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PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
FIRST NATIONAL STUDENTS CONGRESS - AZASM
HELD AT LAY ECUMENICAL CENTRE - PIETERMARITZBURG

COMRADES, I extend my revolutionary greetings to you all, at these times of Political confusion and economic upheaval. Still, harder and more challenges lie ahead. I cannot say in stronger words, that we are gathered here on the occasion of the first National Students Congress of AZASM, at the time when the forces of destruction, nichodi seeking to destroy our very life core, are unleashed against us. We gathered at a time where the blows that we suffer in the hands of the white minority ruling class, are as severe as the ones that are visited us by the detractors of BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS, who masquerade as progressives together with their fellow-travellers. What has, however, sustained us up to this day and shall continue to until AZANIA prevails, has been the great responsibility, tempered with iron tenacity and unwavering resolve, that we have taken on our shoulders - to liberate the massess.

The liberation struggle has entered into one of the most confusing and hard times indeed. Amophorism is on the increase and multi-racialists (parading as non-racialists) are not idle. It is a matter of great concern, how many of us present here today, are 'Squattering' in the movement only waiting for another golden chance to rise against B.C. Many have started and many more are still to join in the claim that they have outgrown the revolution that one never really participated in and whose goals have not been attained is a question still to be answered. On the other hand, the capitalist press play its role and the forces of imperialism, more than ever before, are at work obstructing our progress.

In student circles, anger is taking shape and finding expression. The boycotts of classes that characterized the beginning of this academic year and indeed the rest of the year is threatened with these boycotts and other forms of protest by the student community. The seeds of discontent as constantly being sown by the intransigence that the racist S.A. government, through its agency - the DET - are likely to mushroom all over the country and another 1976 is imminent.

However, the Black student has come to grips with reality and realized that gone are the days when students were regarded as spectators and passengers in the liberation movement - living in a world detached from realities and discussing issues affecting humanity in a cold clinical manner. He has now realized he should and must belong to the broader community and he should, perforce, be affected by the issues of the day.

In fact, a simbiotic relationship that should exist between students and the Black workers, who are the vanguard of the liberation struggle, can never be over-emphasised. Workers and students are inseparable in their common and aggregate experiences. They are both victims of racial oppression and exploitation under the system of racism and capitalism.

Later during this Congress, when the amended version of the Constitution shall be tabled for your ratification, you will realize that 'BLACK STUDENT WORKER ALLIANCE' has been substituted for 'BLACK STUDENT-WORKER SOLIDARITY' just to re-emphasize that, as Black students we are not just an entity living in cloud nine, but part of a whole.

This means that as students, ^{we} have an historical mandate to interact with the working people in their quest for freedom. The revolutionary task of students, therefore, is to give cohesion to ideas and aspirations of the workers. However, in doing this it must be ensured that no reactionary tendencies are brought in and students (the radical sections of the middle class and the revolutionary intelligensia) realize that this is done to help remove the obstacles in the way of the workers that impede a speedy assumption of the rightful leadership of the struggle by the workers, thereby guaranteeing the success of the revolution.

For us as Black students, the access to power, prestige and prosperity is illusory. True academic and career success is not on the agenda, even after the demise of Apartheid, if such comes of its own without any fundamental changes brought about by ourselves.

As I have already stated, Imperialism, which is Capitalism at the stage where it operates internationally, is cohesive. Therefore, we need to and our own cohesion to counter and eradicate it. The process, whereby this could be achieved is that of struggle. To forge ahead, though, we will find that there are no individual solutions.

As Black students, we emerge from a community where people are bound up by extended family ties. One is expected to take responsibility and from expect support from one's simblings, uncles, aunts, cousins and often friends and neighbours. On the other hand Capitalism orients one to assimilate into its dog-eats-dog ethic. Acceptance of these norms is even more alienating for the Black student. Perhaps this explains the atmosphere of hostilities between the recipients of services at places such as hospitals and personel offices and the staff who often exhibit arrogant and abusive attitudes towards other Black people. All this results from the fact that

the atmosphere in which we as students learn, is a one dominated by these values. As revolutionaries, however, we should be able to exercise our ability to take decisions both about our lives and the environment that we find ourselves in as Black students in Capitalist education and bring revolutionary transformation to both.

Another basis for cleansing ourselves of the midn of pollution from the system of racism and Capitalism would be retaining the perspective that no matter our academic standing, we come from a struggling community both in the sense of being economically deprived and in the sense of being involve in the struggle to assert our right to live decently in our own land, and to control its resources.

The raw materials from which this country's wealth evolves, comes out of our land. The labour which converts them into finished products is the sweat and blood of our mothers and fathers. The capital which the multi-nationals use to exploit the resources of our motherland is the undistributed wages of our parents and forebears. Furthermore, it is a result of the plunder and enslavement of the Black people throughout the world. Once we realize this we must see that the people we owe everything to, for our education and acces to better living are the Black toiling masses of AZANIA. It is imperative for Black students cast off any acquired or cultivated superiority complexes in relation to Black workers.

At the same time, students have to bear in mind the following factors that could mitate against the aspirations of the Black working class:

1. The ideas that students acquire and assimilate at the institutions of learning are those of the ruling class, whose purpose is to promote the system of racism and capitalism;
2. The educational system does not relate to the experiences of the broad oppressed and exploited masses of our country;
3. The education given to the Black youth is geared at assimilating in an already established order, which has specific norms and values contrary to those of the struggling masses, and
4. The education does not prepare the Black student to play any meaningful role in the creation of a new and just order.

Therefore, the skills and education we acquire need to be re-contextualized in order for it to be relevant to student-worker activity.

As students in secondary and tertiary levels of education, we also have to counter the effects of isolation in institutions where all learning is from books and where opportunities for collective effort are limited. We must find means to interact with the Black working class, to tap their vast experience. This will break the grip idea that the guidance emanates from the few so-called intellectuals or academics, who have been successfully groomed by the capitalists. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The insights of the Black people into the ravages of the system on their lives and the multitude of struggles that they have waged and continue to wage, makes them a rich repository of knowledge. By working closely with the masses in community and labour projects and in the struggle for liberation, we could learn from them and benefit mutually from such interaction. With that level of co-operation more grounds for elitism, which we as students are aspiring to, will go out of the window. In other words, we as Black students must commit class suicide and work along with the Black working class, before our AZASM's much espoused 'Black student-worker solidarity' can be realized.

For this Congress and the year, we have decided on "SHAPING OUR OWN DESTINY" as our theme. A call is, therefore, being made once more, to the masses that they are their OWN liberators. That the pace of the liberation struggle shall be set, not by the oppressors, but by the oppressed themselves. This call sounds even louder today, in spite of the attacks and labellings on us by the apologists of the ruling class that Black Consciousness is racism in reverse. In spite of and not because of these frustrated accusations, I urge you to recommit yourselves to the liberation struggle and hope you will come out of this Congress more convicted than ever before to the philosophy of the Black people viz. BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS. Let us have no illusion and let us make no mistake that there can ever be any rest for Black students and workers until such time that we are the holders and directors of our own destiny.

Finally, it would be well to state that it may be essential, however, in the process of advancing our aspirations at liberating and demystifying education to closely examine alternative educational systems, that is not only for a content that is more relevant to the practical means of the working class, but also for the methods that encourage assertiveness, collective responsibility and co-operation.

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