nokwe, a frequent and valued contributor to our journal, on his recent admission to the Transvaal Bar, the first African to be so admitted.

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The Story of the Coloured Vote, and

# THE MYTH OF "CAPE LIBERALISM"

By "AUSI"

**UNLESS** its proceedings are ruled invalid, the Joint Parliamentary Session has at last destroyed the voting rights held by a section of the Cape electorate for more than a century. It is no condonation of this destruction of rights to point out that by 1956 the Coloured vote had itself dwindled to little more than a token: the shadow rather than the substance of democracy. The weight and effectiveness of the Coloured vote had, over a period of many years, both before and after Union, been steadily whittled away. In a very real sense, the death-knell of the Non-European franchise had been tolled not in 1956, but in 1909 and 1910, when the Act of Union was adopted by the Cape Parliament and endorsed by the Westminster Parliament.

**To understand the full significance of the process which culminated at this year's Joint Session, we should briefly retrace the story of the Cape franchise up to the betrayal of 1910, paying particular attention to the rather shady and sinister role played by so-called Cape Liberalism.**

It took a long time for representative institutions and self-government to come to the Cape Colony. Britain had captured the Colony, with a population of about 75,000, in 1806: thirty years after the

American War of Independence. But it was not until 1854 that the Colonists were allowed to elect representatives under a constitution: and even then what they elected was not really a law-making assembly but little more than an advisory board. Essential power was held by the British-appointed Governor. This was called "Representative Government." The next step—"Responsible Government"—was not reached until 1872, when the Cape was governed by Parliament with a Prime Minister and a Cabinet, much as we know it today, modelled after the British House of Commons.

This delay was not through want of trying by the Colonists. In 1827, 1832 and 1834 they submitted petitions asking for the right of self-government, but each time they were rebuffed by Britain, on the ground that the time was "not yet ripe." In 1836, however, an ordinance provided for the election of Municipal Boards—the forerunner of the present City and Town Councils. There was no colour bar in these regulations. As a matter of fact, a Coloured man was elected as Wardmaster in a Cape Town Ward.

One of the reasons advanced in Britain for the continual delay in granting self-government was the fear that the dominant White section would oppress the Non-Whites in the Colony. Even at that time scandalous stories of South African treatment of Non-Whites had outraged British public opinion. In 1841 the Colonists submitted a further Petition to Westminster, asking for self-government. Refusing it, on the usual grounds that the time was not ripe, the Colonial Secretary added that "representative institutions might be perverted into a means of gratifying the antipathies of a dominant caste or of promoting their own interests or progress at the expense of other and less powerful classes."

The Colonists vigorously rebutted these implications. They had developed increasingly sharp differences with the British Government and the stifling, autocratic administration of the British Governors sent to the Cape. In 1820 there had been a big influx of British settlers to the Eastern Cape, mostly people of working-class origin, impatient of despotic rule, and the emancipation of the slaves in 1836 had evoked a rebelliousness of which the angry departure of the trekkers was only one symptom. The Colonists virtuously declared that they had no intention of oppressing anyone; they were quite prepared, said their spokesmen, to accept a Constitution that would not discriminate on grounds of race or colour. Ultimately the British had to make concessions under pressure. It is very doubtful whether their long delays were really motivated by concern for the Non-Whites of the Cape as much as their desire to retain their control over the Colony for selfish imperialist reasons. But the readiness of the Cape Colonists to accept a non-discriminatory franchise removed the moral justification upon which the British had so long relied in withholding them a Constitution.

The Constitution of 1854 provided for a representative council to be elected by every man who was a British subject over the age of 21—provided that he owned a house or land worth at least £25, or earned a salary of at least £50 per year. These figures for the "income-bar" may not seem very high—but it should be remembered that money was

worth a great deal more in those days. There was no colour-bar in the voters' roll, but not many Non-Europeans were wealthy enough to earn the vote. From the beginning, the Whites were sure of a safe majority.

