

the case for a south african democracy

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THE THREATENED PEOPLE

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THE THREATENED PEOPLE



THE CASE FOR A
SOUTH AFRICAN DEMOCRACY



1953

South African Congress of Democrats, Johannesburg

“Why should you fear the exercise of the franchise? This is a delicate question but it must be touched upon. I do not hesitate to say that I would rather meet the Hottentot at the hustings voting for his representative than meet him in the wilds with his gun on his shoulder. Is it not better to disarm them by granting them the privileges of the Constitution? If you now blast all their hopes and tell them that they shall not fight their battles constitutionally, do you not yourselves apply to them the stimulus to fight their battles unconstitutionally?”

William Porter, Cape Colony Legislative Council, March 9, 1852.

**A pamphlet of the South African Congress of Democrats,
P.O. Box 4088, Johannesburg.**

THE NATIONALIST ASSAULT ON DEMOCRACY

“When you have succeeded in dehumanising the Negro, when you have put him down and made it impossible for him to be but as the beasts of the field; when you have extinguished his soul in this world and placed him where the ray of hope is blown out as in the darkness of the damned, are you quite sure that the demon you have roused will not turn and rend you?

If you make yourselves familiar with the chains of bondage you prepare your own limbs to wear them. Accustom yourselves to trample out rights of others and you have lost the genius of your own independence and become the fit subjects of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you”

Abraham Lincoln, Illinois, 1858.

1858 in the Southern States — South Africa in 1954.

We in South Africa have accustomed ourselves to the trampling out of the rights of others.

We have succeeded in dehumanising the Negro and in making ourselves familiar with the chains of bondage. Never have we been more familiar with them than since May 1948 when the Nationalist Government was returned to power.

We have seen mounting attacks on the Rule of Law and the rights of the courts; attacks on the freedoms of association and speech and on the rights of trade unions; attacks on civil liberties, with the aim of stilling criticism from those outspokenly opposed to the Nationalist Government.

The Nationalists withdraw and refuse passports; they forbid marriages; enter homes without warrants; decide where people shall live; in which schools their children shall be educated, what language they shall be taught; who shall have the right to assemble at public gatherings; to which organisations people may belong; which publications they may read.

The first and heaviest blows of the Nationalist attack on civil liberties have fallen on the Non-European people. Even greater restrictions have been placed on their freedom of movement. Meetings of more than ten Africans in Native areas are outlawed by proclamation; scores of Non-European leaders have been banned from attending public gatherings or leaving their home districts; trade union rights are outlawed; strikes are banned and punishable with savage sentences; the right of Non-Europeans to own fixed property is being attacked under the Group Areas Act and long-established communities are threatened with uprooting and removal to far-flung isolated areas.

A BILL TO MEET

Europeans have managed to shrug off these Government actions as confined to the Non-Europeans and of little concern to them. They can no longer afford to do so.

The despotic trend revealed by these measures holds out ominous signs for the future of civil liberties for all.

The very measures passed by the Government to "control" Non-Europeans and "keep them in their place" are erecting the bars behind which Europeans too are being confined.

The Suppression of Communism Act, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the Public Safety Act, have no special application to Non-Europeans only.

The Government has forbidding powers under these measures: powers to suspend the country's laws (with the exception of those relating to military conscription, parliamentary elections and the Industrial Conciliation Act); powers to suspend the courts, and power to govern by emergency regulation.

WIDE POWERS

The Government may clearly by proclamation set up concentration or detention camps. It can deny people access to the courts

of law, suppress newspapers, confiscate property, take reprisal measures against whole communities, close down schools and churches.

WRITING ON THE WALL

Through the Suppression of Communism Act, passed in 1950, with its powers to ban organisations, proscribe individuals, search homes and close down newspapers the Government is dismembering the democratic opposition, starting with the Communists but certainly not ending there. The Public Safety Act presages rule by Cabinet dictate, a new form of parliamentary fascism; and its twin measure, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, provides the trappings for the new barbarism, floggings for men and women who break laws as a protest against legislation or in defence of their rights or in order to improve their conditions. The viciousness of the sentences laid down in this act, the powers to ban exiles, to confiscate an offender's property if his fine is not paid in 48 hours, to interfere with the mails of individuals and organisations — all these are unprecedented signs of the growth of an indigenous South African despotism.

