MINUTES
OF THE
ALL AFRICAN
CONVENTION
EDITED BY
D. D. T. JABAVU
June—1936
Price 1/- By Post 1/3
LOVEDALE PRESS
PREFACE

These Minutes are the result of severe midnight toil by our Recording-Secretary (Mr. R. H. Godlo) who deserves the thanks of Africa for his loyal devotion at the peril of his health for no material reward.

The enumeration of these Minutes takes up the record from the ten resolutions registered last December as embodied in the book *Findings of the All African Convention* (see the book list at the last page).

The primary object of this publication is to enable the delegates to treat the Minutes "as read" and thus to expedite their adoption at the next meeting in December, 1937. Another object is to supply the world with information on the objectives and activities of the Convention.

Consequently we appeal to all our readers to induce as many friends as possible to order this book as well as the separate pamphlets of the Presidential Address obtainable in English, Sotho and Zulu and thus help the funds of the Convention.

D. D. T. JABAVU, Editor.

Alice, C.P.
July, 1936.

CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MINUTES</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DRAFT CONSTITUTION</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELEGATES</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORGANISATIONS</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PUBLICATIONS</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE ALL-AFRICAN CONVENTION WAS HELD IN THE COMMUNITY HALL, BLOEMFONTEIN, ON THE 29TH JUNE TO THE 2ND JULY, 1936.

Present: Prof. D. D. T. Jabavu, (in the chair), Dr. A. B. Xuma (Vice-President), Dr. J. S. Moroka (Treasurer), H. Selby-Msimang (Gen. Secretary), R. H. Godlo (Recording Secretary) and Prof. Z. K. Matthews, M.A., LL.B. (Clerk-Draughtsman) together with members of Provincial committees and 206 delegates from the various Bantu organisations in the Union. (For complete list see page 26).

(11) Opening Preliminaries.

The meeting opened with devotions and the singing of the Bantu National Anthem, after which Cr. Lionel Nathan who deputised for the Mayor heartily welcomed the delegates. In his brief remarks Mr. Nathan said he understood that certain measures recently passed by the Union Parliament would be considered and reviewed by the Convention. He drew the attention of the delegates to the fact that their deliberations would attract the attention of all shades of opinion throughout the country. He pointed out that during the past few years tremendous strides had been made towards arriving at a better understanding of inter-racial questions. He therefore hoped the discussions would be characterised by the avoidance of ill-considered decisions on these measures which had not been tried and exhorted the leaders of the Bantu races to realise their responsibilities and so regulate their words and actions as to win and not to alienate the sympathy of the powers that be.
Mr. J. R. Cooper, Manager of the Native Affairs Department of the Municipality of Bloemfontein also spoke and told the delegates of the amenities his Council was providing for its Location inhabitants.

In behalf of the Convention, Dr. Xuma thanked the speakers. In his remarks the doctor said that Mr. Nathan had asked them if they would be justified in condemning measures that had not been given a trial. In reply he assured their European friends that Africans were not irrational and whatever decisions they might pass will be dictated by deep thoughts for future generations. They were not doing anything for themselves but merely laying the foundation for those who were coming after them, and whatever they did, it was not their intention to purposely handicap the future development of their race. Although they fully realised that the measures referred to had not yet been tried, they were convinced that no race can maintain itself at the expense of another. Hence their opposition to the Native Bills. He hoped the authorities would ease their task by treating their people more liberally and thereby pave the way for moderation.

(12) Presidential Address.

After the reading of the Notice convening the meeting, the roll call and examination of credentials, Prof. Jabavu delivered his Presidential Address (See page 36). This highly educative address was well received by the Convention, and in the words of Dr. P. ka I. Seme “it was a master-piece and showed the soundness of the leadership the Convention had.” On the motion of the Rev. Z. R. Mahabane seconded by Mr. Clements Kadalie, the Convention passed the following resolution thereanent:

"This Convention places on record its sense of high appreciation of the uplifting, thought-provoking and cultured Address delivered by the President, Prof. D. D. Tengo Jabavu, before this Emergency Meeting of the All-African Convention.

The Convention expresses its deepest gratitude to the President for the painstaking trouble he has taken in preparing an Address that has given the African race a desired lead at a time of crises in the history of the race." It was further resolved that the Address be printed in book form in English, Zulu and Sesuto; such booklets to be sold at a moderate price to all African organisations.
(13) **Correspondence.**

A number of letters and telegrams of good wishes from various parts of the country were read.

(14) **Obituaries.**

Votes of condolence with the relatives of the following departed leaders were passed: Late Dr. W. B. Rubusana, late M. Pelem, late Chief Moshosho Kgantlapane, late Chief Mothibedi, late H. Madapuna, late M. T. Fredericks, late Canon D. Malgas.

(15) **Minutes.**

On the motion of Mr. Ramutla seconded by Mr. Thibedi, the minutes of the last Convention as published in the booklet entitled "The Findings of the A.A. Convention" were taken as read, and adopted.