In 1854 there were few Africans living in the Cape Colony, and at first all the Non-White voters were Coloured men. But in his speech from the throne to the first Parliament of the Cape Colony in 1855, the Governor, Sir George Grey announced the new policy of extending the frontiers of the Colony by annexing the independent African areas on its borders—the Ciskei and Transkei. This expansionist policy not only resulted in adding large additional territories to the Colony, but it also added, between 1865 and 1894, one million African people to the Cape population.

In 1872 with the granting of Responsible Government, far more powers had come to the Cape Parliament. They used these powers, among other things, to pass harsh anti-African legislation. For example, the Masters and Servants Act of 1856, as amended in 1875, made it a criminal offence for an African to be absent from work, late, or even careless. Pass laws, location regulations and other unlovely laws of South Africa began to develop in the "liberal" Cape a hundred years ago. The fears expressed by the Colonial Secretary in 1841 seemed to be justified.

## UNITY FOR REACTION

But with the incorporation of the Transkei and Ciskei a new factor appeared to threaten the Baasskap State that was developing in the Cape—the growth of the African vote. In 1882 the African vote was only 14 per cent of the total electorate. In 1886 it was 47 per cent. Although new to the Parliamentary system, this electorate was beginning to become organised and articulate. Panic seized the Parliamentary Parties or groups of the Colony, and they decided to sink their differences in a common effort to disfranchise the Africans.

There were three such Parties or groups:— the Afrikaner Bond, of the Western Cape, led by "Onze Jan" Hofmeyr, and dominated by the big wine-farmers; the jingoistic Party of Sir Gordon Sprigg, representing the predominantly English-speaking merchants and farmers of the Port Elizabeth, East London and Grahamstown districts; and the group of independent Liberals, such as Sir James Rose-Innes, Mr. J. X. Merri-man, and Mr. J. H. Sauer, who often owed their Parliamentary seats largely to the African vote.

The first measure to reduce the African vote was the Parliamentary Registration Bill—called "Sprigg's Purge," which was supported by the Bond. It provided that a share of communal or tribal occupation of land and buildings should not entitle a man to vote. Thus 30,000 Africans—from 90 to 95 per cent of the African electorate—were removed from the voters' roll.

But even this drastic purge did not satisfy the masters of South Africa's new mining industry, its farms and commercial enterprises, greedy for a flow of cheap forced labour, and determined to break the

political power of the Africans. In July 1890, the Sprigg Ministry fell, and Cecil Rhodes, backed by the Afrikaner Bond, and by the Liberals, Rose-Innes, Sauer and Merriman, came into office as Prime Minister. Rhodes had promised to raise the qualifications of African voters. He had undertaken to make the future safe for "White South Africa"—and, one would add, for the mining investors. William Plomer mentions in his book on Rhodes how that "Empire-builder" changed his slogan on the eve of the general election. Previously he had proclaimed "Equal rights for all White men South of the Zambesi." But now, mindful of the many African and Coloured voters, he changed the slogan to one of "Equal rights for all civilised men south of the Zambesi."

In 1892, Rhodes, supported by the aforesaid Liberals, introduced the Native Franchise Act of 1892, which raised the qualification for future voters to £72, and provided that every applicant for registration as a voter should sign his name and write his address and occupation in the presence of the registering officer. Despite an outcry from Non-White voters and an appeal to the Imperial Parliament in London, the Act was passed. Its immediate effect was that in 1893 the Non-European voters decreased by 3,348 and the European voters increased by 4,536.

The Liberals satisfied their consciences by pointing out that no-one had formally been excluded from the franchise by reason of race or colour, and it was true that the restricting laws were based not on a colour bar but on an income and literacy bar. But as the poorest and least educated were, as now, the Non-Whites, the effect of raising the qualifications was to disqualify many of them. And that was the intention, too. Sir James Rose-Innes, the liberal leader, who voted for this law, said that "it contained no mention of colour, but that they who supported trusted that it would neutralise the Native votes."