All these infringe the most precious liberties of the European population no less than the Non-European.

Not only does the Government have the most sweeping powers to crush any opposition that it views as too vigorous or dangerous: it uses them ruthlessly. Since May 1948, all who challenge Nationalist policies have come to be classed as un-national and un-South African.

“When we have the Republic the say of the inimical and un-national elements in our national affairs must be obliterated.”

Dr. Malan, 1941.

Those who voted against the Nationalists in the 1948 and 1953 elections are unnational elements. Outspoken critics of Nationalist legislation are unnational. Unnational elements are unpatriotic. How long before they are classed as dangerous and denied the vote under a new Republican Constitution?

But supposing even that the Europeans of South Africa could retain their personal freedoms in a country where 10 out of 12 million people are ruled by proclamation, emergency decree and

Native Affairs Department edicts, for how long can a minority of Europeans continue to live peacefully and in security?

THE YOKE GROWS HEAVY

The conditions of Non-Europeans are deteriorating steadily and yet they are denied any right to redress their grievances. The burden of apartheid laws lies heavily on them to-day, heavier because of the knowledge that they face no prospect of its lightening. The Nationalist pattern for their future is clear and unequivocal:

“It should be understood clearly that the Government will under no circumstances entertain the idea of giving administrative or executive or legislative powers over Europeans, or within a European community, to Bantu men and women, or to other smaller Non-European groups. The Government therefore has no intention of repealing the long-existing laws differentiating between European and Bantu”

Dr. Malan—in a letter to the African National Congress.—January 1952.

The Non-Europeans cannot be expected to believe that they are congenitally unfit to vote, to accept the myth of their own inferiority, and to acquiesce in their permanent subjugation. The breakdown of colour bars and the extension of liberty throughout the world, contrasting with their own wretched conditions, impels the Non-Europeans of South Africa to demand radical changes.

THE CHOICE BEFORE SOUTH AFRICANS

The Nationalists are meeting these demands with added repression, breeding only greater discontent and mounting race tension. The threat of open conflict hangs over all who live in South Africa. The rising tide of Non-European demands cannot be stemmed for long.

HOW STOP LIFE?

Rapid industrialisation brings men from the countryside into the factories, produces goods which the majority need but are unable to buy, sets up demands for higher wages, leads to the

formation of trade unions and the formulation of political demands to achieve those standards which are the hallmark of a modern civilisation.

The process is taking place throughout South Africa and Asia. How try to stop in South Africa a process so inevitable everywhere else?

South Africa has herself set in motion those very forces which assail that system of colour supremacy and cause its restrictive colour barriers to crumble.

No banning of publications or censorship of the press can prevent the echoes of what is happening in other parts of the world, and on the African continent, from reaching South Africa and its Non-European people. No fantastically elaborate schemes for apartheid states, or checker-board patterns for different communities to exist separately can turn back the economic and social forces which go to make up the South Africa of to-day.

“The choice for the Whites, then, is no longer simply between the two roads which lead to freedom or to bondage for the Africans. The choice is now differently framed. It becomes one of waging bitter and perhaps bloody struggles as the Africans step by step assert their rights — or of conforming intelligently to the needs of those social and economic forces which white civilisation has itself forced into motion. Once again in contrast with the past, the first of these two roads can no longer be chosen with any hope of prolonged success.”

Basil Davidson: "Report on Southern Africa."

This is the choice we South Africans have to make. We can recognise that the Non-European people have legitimate grievances; we can see the dangers of a policy which goads them to deeper frustration, bitterness and revolt. We can cast aside the outworn prejudice that only Whites are born fit to govern themselves, and that Blacks are equipped only to occupy a permanent state of servitude. We can make a new start by recognising that democracy is not divisible, that a new road to race co-operation is the only guarantee of democratic rights and security for every South African.