(16) **Report of Deputation.**

The report of the deputation that interviewed the Prime Minister at the beginning of the last session of Parliament to present the resolutions of the last Convention was submitted by the President, and was gratefully received by the Convention. The following resolution relative thereto was unanimously adopted:-

"That this Convention receives the report of the deputation to the Premier with satisfaction, and realising the very complicated and difficult situation with which the deputation found itself confronted, the conference appreciates the very tactful and diplomatic manner in which the deputation performed its duties." It was further resolved, on the motion of Mrs. Bhola seconded by Miss Soga that hearty votes of thanks be sent to the Institute of Race Relations and the National Council of Women as well as other European organisations and individuals who assisted the Deputation in every possible way during the anxious days it spent in Cape Town.

(17) **Organisation.**

Several speakers took part in the discussion under this head, and on the motion of Mr. R. V. Selope Thema seconded by Mr. P. Ramutla, it was finally agreed "that the Convention approves of the principle of the establishment of this body as a permanent organisation of all the African people." The Executive Committee, after being augmented by the addition of the following names: Drs. H. Gool, P. Seme, M. Yergan, Messrs. J. R. Rathebe and L. T. Mtimkulu, was instructed to prepare a draft Constitution forthwith.

Convention adjourned at 6 p.m.

**Tuesday, June 30.**

When the Convention resumed on the above date the discussion on "Organisation" was continued and the delegates listened to an edifying address by Mr. Calvert, Kimberley, who suggested the formation of a limited liability company to be run by Africans for Africans. His scheme consisted of the floating of a syndicate to be styled "The African National Industrial and Commercial Syndicate" with a capital of at least £25,000. He commended the scheme to the Executive Committee as such a venture would help keep their money circulating within the colour and thereby counteract the Government’s "Civilized Labour" policy.

Mr. W. T. Macleod, Kimberley, who brought the greetings of the Coloured community said the non-Europeans...
were in sympathy with the Bantu in all that had happened to them during the last three months. He exhorted them to keep courage and take to mind the words of Dr. Aggrey whose words of counsel to the Africans were usually couched in the short but rich phrase: “Use what you have to get what you want.” As an example of what could be done out of their meagre earnings he gave a brief outline of the A.P.O. Building Society which now has a capital of £190,000. He also quoted the example of the progress made by Japan in a small and humble way with such small and insignificant beginnings as melting scrap iron which has raised that country into a first rate power.

The debate was continued by Messrs. Koma, Koloi, Richards, Kolokoto, Dhladhla, La Guma, Kiviet and others who all supported the opening speakers. Mr. van Rensburg who supported the scheme put forward by Mr. Calvert disclosed the interesting fact that the 10 million non-Europeans in this country spent something like £60,000,000 for food and clothing, and if they put aside at least 2½ a month they would amass a lot of money within a year. At this point enthusiasm began to run very high and the discussion on the development of trading by Africans proved the most interesting topic on the agenda of the All African Convention. An illuminative address on this subject was given by Mr. L. J. Mfeka of Western Native Township, Johannesburg. His delivery in characteristically graphic style held the delegation spell-bound for well over an hour. This enterprising African related his experience in the co-operative retail business during the last five years for the edification of his countrymen, and as one who had blazed the trail with consummate success, despite the popular belief that the Bantu were not endowed with a commercial aptitude. As if to controvert the statement made by certain delegates that co-operative societies would not be the panacea because they would always be dominated by the capitalists, Mr. Mfeka triumphantly carried the day by quoting trade figures which enabled his concern to provide permanent employment for fourteen Africans in their stores.

As manager of the Johannesburg African Trading Co-operative Co. (Regd.) in Newclare the speaker laid emphasis on the fact that African stores must succeed so long as members of the society were loyal in the patronage of their own stores. Whether competitive shops reduced prices in order to undercut the African endeavour Mr. Mfeka maintained that this artificial setback was doomed to failure.

As from July, 1931, the date of their first meeting as a society, their monthly turnover had risen to £1,200. In the course of week-days their takings averaged £30 per day, and takings on the week-end mounted to £112. Their concern started with the modest capital of £127. A dividend of 5 per cent. was paid to all members of the co-operative society on every £1 spent in the shops, thus distributing the benefits of profits made among Africans. Mr. Mfeka explained how a certain amount of profits was set aside for educational betterment, and charity to needy Bantu people. He regarded the Native Bills as a message from God which had been sent with the express object of killing racialism among the Black tribes of South Africa, for as a result thereof they would be compelled to unite as one man to fight the common enemy.

A delegate from Paarl, Mr. van Rensburg, had evolved an elaborate scheme whereby the retail tradesmen could
be instrumental in creating large factories for the manufacture and distribution of foodstuffs, clothing and soft goods.

Convention adjourned till next day.