## THE COMING OF UNION

The triumph of the mining and financial interests that Cecil Rhodes had accomplished in the Cape through a peaceful victory at the polls, could only be attained in the North through the force and violence involved in the Boer War. Once that victory, too, was assured there seemed to be little point in the exorbitantly wasteful and inefficient administration of four colonies each on its own. A unified administration for South Africa was needed: a single Parliament. But who was to vote for that Parliament? In the Transvaal and the O.F.S. no Non-White person would be considered for the franchise. The Royal Charter for Natal, granted in 1856, had, it is true, not excluded Non-Whites from the vote, but it had made the procedure for registration so complicated and difficult that only 3 Africans, according to Professor E. H. Brookes, ever qualified for the vote there, and in 1910 there was a total of only 186 Non-European voters.

As for the Cape, the leaders of all Parties were, as Merriman wrote to Smuts in 1908, "pledged as far as the most solemn assurances can go to maintain the rights conferred by our franchise." They solemnly promised to fight for a non-racial franchise in the proposed Union, and not to accept discrimination in the Constitution. J. W. Sauer wrote: "There

must be political equality." Edgar Walton said in 1907, "To deny to any large portion of our fellow-subjects the rights of mankind would be to imperil the very foundations of civilisation." Mr. Merriman said as late as 1908, the year before the national convention: "It is impossible to govern large masses of men unless we give them the same political rights. . ."

But though the Cape liberal leaders had thus given all these solemn pledges and undertakings that they would never consent to a Union in which the Cape policy was not fully endorsed, they all surrendered miserably and voted for the Draft Act of Union, in which the Non-Europeans of the North were condemned to a permanent state of votelessness, and the Non-White vote of the Cape diluted and drowned in an all-White Union Parliament.

When the Draft Act was published, the betrayal of the Cape delegates was immediately attacked by the Non-Europeans. The Cape liberals, however, defended the Cape delegates to the National Convention. Sir Henry de Villiers said "the position of Natives and Coloured peoples in other parts of South Africa will be greatly improved." Dr. Jameson completely changed his tune, declaring: "We who believe in (a policy of) equal rights feel it should not be forced upon the people of other colonies." Sauer, Merriman, Jameson and De Villiers voted with the majority in the Cape Parliament for endorsement of the Act of Union. They claimed that the entrenchment of the Cape Coloured vote in the Constitution by the clause requiring a two-thirds majority for its abolition represented a great victory. It was impossible, they said, that a two-thirds majority could ever be obtained for the abolition of this vote.

## **BLOT ON THE CONSTITUTION**

Among the few to stand out against the betrayal was W. P. Schreiner, a former Cape Premier, and brother of the famous Olive Schreiner. He had never claimed to be a liberal, indeed he had begun his political career rather as a conservative. But he was a deeply honest and sincere man, and as he grew older adopted an increasingly progressive attitude towards the aspirations of the Non-European peoples. He condemned the franchise clauses of the Draft Act as "a blot upon the Constitution." In prophetic words he declared that the two-thirds majority clause was a trap, and that "if only a few Cape members betrayed their trust, Native and Coloured Parliamentary rights would vanish."

Schreiner fought the Act to the end. He associated himself with the widespread protest movement of the Non-White people against the proposed Constitution. He went to England with a deputation of Non-Europeans to put the people's case against the South Africa Act before the British people and Parliament, and to call for the rejection of the Act by the imperial Parliament.

Also in England was an official delegation from the four Colonies supporting the Bill, which included the self-proclaimed "Liberals," Sauer and Merriman. Writing of the difficulties of the Non-European delegation afterwards, Schreiner wrote:

**“The big rock to the reversal of the Act by the British Parliament was its acceptance by the Cape Parliament and by the friends of the Natives, Merriman and Sauer, who say the amendment (to provide a non-racial franchise) would rock Union and do the Natives a great deal of harm.”**

The steady decline in the weight and effectiveness of the Non-European vote of the Cape since the time of Union is a fairly well-known story. The 1936 legislation robbed the Cape Africans of their right to vote on the common roll, giving them instead a communal franchise for three M.P.s, and providing for Africans in all Provinces the right to elect (indirectly) four Senators and a Native Representative Council with advisory powers only. The last body has already been abolished: the ruling Nationalist Party has already proclaimed its intention to abolish the representatives too.