LIKE KENYA?

Or we can persist in a belief that we can barricade ourselves

within a bastion of white supremacy. We can ignore the tide of events everywhere in the world where the underprivileged and the backward are advancing towards the acquisition of universally recognised human rights. We can await the prospect of South Africa having to "shoot the issue out" as in Kenya.

The day has passed when a thinking South African could believe that White Supremacy would endure for ever, or even last for another fifty years, long enough for our own lifetime.

The issues have now presented themselves for our decision—can a limited democracy survive?—can open conflict be averted?

These are the issues which loom above all else, these are the issues which overlie the post-election searchings of the democrat, and the question of why the Nationalists won.

CAN THE NATIONALISTS BE DEFEATED AT THE POLLS?

Among hundreds of thousands of anti-Nationalists there is an earnest and determined wish to defeat this Government because the future under the Nationalists will bring only greater excesses and the death of all democratic procedures.

Everywhere vital questions are being debated.

Which opposition party should the democrat join? Should the United Party be abandoned in favour of the new Liberal Party? Can the Nationalists be defeated at the Polls in 1958? What is the meaning of the United Party split?

To answer these questions it is necessary to examine in fair detail how the Nationalists have entrenched themselves and how the existing opposition groups measure up to the task of fighting the Nationalists.

UNDER-MINING PARLIAMENT

All the European opposition parties of this country are committed to parliamentary methods to defeat the Nationalists. But the five years of Nationalist rule since 1948 have shown this Government no respecter of the constitution or of the powers and rights of Parliament. The Government is no advocate of the democratic system, and has said so on more than one occasion. The Nationalist Party since its accession to power in 1948 has steadily white-anted

parliamentary democracy; and manipulated the electoral machinery to give the Government the supreme advantage.

South-West African voters have been given twice the voting power of South Africans and disproportionate representation in the Union Parliament so as to swell the Nationalist majority. The Citizenship Act has forced British immigrants to wait five instead of two years for the vote and made their registration as voters dependent on the will of the Minister of the Interior. The limited voting rights of the Indian people were abolished in the year the Nationalists were returned to power.

ENSURING A MAJORITY

The attempt to rob the Coloured people in the Cape of their vote by stampeding the Separate Representation of Voters' Bill through Parliament in defiance of the constitutional requirement of a two-thirds majority vote, then by the ludicrous High Court of Parliament Bill and now by the open haggling for renegade opposition support is one of the shabbiest chapters in the shabby history of the Non-White franchise in South Africa.

In Parliament itself the Government has called into use the guillotine to cut short debate, and it has steam-rolled through unpopular measures with the minimum of delay and protest.

The growing success of Nationalist manoeuvres to ensure parliamentary supremacy was seen in the 1953 elections when the results of a carefully planned delimitation scheme of re-sorting constituencies and weighting the rural against the urban vote returned a Nationalist majority of 94 representing just over 643,000 as compared with 62 Opposition members representing over 775,000. (The Native Representatives are excepted.)

The Nationalists have relentlessly used every means to press home their control and increase their majority. Further rigging of electoral machinery; the expulsion of the Native representatives to follow Kahn and Bunting, the postponement or suspension of elections in the face of some decreed "National-emergency"—all these developments are possible under the Nationalists.

EIN VOLK—EIN VOLKSWIL

The Government's fury at the rulings of the courts that the Constitution was being infringed found expression in threats by

Cabinet Ministers, among others, that the courts would one day no longer be allowed to dominate and dictate to the "Volkswil": that mystical pseudonym for the will of Nationalist voters. At a public meeting in Ferndale on March 23rd, 1953, Dr. Donges said the Government would be forced to "pack" the Supreme Court with its own supporters if the Appeal Court continued to "stand in the way of the will of the representatives of the people." Steps to control the judiciary have already been mooted.

