

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE:

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE 42ND ANNUAL CONFERENCE HELD AT:

THE MALLETT HALL, QUEENSTOWN : 18TH -20TH /12/53.

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A.J. LUTHULI, ESQ; PRESIDENT-GENERAL.

SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF AFRIKA,

AFRIKA ! AFRIKA ! MAYIBUYE !

INKULULEKO NGESIKATHI SETHU ! FREEDOM IN OUR LIFETIME !

My first pleasant task is to join Mr. Speaker in welcoming you all, delegates and visitors to this Conference of the African National Congress. It is most encouraging to me, as your President-General, to know that, at a great sacrifice of your time and money, you have travelled, many of you, long distances to come to this conference impelled by nothing other than a high sense of duty and loyalty to the cause of liberating our country, the Union of South Africa from the exclusive domineering and selfish rule by whites to a true democracy where all people domiciled in the land will have full civic rights and obligations.

This annual getting - together of ours may be a most unwelcomed event among those whites who mistakenly believe that denying us opportunities for free association and free speech will stop us from fighting for our rights and so ensure white domination over us. They forget that the urge and yearning for freedom springs from a sense of DIVINE DISCONTENT and so, having a divine origin, can never be permanently humanly gagged and that, human effort to artificially gag it by means of harsh discriminatory laws and by threats must result in suspicions, strains, and tensions among individuals or groups in a nation, as, unfortunately, is the state of things in our country, the Union of South Africa.

On the other hand, our annual meeting is an event always most welcomed and eagerly awaited for, by all freedom loving people in our land and, in other countries, who truly desire the realisation of PEACE in the world and know that no true peace and progress can be secured

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and maintained in any country so long as there are others in that country denied full democratic rights and duties.

I am happy, at this point, to express, on behalf of the African National Congress, the sincerest and deepest appreciation and thankfulness to the local authority of Queenstown for consenting to our meeting in their area of jurisdiction. When the African National Congress is non persona grata in many quarters among whites, it is most reassuring to find a White civic authority that does not indulge in the dangerous and undemocratic action of attempting to muzzle people from voicing their legitimate aspirations and feelings and so becoming guilty of doing a disservice to one's country, helping to create and increase discord, suspicion, tensions and strains in human relationships in the country.

Another pleasant task of mine which I am happy to perform now, is that of thanking most sincerely, on behalf of the African National Congress, the Congress authorities and people in the Cape province, at both the provincial and local levels for consenting at very short notice to undertake, most willingly, the heavy responsibility of acting as hosts to this Conference. In this connection, a special word of thanks is due to the local Congress branch and the people of Queenstown, who, in the circumstances, must bear the brunt of providing us all hospitality.

Last year, the annual Conference of the African National Congress honoured me greatly and placed on my shoulders the heavy responsibility of leading Congress, at one of the most difficult and critical period in her history and that of the Union of South Africa. Very significant moves and changes are evident in the Union and in the world. I may refer to some of these more specially later.

I am glad to say that despite the ban imposed on some leaders of the people by the Government with the specific object of crippling the Liberatory movement of the people, we are able to carry on the work of our Congress fairly effectively. We maintained the policy of working with other National organisations accepting our objectives and programme. In this connection I must specially mention the most active and effective co-operation between us and the South African Indian Congress.

/ My deepest / -111-

My deepest appreciation and thanks go to my colleagues for their helpful and loyal support.

I must now pass on from the very necessary and pleasant duty of expressing appreciation and thanks, and, address myself to some aspects of Congress activities, views and observations.

1. SOME SIGNIFICANT TRENDS IN OUR SOUTH AFRICAN SITUATION.

We, who are vitally concerned with the emancipation of Africans in their land, should keep a keenly observant eye on events and trends in our homeland that manifest themselves from time to time in our country since prudence demands that our programme of action should take account of these trends and events. Within the compass of one address and having regard for the need for brevity, I can do no more than briefly touch upon a few illustrative instances.

DETERIORATION IN HEALTHY HUMAN RELATIONS:

Since Union, legislation discriminating most disasterously against non-whites, especially Africans, has increased in volume and severity. This has been due mainly, to the ascendancy of conservative and reactionary forces among whites. These forces, at whose vanguard must be placed the Nationalist party of Dr. Malan, became more aggressive and virulent with the coming into power of the Nationalist party in 1948.