The European women were enfranchised in 1930, but not the Coloured women. At one stroke this halved the proportional value of the Coloured vote.

Franchise qualifications for White men were abolished in 1931. But property and educational qualifications remained for Coloured men.

By 1953, the relative value of the Coloured franchise may be seen from the following table:—

#### **VOTERS IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1953**

			<b>White</b>	<b>Coloured</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cape	.....	.....	555,063	47,849	602,912
Transvaal	.....	.....	720,394	—	720,394
Natal	.....	.....	164,862	1,337	166,199
O.F.S.	.....	.....	137,880	—	137,880
S.W.A.	.....	.....	26,196	—	26,196
Union	.....	.....	1,604,395	49,186	1,653,581

It is this negligible minority of less than 50,000 voters, under 4 per cent of the total electorate that the Nationalist Party has gone to such enormous lengths to destroy, including the merging of the Nationalist and Afrikaner Parties, the High Court of Parliament, and the radical reformation of the Senate to secure the necessary two-thirds majority. It is not that they fear that these few voters can affect an election; there is something more in it than that. Their hatred of the Coloured vote, their obsessional determination to eradicate it, has something pathological about it; something psychotic. It is a symbol of broken promises, of wrecked faiths of the past. It is also a symbol of something else: of the free and democratic Constitution of the liberated South Africa of the future: the Constitution whose cornerstones will rest on the Freedom Charter.

In destroying the Coloured vote, the Nationalists are at the same time destroying the remnants of the Great Illusion that underlay the betrayal of 1910: **the illusion of the Liberals that unfree and unequal institutions can gradually evolve into free and equal institutions. They cannot: they can only become more unfree and unequal.** The dishonest



compromise of 1910 has led straight to Strijdom's baasskap and the fascist republic. It is plain for all to see that there can be no further compromise; a new beginning must be made on the basis of honesty and principle. The Congress movement has accepted that challenge: it has advanced the inspiring alternative of the Freedom Charter—a blueprint for a full democracy. What of our liberals of 1956? Which side are they on?

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# NKRUMAH AND THE GOLD COAST

By IDRIS COX

**D**URING recent years more has been written about the Gold Coast than any other British Colony in Africa. Last February marked the fifth anniversary of Dr. Nkrumah's striking victory in the elections of February, 1951, when the Convention People's Party won 34 out of the 38 contested seats. Nkrumah was in prison at the time, and was released as 'an act of grace' by the British Governor to enable him to take up his position as Chief Minister. In these five years, Nkrumah has maintained his leadership of the C.P.P. and is now first Prime Minister of the Gold Coast. Whatever may be the final estimation of his political record there can be no doubt that his career has been a colourful one, as may be seen from a recent biography\* written by a Gold Coast journalist.

Kwame Nkrumah was by no means the first nationalist leader in the Gold Coast. Dr. Azikiwe (now Premier in Eastern Nigeria) and Wallace Johnson (Sierra Leone) had formed the West African Youth League and were stirring the Gold Coast people into action long before Nkrumah became interested in politics. Then in 1947, Dr. Danquah launched the United Gold Coast Convention, of which Nkrumah became the General Secretary in 1948. It was not long before differences on policy arose in the leadership, and a year later Nkrumah formed the Convention People's Party.

