(a) Segregation and colour bars must go; alternatively we want a separate State of our own where we shall rule ourselves free from the present hypocritical position.

(b) Economic repression must go. We can do that partially ourselves; for if we but knew our power we could hold up the industries that depend on our labour in one day and secure terms approximating fairplay. We are not so powerless as we often imagine ourselves to be.

(c) Selfishness must go. In our primitive African tradition we used to smell out and destroy all abnormally acquisitive individuals as a danger to society. By this crude method we guaranteed all men a chance to have food, shelter and clothing without prejudice. This is a lesson we Africans can teach Christendom, for Christendom still needs a change of heart from selfishness.

The supreme task of this Convention is to protect the interest of Africans not only in the Union but in all Africa. It is our duty to protect our fellow Africans in the Protectorates against being forced into the Union of South Africa contrary to their wish, until the policy of the Union is changed and made more liberal than it is at present. One eminent European press writer in this country last February flattered us in the following words:—“This All African Convention is to-day to the Natives of the Union what the India Congress is to the people of India. It is recognised by the Parliament of this country as the mouthpiece of the Natives of South Africa, and any resolution which it takes on Native questions will carry great weight not only with the Black peoples of the whole of Africa, but also with the Government and Parliament in Great Britain.”

That is the outcome of unity and unified organisation which we must jealously guard against losing. In order to retain this unity, we, leaders, must avoid mental stagnation. Our minds should be kept refreshed by the breezes of fresh knowledge gotten from the vast available literature concerning what other leaders in the rest of civilisation are doing in facing problems similar to ours.

For example, a stirring Presidential Address was delivered last April in Lucknow by Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru, head of the All India Congress, a perusal of which (in its full version) gives much food for thought. In the course of that address he indicated that the efficiency of Congress organisation means little if it has no strength behind it, “and strength, for us, can only come from the masses.” He emphasised the fact that the vital section of the Indian population was that of labour and the peasantry, and that the leaders must protect these classes from suppression and exploitation; for the most important question was appalling poverty, unemployment and indebtedness. Hence the need for closer contact with the masses.

These exhortations are applicable to us. Whatever we do or decide upon, we must not lose touch with our backveld masses. The time is ripe for us leaders to reconstruct and rehabilitate all our mass organisations to fight starvation, poverty and debt.

Says Nehru, “Let us not indulge in tall talk before we are ready for big action.” I think this wise advice is worth following.

Once we emancipate our people from the servitude of poverty we shall be able to accomplish great deeds. The stumbling blocks placed in our path are for us to remove. If we do not work hard to remove them we shall get only what we deserve to get. If we succeed in removing them
we shall be in a position to render to the world the contribution due from Africa.

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