Since this year we have witnessed an accelerated crescendo in the singing and acting of the apartheid song. All this has brought about suspicion, severe strains and tensions within and between the white groups themselves, but, even more so, between black and white. With apartheid as the dominant note in the Union of South Africa, how could it be otherwise? From the utterances of the Nationalist leaders themselves, apartheid is intended to maintain white supremacy, which, conversely, means the permanent subjugation and domination of non-whites by whites.

Apartheid laws are being enacted in great haste and impatience and, are being implemented in the same tempo and ruthlessness with studied utter disregard for human feelings and sufferings of the people affected; who happen to be voteless and, therefore, voiceless and defenceless non-whites. It is precisely because the vote is the key to the security of an individual in a state, that the African National Congress unequivocally demands full democratic rights NOW; during our lifetime and not in infinity.

THE GROUP AREAS ACT:

The basic wickedness of this Act is that it unashamedly robs people without compensation by the state of their property, often acquired at much sacrifice of hard-earned savings or by instalment, which is, in fact, a form of mortgaging one's future for that property.

We are told that the act is meant to create better and healthier relations between the races. Even if this were true, which is not the case, what a price to pay! But the tragedy is that this argument is based on a fallacy that " IN SEPERATION OF RACES IS AUTOMATIC EVIDENCE AND CONTENTEDNESS". History and general human experience have many examples that prove the contrary to be more in accordance with facts. How could non-Europeans in the Western Areas of Johannesburg, Charlestown in Natal and other areas affected by the Act be expected to be happy?

INDUSTRIAL LAWS .

The influx control laws deny the Africans the fundamental human right to sell one's labour in the most remunerative market, according to his ability and tastes. Taken together with other industrial laws of the country, these laws, with their colour-bar practice, create conditions most inimical to the interests of the African workers and make a mockery of the Union in the civilised world.

It becomes difficult to see how a country claiming to be civilised and to be Christian, could allow such discrimination to go on and, how it could give white farmers permission to build private gaols to ensure cheap labour.

THE SEPERATE AMENITIES ACT.

This Act removes from apartheid measures any sugar-coating which may have deceived some people to accept apartheid as a fair policy. The Act merely legalises the evil that was being practised. It removed the fig-leaf which concealed the nakedness of the unjust policy of apartheid and, has showed up, most convincingly, the Nationalist conception of seperation or apartheid. It revealed it as basically " seperate and unequal " and not, " seperate but equal ". In the African National Congress we stand for equality hence we find ourselves so violently opposed to apartheid.

It is for that reason, basically, that we shall continue to oppose, by all legitimate means, apartheid acts like the Bantu Education Act. To add insult to injury to embrace without protest all apartheid laws because it is alleged that they are made for our protection and convenience. In the African National Congress, we shall continue to protest most vehemently against discrimination.

THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA BECOMING A FASCIST STATE.

The non-violent Defiance Campaign against unjust laws has helped to show up most convincingly that the Union of South Africa under the Nationalist regime is fast becoming a dictatorship. The Nationalist government of Dr. Malan will go down in history, not only as a government that has made the most tyrannical laws with sweeping dictatorial powers such as we find in the Suppression of Communism Act, The Public Safety Act and the Criminal Laws Amendment Act, but also as a most ruthless government in dealing with opposition to it.. In and out of parliament it has shown the tendency to crush anyone opposing it. On the pretext of fighting Communism and the non-violent Defiance Campaign, it has banned many leaders of political and Trade Union organisations. It has deposed chiefs who have tried to oppose government measures. On behalf of the African National Congress I would like to express our sympathy to all who in any way have become victims of the ruthlessness of the Malan government in suppressing free speech, free association, due to a guilty conscience of the public wrongs it has committed against those who have sought the welfare of the Union of South Africa in ways different from their own. As President-General of the largest political organisation in the Union, I call upon all freedom loving people to regard no sacrifice too great in opposing the fascist government of Dr. Malan's before it is too late.

RISE TO POWER OF THE AFRIKANER UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE NATIONALIST PARTY.

Some of us are violently opposed to the Nationalist party led by Dr. Malan. Our opposition arises from the fact that we regard as undemocratic and un-South African, most of the political theories and practices, such as their master-race theory, their idea of regarding civilisation as the white-man's prerogative or exclusive possession, their claim to exclusive white supremacy etc; but we must not be blinded by our opposition to them, to admire them for the way they worked hard and sacrificed much to attain /

they are in.