During this period he was under heavy fire from the Colonial Office. The Watson Commission (appointed to investigate shots fired at a procession of ex-servicemen in 1948) declared that Nkrumah

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\* **Kwame Nkrumah**, by Bankole Timothy (George Allen & Unwin)

**Appears while in Britain to have had Communist affiliations . . . (and) proposes a programme which is all too familiar to those who have studied the technique of countries which have fallen the victim of Communist enslavement . . . (and) has never abandoned his aims for a Union of West African Soviet Socialist Republics . . .**

What a contrast to the present attitude of the Colonial Office! Today it presents Nkrumah as the 'model' Prime Minister. Tory and Labour leaders proclaim him as a great statesman, whose fine example should be followed in all other colonies which are 'advancing to self-government.' During those three years, 1948-51; there is no doubt that Nkrumah expressed the growing opposition of the people to imperialist domination. Upon his release from prison in 1951 he was even bold enough to declare 'I am a Marxian Socialist and an undenominational Christian,' and claimed that 'From Lenin I took ideas for the party's local organisation.' The fact that these declarations were made (even though there is no evidence of their translation into practice) was itself significant. It revealed that the great majority of the people of the Gold Coast were not afraid to give their allegiance to a leader who was accused of association with Communist ideas. After five years Nkrumah's influence weakened considerably in the 1954 elections, following attacks that he made on some of the best C.P.P. stalwarts. The most outstanding C.P.P. victory in the 1951 elections had been that of Mr. Pobee Biney, engine-driver and trade union leader, who defeated Sir Tsibu Darky IX, the most prominent pro-British chief. Mr. Pobee Biney and Mr. Anthony Woode (both pioneers of the C.P.P.) have now been expelled for daring to attend an international conference organised by the World Federation of Trade Unions. Marxist publications and journals are banned, including the **Labour Monthly** and the **Daily Worker**. Anyone suspected of Communist views is refused employment in the public service, and regulations are enforced to cancel the passports of delegates appointed to attend any international function which is held behind the 'iron curtain' erected by British and U.S. imperialism.

While all this has not strangled the progressive movement, it has encouraged the reactionary feudal elements to raise their heads higher. Criticism, and discontent with Nkrumah, has grown, though among the progressive forces this is being silenced to some extent by the pledge that 'full self-government' would be achieved in 1956. This is therefore the time to appraise the political record and achievements of the Nkrumah Government in the past five years.

There are those who find themselves incapable of presenting an objective picture of Nkrumah's life and work, and his biographer is one of them. He is presented as a brilliant student, great orator, astute politician, talented man, and superb idealist. Whatever weaknesses exist are ascribed, not to Nkrumah, but to the 'yes-men,' and the shortage of 'efficient men' in the leadership. Equally, Mr. Fenner Brockway, in a review of this book, gives a fanciful vision of great advances in education and health services under Nkrumah. Of course, there has been limited improvement. No government could exist unless these services

were raised above the disgraceful level of 1951, but there is no evidence of any basic change in economic and social conditions.

The truth is that imperialism still dominates the Gold Coast. Its economy and trade are attuned to the interests of imperialism. Wages are on a starvation level and only 6 per cent of the workers are engaged in manufacture. Though Nkrumah is the Prime Minister, the decisive powers of government are in the hands of the British Governor. The main banks, insurance firms, shipping companies, mining firms, oil firms, manufacture and import merchants are owned and controlled by British and other foreign interests. The United Africa Company alone (subsidiary of Unilever) controls one-third of the import trade and is the biggest licensed buying agent for the Cocoa Marketing Board. Daily minimum wage rates vary from 3s. for unskilled workers to 6s. for semi-skilled, and a maximum of 10s. for skilled workers—with an average of 45 to 50 hours a week. Food prices have doubled since 1948. There is no system of unemployment insurance, free medical service, or widows' and old age pensions. There is one doctor for every 22,000 of the population, and one registered dentist for every 70,000. This is in contrast to the enormous wealth which is taken out of the Gold Coast. In the nine years since the war the surplus of exports over imports totalled £150 million and is now at the rate of £44 million a year. Sterling assets of the Gold Coast in British banks are now over £160 million, and record profits are being made by the big overseas firms. The country is mainly dependent on cocoa; the high price of cocoa in the world market enables the Government to extract enormous export duties from cocoa. A serious decline in the artificial high level of cocoa prices would destroy the main prop of the Gold Coast Budget. It is not surprising that the cocoa farmers (who have to sell their cocoa at one-third the market price) should express their discontent. They represent only one factor among the several divergent streams of opposition to the Nkrumah Government, which is now being canalised by the National Liberation Movement.