**Wednesday, July 1.**

(18) *Draft Constitution.*

When Convention resumed deliberations at 9.30 a.m. on the above date, the Executive submitted a draft Constitution (see page 23) which was accepted pending approval by the various African organisations and final ratification by the next Convention in December, 1937.

(19) *Athlone Blind School.*

At this stage the Convention was addressed by Mr. H. Menta of the Athlone School for the Blind who is shortly going overseas to study the methods of teaching the blind.

He gave a brief history of the school which was started some nine years ago with the Rev. Mr. Blaxall as organiser. The school has now eighty-six children on the roll drawn from the Coloured and Bantu communities. An appeal is being made to all Africans for financial assistance of the school which has blind children coming from all parts of the Union. The Coloured and African blind had been excluded from the provisions of the Blind Persons Act passed by the Union Parliament in March, 1936, but the Secretary for Native Affairs had since been interviewed on the one-sidedness of the Act.

Meantime the National Council for the Blind was doing all it could for those excluded from the benefits conferred on the European Blind by that Act.

Mr. Menta was suitably thanked for this valuable information.


The African women delegates were given an opportunity of reporting on their activities among the women-folk, and Mesdames Godlo, Bhola, Lesabe, Tyamzashe and Miss Soga gave encouraging reports of the response given by the fair sex to the appeal issued by the last Convention. Others who told of difficulties in their way promised to do all in their power before the next Convention.

On the motion of Mr. R. H. Godlo seconded by Mr. S. Rajuili, it was unanimously resolved “that the women be authorised to form branches of the National Council for African Women in terms of the decision of the last Convention.”

(21) *O.F.S. Jubilations on Native Bills.*

Disapproval of the celebrations in the Free State, in connection with the passing of the Native Bills by Parliament, was expressed. The Convention adopted a resolution protesting against the proposed celebrations, which, it felt, would exacerbate feelings between Black and White.

It was resolved to communicate with the Minister of Justice (General Smuts) and draw his attention to section 29 of the Native Administration Act of 1927, the first sub-section of which reads:—

“Any person who utters any words, or does any other act or thing whatever with intent to promote any feeling of hostility between Natives and Europeans, shall be guilty of an offence and liable, on conviction, to imprisonment for a period not exceeding one year, or to a fine of £100, or to both.”

“GLOATING OVER A DOWN-TRODDEN PEOPLE.”

The following resolution, moved by the Rev. S. J.
Mvambo (Cape Town) and seconded by Mr. S. P. Akena (Cradock) was carried:—

"This All-African Convention expresses its entire disapproval of the movement afoot in the Free State and other centres to celebrate the passing by Parliament of the Native Bills by public functions and jubilations. This, in its opinion, is gloating over a downtrodden people and is not in keeping with the traditions of civilised or Christian races, and, moreover, is calculated to embitter the relations between the Black and White races of this land, thereby provoking feelings of hostility between Black and White. (Section 29 of the Native Administration Act of 1927)."

(22) European Interpreters.

As a protest against the employment of European interpreters in the lower courts of law, the following motion, sponsored by Mr. Akena (Cradock) and seconded by Mr. Kiviet (Benoni), was adopted:—

"This Convention deplores the growing tendency of appointing European interpreters for Natives in the lower courts, resulting in many cases, in gross miscarriage of justice through indifferent interpretation, especially as there are many Natives qualified for such posts."

Further it was resolved that copies of these resolutions be forwarded to the Rt. Hon. the Minister of Justice for consideration and action.

(23) Economic Upliftment.

Resuming the debate on organisation and the economic uplift of Africans, Mr. Jafta of Qumbu gave a brief sketch of the activities of the Farmers Co-Operative societies in his area which started with a small capital of £70 in 1923 and has now a reserve fund of £3750. Messrs. C. D. Zulu, Gomas, Mapikela and S. Rajuili also made valuable contributions to the debate, after which the Convention passed the following resolution:—

"This Convention approves of the Industrial and Commercial Scheme as drawn up by the Committee appointed by the Non-European Conference held at Port Elizabeth in January, 1934. It further empowers and instructs the Executive to collaborate and work in conjunction with the said Non-European Committee with a view to bringing into immediate operation the aforesaid scheme."

(24) Programme of Action.

After a full dress debate on the Programme of Action, the Convention passed the following set of resolutions submitted by the Executive Committee:

1. This Convention of African chiefs and other leaders desires to record its profound disappointment with the Government in its enactment of the Representation of Natives Act and the Native Trust and Land Act without due regard to the views of the African people as expressed both in the regional conferences held by the Government ostensibly for the purpose of consultation and in the resolutions of the All-African Convention presented by a deputation to the Prime Minister at the beginning of the recently concluded session of the Union Parliament.

2. In brief the objects of the Native Trust and Land Act is presumably to improve the economic position of the African people. We believe, on the contrary, that the result of the application of this Act, in so far as it will drive large numbers of Africans now on European farms and in urban areas into the already congested Native Reserves and into the meagre released areas set aside for, and already largely in Native occupation, will accentuate