By a series of adroit manoeuvres to increase their parliamentary majority and weaken the Opposition, and supercede its decisions, the Nationalists have reduced Parliament to the status of a machine to endorse Nationalist Party decisions. The defence of democracy must be conducted outside Parliament.

Despite this patent fact, the Opposition has become more and more faltering in its efforts to counter Nationalist legislation. It has remained with its eyes fixed on Parliament alone as the only possible arena in which political change can be brought about. It has ignored the great potential forces for progress and democracy that could be mobilised outside of Parliament from among the voters and from the disfranchised, all determined to halt the Nationalist assault on their rights.

THE RECORD OF THE PARLIAMENTARY OPPOSITION THE UNITED PARTY

A good measure of the frustration of the European anti-Nationalist to-day can be attributed to the United Party's steady history of compromise on key issues, which is now leading to the party's own disintegration and decline as a political force.

Throughout its years in opposition, the United Party, far from pursuing a vigorous, principled, anti-Nationalist policy, has made persistent attempts to out-Nazi the Nats. It has tried to compete with Nationalist appeals to the most backward and reactionary elements in the country; and has advanced not its democratic principles, but a United Party version of Nationalist plans.

To apartheid cries of the Nationalists, the United Party has retorted, not that apartheid is un-Christian, immoral, unrealistic

and the wrong policy for communities seeking to co-exist in harmony, but that apartheid is really segregation by a new name, and that the United Party must have the credit for having conceived the segregation system.

On the eve of the election when Nationalist attempts to impose railway apartheid were upset by the Supreme Court the United Party seized on this judgment not as another sign of the lawlessness and lack of scruple of the Nationalists, but to urge the voters to return the United Party to power so that it could perfect the apartheid laws.

With the introduction by the Government of the Reservation of Separate Amenities Bill, the United Party was placed in the position where it could hardly oppose the principles of this measure.

ELECTION COMPROMISE

On countless issues the apparent conflict between the Nationalists and the United Party has grown more and more superficial.

The tragic end results of this policy of compromise were demonstrated in the pre-election parliamentary session when the United Party did not fight the principles of the Public Safety and Criminal Law Amendment Bills, but accepted the Nationalist pattern for the imposition of fascism by constitutional means. For this betrayal of the hopes of all democrats the United Party offered the ludicrous justification that theirs was a technique to divest the Nationalists of any election advantage on these measures. The Nationalists, ran this argument, would not be able to go to the country with the story that the United Party was opposing stern measures to deal with "lawlessness". The grim import of these measures was waved aside in the interests of election tactics.

MALAN SETS THE PACE

"Keep the black man in his place", "White supremacy", "White leadership", "Apartheid" and "Segregation"—terms used variously by the United Party and the Nationalists—are rapidly becoming inter-changeable terms. If apartheid really is the United Party's traditional policy of segregation, what quarrel can the U.P. have with the Nationalists? Malan's eve-of-the-election broadcast put the issue of the election as South Africa's last chance as a White man's country and the United Party accepted the formulation and fought the election on a policy at times barely distinguishable from that of the Nationalists.

the United Party its principles as well as the elections. It could have left the party with a following confident of its correct policy, poised for the next battle to defeat the Nationalists.

The opportunism of the United Party has inevitably led to a split within its ranks. Weakening to Nationalist overtures, its right-wing rebels have advocated an agreement on the Coloured franchise and have used internal Party disagreements to try to provoke inner dissension. The Nationalist bargain has thus far not proved sufficiently attractive an enticement to the Party as a whole which recognises that agreement with the Nationalists to-day would be solely on the terms of the latter. But further compromises of principle must be expected and a deep disillusion must set in in the ranks of the United Party.