The Gold Coast is made up of four main territories. These include the northern territories (mainly feudal), Ashanti (main cocoa area), Togoland (trust territory), and the Colony (in the South). The N.L.M. has its base in Ashanti and brings together discontented elements varying from cocoa farmers, feudal elements, demanding greater autonomy, and former C.P.P. leaders. This itself is a 'mixed bag,' but it is now actively co-operating with even more mixed elements, including the Northern People's Congress and the Togoland Congress. Even before the growth of this heterogeneous movement, the 1954 elections had revealed a serious decline in Nkrumah's influence. His biographer claims that only one in four of the electors voted against the C.P.P. It is a mystery where he gets these figures from. The official results show that the total poll was 716,509 (59 per cent of the registered electors). In the north the opposition vote was double that of the C.P.P. In Togoland it was slightly higher, and in Ashanti slightly lower. Only in the south did the C.P.P. win a substantial majority of votes over the opposition. It got 70 per cent of the seats due only to the unequal distribution of them.

This combined opposition of diverse political trends presents a serious challenge to the Nkrumah Government. If it succeeds there is no guarantee that it would represent a step forward—and it could mean a serious backward step. All the more reason for Nkrumah to recognise that the advance of the Gold Coast towards complete self-government depends on the extent to which the working-class and progressive elements become the vanguard of liberation. It will depend not on vain professions of being 'Marxian Socialists' but the application of Marxism to the actual struggle to make the Gold Coast free and independent.

The Convention People's Party was born in the struggle against British imperialism. When its leadership stimulated the masses in this great fight, the British Government was forced to make big concessions. When the struggle is renewed, and on a higher plane, then the Gold Coast will come into its own.

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# THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE OF THE A.N.C.

By "OBSERVER"

**T**HE special conference of the African National Congress came to an end in Johannesburg on Sunday April 1st. The 43rd Annual National Conference held at Bloemfontein last December had decided, owing to lack of time, to convene this special conference to consider the adoption of the Freedom Charter, further plans in the anti-Pass campaign and the draft constitution. The last item was referred back to the branches and will be dealt with next December.

Over 250 delegates, from all four Provinces, came to Orlando for the Conference. The number would have been even greater had the Cape Province been represented according to its full strength. That it was not so represented was due to what amounted to sabotage and should be investigated. Many delegations could ill-afford the long journey so soon after the national Conference. Yet they made the necessary sacrifice and came to Johannesburg, realising the importance of the issues to be discussed.

The significance of the Conference lies above all in the fact that it was faced with a task as deeply significant as any in the forty-three years of the existence of the A.N.C. This was the adoption of the Freedom Charter, a document of major importance, a declaration of fundamental principles, the expression of the aspirations of the people of South Africa.

The ratification of the Freedom Charter by an overwhelming majority marks a turning point in the history of the A.N.C., and a radical change to a broader outlook on national affairs. For here, in this Charter, are embodied the social changes and fundamental free-

doms which can make South Africa a happier country for all than it is today. As Mr. Mokgothi put it, "This is not a document imposed from the top." It is rather a document discussed and formulated by the people themselves, both of the towns and of the countryside; people who are landless and suffer from famine; people who grow rich foods but are kept poor by the laws of the country; people who work with their brains and their hands. It is a declaration of the desires and the beliefs of the people of South Africa, black, brown and white. It is a rallying point for all those who would like to see a better South Africa, a South Africa freed from racial discrimination and Herrenvolk ideologies.

The critics of the Freedom Charter came from the ranks of the "Africanists." They alleged that the Charter "is a document produced in Moscow." That "South Africa belongs to the Africans alone." And that the Charter has no right to declare that "South Africa belongs to all who live in it." They maintained that the Freedom Charter was a negation of Congress policy.