Their success was due, inter alia, to some of these qualities, if my observation is correct: Loyalty to an idea or ideal and a singleness of purpose in working for the realisation of that idea or ideal. The ideal was: THE FOUNDING OF AN AFRIKANER NATION, and so, AFRIKANER NATIONALISM BECAME THEIR FOCAL POINT OF RALLYING THEIR PEOPLE.

We are now in a position in Union politics when we have two main opposing forces : AFRIKANER NATIONALISM and AFRICAN NATIONALISM. Some of us hope and believe that African Nationalism shall remain broader, democratic and progressive, in keeping with the declared policy of the African National Congress of seeking to establish in the Union of South Africa, a democracy which shall provide for a partnership in the Government of the Union of S.A. within the present framework of the Union.

THE GROWTH OF THE LIBERATORY MOVEMENT AMONG NON-WHITES.

It is well for us to note that the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress, whilst retaining their full identity as National Organisations in their own communities respectively are no longer isolated organisations but, together with other national liberatory movements whose object is to waken the political consciousness of the non-white and white masses and to get the present rulers in the Union to accept the non-white on the basis of equality AND, no other and extend to them full democratic rights so as to enable them to share in the government of the country.

Further, we must regard our liberatory movement in the Union as part of the liberatory movement in the whole of Africa. In this connection, I am happy to say that the African National Congress is already interesting itself in the proposition of a Pan-African Conference.

We welcome the interest taken in this matter by the Prime-Minister of the Gold Coast, Mr. Nkrumah; The President of Egypt, General Naguib and the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Nehru.

The African National Congress has played a noble role in setting into motion the liberatory movement. It can well regard itself as being the vanguard of the movement in the Union. Contrary to the criticisms of some of our critics, it was the African National Congress that took the initiative in inviting other national organisations in the Union to discuss the matter /

OF JOINTLY PROSECUTING A MILITANT PROGRAMME AGAINST THE OPPRESSIVE MEASURES BY THE PRESENT RULERS OF THE UNION.

It was in 1949 that this militant programme took shape and received the approval of the Annual Conference of the African National Congress. It is well to point out that, in this programme of action, many forms of carrying on the militant programme of action were agreed upon in principle. Non-violent Passive Defiance Campaign of great fame was only one of the forms of militancy.

SOME SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN THE UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

(1)

THE NON-VIOLENT CAMPAIGN FOR THE DEFIANCE OF UNJUST LAWS.

The non-violent campaign for the defiance of unjust laws organised and jointly launched in 1952 by the leading political organisations among the non-whites : The African National Congress, The South African Indian Congress and the Franchise Action Council, will rank as one of the most outstanding events in the political history of the Union of South Africa. Whether it is admitted or not, its effects have been profound and far-reaching. Many events have followed precipitously in its train. It accounts for the notorious short session of parliament which produced the twin anti-defiance Acts : The Public Safety Act and the Criminal Laws Amendment Act. It brought about the hurried formation of the Liberal party of South Africa.

In Church circles and Liberal circles it has brought about talks on the need to hold a Nation-wide National Conference to discuss Non-European affairs, with the Dutch-Reformed Church seeming to take a lead in the matter. The Christian Council of S.A. and the Institute of Race Relations have spoken about the matter too.

The Campaign has so sharpened the political issues in the Country as to leave no room for middle-of-the-road individuals or groups. Hence the dissension in the great Smuts' party, the United Party and also the Labour Party of S.A. Hence also the silence of some leading people in our own communities. One has to accept the justice of the claim of the Non-whites for freedom and work unreservedly and openly for its realisation or, be guilty of directly or indirectly assisting the Nationalist party in its relentless and unmitigated oppression and suppression of the Non-White peoples in their claim for free democratic rights.

In a word, the non-violent campaign has caused much heart searching among some people and much ire and violent reaction with others in all communities. Much to the discomfort of the present rulers of the Union, the search-light of the world has been focussed on the Union of S.A. more than ever before by the Campaign. Racial discrimination has become an international issue and no amount of talk about domestic jurisdiction will deceive the world regarding its true nature and effect.

WHAT ABOUT ITS EFFECT ON THE NON-WHITES AS A WHOLE ?