THE TORCH COMMANDO

Many of the grave policy errors and weaknesses of the United Party were inherited by the Torch Commando. The formation of the Commando, designed to rouse people in extra-Parliamentary action against Nationalist threats to violate the constitution sent a surge of hope through the ranks of democrats. In the first weeks of Commando activity, public feeling against the outrages committed by the Nationalists was at its height. The early Torch Commando rallies became gigantic demonstrations of the will of a large section of the electorate to take part in actions to salvage democracy, to get away from the slow and devious methods of the Party machine and the steam-roller of the caucus room, where expedient, not principled, solutions to crises were sought. But as support grew for the Commando, its leadership, nurtured in the tradition of the United Party Parliamentary "opposition", grew apprehensive of the militant spirit it was evoking throughout the country. Early on, it sowed the seeds of its future collapse by undertaking to defend the Coloured vote not on the principle of guarding a democratic right precious both to European and Non-European, but only because the Government was resorting to unconstitutional means to get its Coloured franchise measure through the House. Next the Torch Commando faltered through the imposition of its own internal colour-bar. Formed to uphold the rights of the Coloured people, it excluded them from its ranks and torchlight demonstrations. Then followed slavish imitations of Nationalist and United Party attacks on Communism. Gradually it dampened the spirit and courage of its rank and file supporters,

by the rejection of such proposed action against the Nationalists as the calling of a general strike.

FALSE EXPEDIENCY

Having once submitted to the false god of political expediency and compromise, the Torch Commando was unable to resist pressure from the United Party and submitted to the idea that it was politically tactical not to challenge Nationalist policies from bedrock principle, or to pose sharply the alternatives to Nationalism; but rather to concentrate on safe and "traditional" policies so as to make it difficult for Nationalist propagandists to attack it. "What will the Transvaler make of it?" became the criterion instead of "What is the democratic solution?"

The final cowardly capitulation—which left many a Torchman bitterly disillusioned and heralded the Commando's virtual eclipse—came on the issue of the Public Safety and Criminal Law Amendment Bills. A Torch Commando deputation went to Cape Town to demand opposition to these measures, but in the interests of the approaching general election, decided to capitulate to the already decided United Party policy of merely asking for safeguards in these measures.

The Torch Commando in its heyday perfected an election and technical machine, but forgot the driving force of democratic advance which originally brought it to life. It could have revitalised the whole European opposition to the Nationalists and, together with the anti-Nationalist forces of the Non-Europeans, have brought about the defeat of the Nationalist Government.

But lack of a basic political objective was responsible not only for the contradictory statements of policy that issued from Commando spokesmen, but also for its retreats when bold action was needed, and for the confusion the Commando now faces as it tries to find justification for its survival. Tens of thousands of anti-Nationalists have been left in the lurch by the collapse of the Torch Commando.

THE FEDERAL PARTY

Many of them turned to the Federal Party as a way out. Born of a desperation at the advances of the Nationalists, the Federal way is at the same time a retreat from the anti-Nationalist fight. A new Federal constitution is designed to enable Natal to withdraw from the Union's political struggle, leaving the remaining provinces

to the mercies of the Nationalist majority. In contrast to the urgent unity of democratic forces, this is a splitting and a weakening of their camp.

In the democratic camp the posing of a new constitutional blueprint as a way out of the crisis into which the Nationalists have plunged South Africa is a dangerous diversion. The issue to-day is not a federal or unitary parliament but the issue is how to rally South Africans against a Christian-National Republic.

The Federal Party is in part the rise of a counter to Nationalist Republicanism in the form of an English nationalist movement for an independent state in Natal. Its "enlightened" native policy exists in the barest outline and however enlightened its sponsors may call it, it accepts the principles of White supremacy which have made United Party policy so indistinguishable at times from that of the Nationalists.

THE LABOUR PARTY

Similarly the Labour Party for years proved itself unable to make a complete break with the tradition of regarding the White man as the trustee of civilisation. This party was formed by the skilled White workers, protecting themselves from the challenge of black labour in a country where artificial barriers in industry were erected to the advantage not only of industrialists, but also of the privileged White artisan. As a major political party the Labour Party declined years ago, until to-day it is a splinter group with some very limited connections with the European trade union movement, and with its representation in Parliament dependent on electoral pacts with the United Party.

