

Prof. Matthews or Congress ?

BY N. NOMNGANGA

YOUR editorial in the "Inkundla" of the 1st October, calling upon Prof. Matthews to resign from the NRC, is a pathetic illustration of the childishness, to which even the editor of "Inkundla" whom, I must hasten to add, I respect for the sanity of his editorials and the maturity of his judgment, can sometimes lapse. Childish, because if we look at Professor Matthews's political career and at that of the African National Congress, particularly on the boycott issue, we find the two running the same course.

While we do not wish to go over what is common knowledge, it might help us if we bark back to 1936 when the boycott was first mooted as a weapon against the Native Bills which had not become the reality that has kept Prof. Matthews and many other African leaders in the NRC a begging for crumbs at the masters' overflowing tables. At the time the boycott was dropped because "the time is not ripe yet"—a saying with which we have since become familiar whenever a sell-out against the African people was being perpetrated by the leaders. For the time will never be ripe unless we organise for and work towards the realisation of African aspirations. It was not until 1946 when the NRC adjourned *sine die*—not, mind you, because it was serving no useful purpose to the African people but because Cabinet ministers, who had known all along that the NRC was a toothless dog, simply ignored it—that it almost seemed that non-collaboration would at last become a reality. The African National

Congress took resolutions affirming its faith in the boycott

But those who thought that the African struggle had reached a turning point were due for a disappointment. Congress was only trimming its sails to the wind. When the NRC elections came round in 1948, this same Congress rescinded its boycott resolutions and sent men into the NRC on a so called "boycott" ticket—among them the illustrious Professor—in order, it was said, to keep collaborators out of the NRC. How one was to keep collaborators out of the NRC by collaborating did not worry these gentlemen! The same slogan that "the time is not ripe yet" was trotted out by Prof. Matthews himself in Port Elizabeth in January 1948 and supported by the Rev. Calata who made the revealing remark that if Congress had wanted to it would have organised the boycott. With the change of Government, the NRC was told that it is to be abolished, but not all the clamour for non-collaboration would move the gentlemen of the NRC; they sat tight and adopted a wait-and-see policy, waiting to see if the Government seriously meant taking away the toy telephone at which the NRC had been playing for so long.

And so we come to the present day, when Prof. Matthews, who has never once showed signs of changing his collaborationist colour, is elected President of the Cape Congress. (Indeed he even misrepresented non-collaboration at the Race Relations Institute Conference in January this year without apparent disapproval from Congress). It is

true that Congress has reaffirmed its belief in the boycott and in non-collaboration (mainly as a gesture to the AAC and so silence the stormy petrels within Congress itself). Significantly enough the Cape Congress had passed a resolution to this effect just before it elected Prof. Matthews its President. It seems clear that Congress does not take its resolutions in favour of non-collaboration seriously; if it did, then Prof. Matthews would not be its Cape President, nor would any of the other NRC men be in its National Working Committee. (The very fact that such people are high in its counsels is a measure of the real attitude of Congress on the issue of non-collaboration). How then does the editor of "Inkundla" expect Prof. Matthews to take a Congress resolution on non-collaboration seriously, to say nothing of the editor's impassioned appeals? It is not Prof. Matthews who must resign from the NRC, but the African National Congress. And it is to Congress that the editor must address himself. For when

Congress ceases to be a clearing house for all sorts of careerists, opportunists, collaborators and a variety of amorphous elements which now find shelter under its broad wing, when it becomes a disciplined and principled body placing the African Liberatory struggle above crumb-begging of its NRC, Bunga and advisory board adjutants and adjuncts, then will people like Professor Matthews and his like be able to find their rightful place—outside Congress, thus lessening the task of an otherwise conscientious editor."