It is no exaggeration to say that the effect of the Campaign on the non-white peoples as a whole, especially those who took an active part in it, has been profound and beneficial. It accelerated greatly the political consciousness of the people. It gave them a new feeling of courage and confidence in themselves as a people. But, even more profound, it forcefully brought them a new awareness of the potency of UNITED AND CO-OPERATIVE ACTION among all oppressed people irrespective of colour or class. The co-operation of the Non-White groups in the political sphere has come to stay whatever lying propaganda may be made against it. Prudence on our part demands its continuation.

I must, at this point, on behalf of the African National Congress, express the deepest appreciation and thankfulness of the African people to those who, directly or indirectly assisted to make the Campaign the success it became. I must mention in particular in this regard, the nine thousand men and women who, by the indelible ink of their sacrifice and sweat in gaols all over the Union of South Africa, wrote, in the history book of humanity the protest and opposition of ten million non-whites in the Union against studied oppression by the present rulers of the land since they came into our country three hundred and one years ago.

WHAT NEXT ?

A perfect legitimate question is being asked by well-wishers and opponents alike, but, naturally, with differing motives.

The reply is that the Defiance Campaign, being one of the several forms in our programme of Action is kept in abeyance at our pleasure. But, the struggle in some form will be carried on until we do reach our goal. What is important and that to which I direct my PRESIDENTIAL CALL IS THAT :

" WE MUST KEEP UP THE SPIRIT OF DEFIANCE AND, THUS KEEP OURSELVES IN READINESS FOR ANY CALL TO SERVICE IN THE INTEREST OF OUR LIBERATORY MOVEMENT.

We can assure the world that it is our intention to keep on the non-violent plane. We would earnestly request the powers that be to make it possible for us to keep our people in this mood.

We call upon our people and all other freedom loving peoples to join our ranks in large numbers in order to give a death blow to the discriminatory laws in the Union of South Africa designed to hinder our progress and injure our human dignity.

RELATION TO OTHER POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS.

I have already indicated that the year 1952-53 saw the formation of new political parties initiated by the whites. They are the Federal Party, the Liberal Party of S.A.; and also the Congress of Democrats. Our general stand is that we are prepared to co-operate fully on the basis of equality with any National political party or organisation provided we share common objectives and common methods of achieving our ends. The co-operation would always be ON THE BASIS OF EQUALITY AND MUTUAL RESPECT FOR THE INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY OF OUR ORGANISATIONS.

I should state further that on this basis of equality and mutual respect for the identity of our respective organisations we may co-operate on specific issues with any group if we feel that it is entirely in the interests of our LIBERATORY MOVEMENT to do so. It is appropriate to state here that the Liberal Party, then still an Association, wrote us and sought understanding and co-operation on agreed specific issues. We must be on guard against members of the A.N.C. becoming members of political Parties whose objectives are different from our own. Divided allegiance would be difficult for the individual concerned. In general, we should not give respite to the Government and those who support it, by indulging in a dog-fight with other groups, provided ofcourse, those groups by word and deed do not stand on our way; but, in frankness, I must say that any African desiring an unqualified emancipation of the non-whites, must join the Liberatory movement through the African National Congress.

NOTABLE VICTORIES.

I have already referred to the success of the Defiance Campaign. I must here put on record other victories won by the democratic front.

I must record with appreciation the fact that our policy of co-operating with other groups for our emancipation has withstood the onslaught of malicious propaganda by the government and other enemies of the people. The government has been frantic in its effort not only to enact and implement new apartheid laws, but, to deprive people of the rights they already enjoyed. We are glad that so far the government has failed to legally enact the " Separate Voters' Act; I make an appeal to the Coloured community to join our liberatory movement and not be delayed by useless offers by the government of what are merely apartheid palliatives.

In its hurry to enact and implement its unjust laws, the government has not only been morally and politically wrong, but, quite often legally wrong. As a result it has lost ignominiously, many legal battles in its efforts to crush opposition to its undemocratic policy and practices. We note, with much jubilation the invalidation of the ban illegally imposed on some of our leaders; I refer to the recent decision of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court, on the Ngwevela appeal. Whether won or lost we applaud the fight behind these appeals; by this judgement the higher organs of the judiciary of the Union have once more proved themselves to be bulwarks of legal justice and guardians of the rule of law.

IN THE REST OF AFRICA AND THE WORLD.