Pressure of events have brought about the adaptation of this party's Non-European policy until to-day its programme is much akin to that of the Liberals. In Parliament the representatives of the party have of late taken a courageous stand against the Nationalists in the fight to preserve democratic rights. But thus far the party has proved incapable of breaking with the long tradition of complete concentration on parliamentary elections and parliamentary struggle and as a result tends to discount the struggles of Non-European movements against the Nationalists, or to neglect to work vigorously to rouse the people to political action outside Parliament.

THE LIBERAL PARTY

The formation of the Liberal Party came at a time when the Opposition had shown itself singularly ineffective in finding an alternative to Nationalist Party principles, and at a time when the Non-European people had launched a political campaign for the repeal of unjust laws and for human rights. Its formation was a recognition of the need to strike away from the old "native policies" which held out the prospect only of disaster, and it was a recognition that the Non-Europeans must be included in political calculations in South Africa.

But the Liberalism of 1953—though far ahead of the policies of the parties which are to-day losing some of their supporters to the new party—is based on several illusions.

The Liberal Party stipulates that it will campaign only by parliamentary and "constitutional" means.

But the Nationalists are steadily whittling away Parliament's power and the constitutional rights of the individual. How then to campaign with any prospect of making headway and effecting changes when the Opposition in Parliament is outnumbered and outmanoeuvred, and Parliament's very powers are increasingly being reduced and controlled by ministerial and Cabinet decree?

To talk of using only "parliamentary" methods is to treat the movement for political rights in this country as one of whites alone; for this community alone has parliamentary power. What of the vast bulk of the people who have no constitutional rights and cannot campaign through Parliament, from participation in which they are debarred by the Constitution? They turn to extra-parliamentary campaigns for their rights precisely because other forms of political action are denied them.

There can be no political future for a party which sets itself resolutely against extra-Parliamentary activity and thus withdraws itself from the entire political life of four-fifths of the people in the country.

Liberals have broken with the tradition of former parliamentary parties by inviting Non-European members. But this gesture is nullified by the Party's self-imposed ban on extra-Parliamentary activity. Instead of being able to participate fully in the work of the Party, Non-Europeans who do join it are relegated to the status of onlookers while White Liberals engage in the mission of converting more Whites to the idea that Non-Whites should have some share citizenship.

THE LIMITED FRANCHISE : THE CASE AGAINST IT

However bravely the Liberals might start off demanding franchise rights for Non-Europeans, by their concentration on Parliamentary campaigns, they will constantly be tempted to make their policies palatable to a White electorate fed on prejudice and racialism.

Already this process is reflected in the Liberal franchise policy.

The party advocates a limited franchise for Non-Europeans, qualified by standard six education, or an annual income of £250, or the ownership of £500 property, or a special voting certificate on grounds of good character and record. It is thus implied that people who are uneducated or poor are unfit to vote. The insistence on the property qualification takes us back to the theory of the British ruling class in the last century, that only the propertied classes have a stake in the country or are responsible enough to exercise the franchise.

FROM PRINCIPLE TO?

The contention that people must be educated first before they can vote leads into a circular argument far removed from any firm conviction that the franchise should be extended. The African should have the vote, says the Liberal, "I am not opposed to African progress, but the Africans should not vote until they have been properly educated." But Africans will not be properly educated until they have adequate access to schools. And they will not have adequate access to schools until Parliament votes enough money for that purpose. Parliament will not vote enough money until legislators are elected who will really represent the voteless. Few such legislators will, however, be elected until the voteless are allowed to vote. Thus the Liberal argument, in postponing the franchise, also postpones the education which is supposed to qualify people for the vote.

The lesson of history is that social and education services for the under-privileged remain limited and restricted until the under-privileged legislate really effective improvements for themselves.