Quite obviously, as the Congress overwhelmingly decided, the Charter is not a negation of Congress policy. It is a development of past policies and programmes of the A.N.C. It does not only claim for Africans the right to participate in the governing councils of the country, thereby using the present institutions as a standard for their aspirations, but boldly outlines fundamental changes in the political and economic set-up which alone will enable the Africans' claims to be satisfied. It does not only criticise existing institutions and policies, but sets forth explicitly the basis for new institutions and policies on all important questions of national affairs, and the relationship of our country to the world outside. **In short, and what is most important, the Charter describes precisely what Freedom means.** From now on the word "freedom" ceases to be an expression to which various interpretations may be attached. The Freedom Charter will become a Congress testament, in which the freedom at which we aim is expressed in no uncertain terms. It stands out as a powerful instrument for cementing the bonds of unity of the various sections of the people of our country.

The Congress, by an overwhelming majority, rejected the false arguments and slanders of the "Africanists," who merely turn the vicious race theories of the master-group in this country inside out, and seek to replace the ideology of White chauvinism with an equally harmful and wrong ideology of Black chauvinism. Congress has turned its back on racialism, and its advocates within the movement.

The debate on the passes which followed a well-prepared report from the Executive, was a practical one which clearly indicated unanimous rejection of the passes and the contempt in which they are held by every one of the delegates. The point which, however, became the subject for differences of opinion was the methods and tactics to be employed by Congress to fight against this system. The ideas expressed by various speakers can be summed up as follows: On the one side we had the emotional type of speaker who stirred the delegates for "action" without analysing the nature of the problem to be solved and the type

of action to be employed. On the other hand a more realistic type of delegate came forward who readily saw the wisdom of taking into account the state of organisation and the readiness of the people to take a particular type of action, under conditions obtaining in any particular area. These considerations were carefully examined by Conference, and the realisation of flexibility in such a situation soon became a keynote in the approach to the issue. The resolution adopted by Conference reflects this approach. It was resolved "to employ different methods and tactics and all forms of mass education and organisation of the people to fight the passes in different areas under different conditions.

The characteristic features of this conference were, in the first place that a large number of enthusiastic women delegates attended and participated in the discussions. Secondly, in spite of the provocative attempts by some disruptive elements to stampede the progress of Conference, a serious effort was made by delegates to avoid the mistakes of the last conference, such as emotionalism, provincialism and unnecessary concentration on side issues. The delegates gave their undivided attention, accompanied by a high standard of discussion, to the important issues of the Conference. Despite the highly offensive tactics and provocative arguments of the "Africanists," they were given a fair hearing. They failed because their arguments were flimsy and unconvincing. Full freedom of speech was allowed.

This does not mean to say that no mistakes were committed at Conference, or that delegates were clear on every issue under discussion. Both in the conduct of the meeting and in the discussion there was room for improvement. Most important of these weaknesses was the failure of many delegates to give serious attention to the executive report. They should have gone into the causes of the failure of the branches, as reflected in the executive's statement, to submit their reports. The failure to discuss the anti-pass campaign on the basis of the document presented by the executive to the delegates was a serious failing. Much time was spent in discussing the evils of the pass laws, rather than the method of struggle against them, which would have given the delegates a better understanding of the implications of the resolution on the passes. Both the resolution and the executive report should be circulated together for thorough discussion.

Despite these imperfections, the special Conference of the African National Congress was a great achievement, marking a new high level in the development of the organisation. This Easter, 1956, Conference will go down in history as a historic milestone: the Conference that adopted the Freedom Charter.

The immediate task confronting the Congress branches is to work for greater unity and broad alliance in the campaign for the endorsement of the Freedom Charter by the masses, linking it with the great struggle against the passes, in terms of the Conference resolution:

**"We call upon the Africans in towns, villages, farms and Reserves, to organise every man and woman into the campaign against the pass laws, and to embark upon any effective political action commensurate with the state of organisation, and not to relax until the pass system has been abolished."**

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