Our interest in freedom is not confined to ourselves only. We are interested in the liberation of all oppressed people in the whole of Africa and in the world as a whole. This accounts for our taking an active part in the Pan African Conference movement. Our active interest in the extension of freedom to all people denied it makes us ally ourselves with FREEDOM FORCES IN THE WORLD. It is a matter of great concern to us that most territories in Africa are still under the grip of Imperialistic powers of Europe who maintain colonialism that keeps the inhabitants of these territories in subjection and poverty.

There are encouraging signs that the people in some of these territories are becoming politically conscious. We condemn most strongly the imperialistic powers controlling these territories for meeting the progressive move of the people by tyrannical suppression. I would cite here the indiscriminate shooting and bombing of the African people in Kenya, on the pretext of restoring law and order when, in fact, it is to maintain their imperialistic hold on Africa. The revolt is no doubt prompted by the legitimate aspirations of the African people; and so, the extension of freedom to the people of Kenya should be the reply of the British government and not, bombing and shooting. We also condemn most strongly the action of the British government in banishing the Kabaka of Uganda for supporting his people in their demand for self-government. In this condemnation we also include the continued deposition and banishment of Seretse Khama, and the high-handed manner in which the British Colonial Office deposed a constitutionally elected government of the people of British Guiana and placing the territory under the autocratic rule of the governor.

I would like here to reiterate our stand on the protectorate question namely, that we are most strongly opposed to the incorporation of the High Commission territories by the Union government. We are entirely opposed to the increase in number of people subject to the racial and discriminatory policies of the Union of S.A.; the incorporation would result in the increase when we are fighting for the liberation of Africans and other peoples in the Union.

Let me state unequivocally that we regard as an unfriendly action towards Africa, the allowing of the United States of America to establish air-bases in Africa, nor do we welcome the making of Central Africa by the British government, a war arsenal since the forced withdrawal from India and its precarious hold and maintenance of influence in the East and Middle East.

AFRICA LIKES TO ENJOY PEACE, PROSPERITY AND FREEDOM
AND WOULD LIKE TO ALLY ITSELF WITH THOSE FORCES OF
PEACE AND FREEDOM AND SO, DOES NOT LIKE TO BE MADE
A WAR ZONE IN ANY WAR THAT WAR-MONGERS MAY PLUNGE
THE WORLD IN.

In this matter of working for the liberation of colonial peoples we applaud progressive elements in Great Britain and other colonial powers that fight against the oppressive policies of their governments and champion the cause of freedom for colonial peoples.

In the world scene I must express our gratitude for the continued interest taken by the United Nations in fighting against racial discrimination practised by some of its member-nations. We note with deep appreciation the initiative taken in this matter by countries like India, under the leadership of its Prime-Minister, Mr. Nehru.

CONCLUSION.

You will agree that the masses of the African people live in abject poverty in both rural and urban areas and so many Africans find themselves landless and homeless; they find themselves suffering from hunger, malnutrition and disease. You must agree that the basic cause of this deplorable state of affairs is due, inter alia, to :-

- (1) The inadequacy and crowdedness of the land allowed them, being only about 12% (twelve percent) of the land surface of the Union, for eight million Africans as against, practically, the rest for the 2½ Million whites.
- (2) The uneconomic wages they receive.
- (3) The economic and political restrictions placed on them to make it impossible for them to exploit, each according to his ability, the resources of their God given land.

HOW WILL THESE DISABILITIES BE REMOVED.?

Certainly not as some fondly and foolishly believe that it will be by the voluntary benevolence of the white-man! These disabilities will only be removed as has happened with other people in other lands, all through the ages to our day, by the united struggle of the oppressed people themselves, to exert pressure on the rulers to grant them freedom. AND SO, I CALL UPON ALL AFRICANS WHO TRULY DESIRE TO SEE THESE DISABILITIES REMOVED, TO JOIN THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS, TO FIGHT IN THE COMRADESHIP OF OTHER OPPRESSED PEOPLE FOR THE ATTAINMENT OF FREEDOM WHICH IS THE MAIN KEY TO THE REMOVAL OF MAN - IMPOSED DISABILITIES.

AFRIKA ! MAYIBUYE !! INKULULEKO NGESIKATHI SETHU !!!

Yours in the National service;

A.J. LUTHULI:

PRESIDENT - GENERAL : A. N. C.