Already the Nationalists have passed a Native Education Act

which will give the African an inferior education and so fit him for his inferior "place in society." Standards in African schools will become lower, not higher; syllabuses will be adapted to fit the African to take his place only on a subservient level in the modern industrial society growing in South Africa. The Nationalists do not believe the African should have the equal franchise. The Minister of Native Affairs has announced that the education system must teach him inequality. Determined that the Non-Europeans shall not advance to share greater privileges, the policy of the Nationalists can hardly be expected to facilitate the education of greater numbers of Africans, who will then qualify for the vote.

PUBLIC OPINION — FORCE FOR CHANGE ?

Some Liberals may agree with these contentions but claim that it would be running too far ahead of public opinion to advocate more than this limited franchise for Non-Europeans at the present time. If present-day public opinion is to be the gauge of policies that are correct this nullifies the whole Liberal argument for a different franchise policy from that of the United Party, and suggests that the policies that to-day satisfy the public should remain unchanged.

In any event, a public opinion whose view of all national issues has been distorted through years of state propaganda to believe in a system of discrimination condemned by all civilized countries and by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is not the best judge of the wisdom of any policy. To talk of public opinion in terms of what Europeans say and want is again to fall into the trap of apartheid reasoning. Ten million people are asking for the vote; two-and-a-half million people think it is not an opportune policy . . . because the two-and-a-half million are White they **are** public opinion. Is that not White supremacy, baasskap, domination, at its most obvious?

Groups such as the Liberal Party which claim to have a wider world view, understand the forces of history, and know that the principles of equality are right and just and will prevail, cannot

allow themselves and their principles to be vetoed and emasculated by the opinion of a prejudiced and race-bound community. The Europeans of this country, as all people, are capable of radical and rapid changes in their thinking and race attitudes—if rational influences are allowed to play on them. But little progress will be made if society's most advanced thinkers are afraid to strike out for change and if they gear their policy to what they think the electorate will accept without having to shed any of its prejudice. Conceding to such prejudice will result in the rejection of the views of the advanced advocates of social change, and the acceptance of the views of the most conservative and backward elements of the community.

EDUCATION — THE CURE-ALL

A variation of the argument that public opinion to-day will not permit the extension of the vote to Non-Europeans is that Non-Europeans are, in any case, not "ready for the vote", and that White South Africa, given time, will become more tolerant of extending the vote as greater numbers of Non-Europeans advance in the scale of civilisation.

LIMITING THE NON-WHITE FRANCHISE : 1872—1953

It is not as though South Africa has had no historical experience of the operation of a limited franchise for Non-Europeans or of the reaction of the White electorate to an increase in the number of Non-Europeans qualifying for the vote.

Those who have set their faces against the vote for the Non-Europeans express the fear that the Black voter will "swamp" the White. But must a democracy not concede that the majority in any country must rule? In fact the history of the vote in South Africa is not of Blacks swamping the White electorate, but exactly the reverse.

When few Africans have qualified for the vote, it has been considered no great harm to extend franchise rights to the élite, the best-educated and propertied Non-Europeans. But as greater numbers have qualified for the vote, the tests have been made progres-

sively more difficult. The horror of the Black man swamping the White is used to scare the White electorate into going back on its promises. The Non-European "advancing in the scale of civilisation" becomes not only a South African qualifying for the vote, but also a greater economic threat to entrenched interests, and the state and the white ruler become less and less benevolent.

LIBERALISM GIVES WAY

The Liberals of the first decade of this century who agreed to Union and the terms of the 1910 Convention compromised on the issue of the vote for Non-Europeans in the belief that in time Cape Liberalism would spread to the North. The last vestiges of the achievements of Cape Liberalism are to-day vanishing after a series of steady encroachments on the rights of Coloureds and Africans.

This pattern was evident long before 1910.

In 1853 the Cape was granted its first Constitution and the right to vote was given to every man of 21 who had property in land and buildings worth £25, or who received a salary of £50. At first there were few Non-Europeans on the roll, but as time went by increasing numbers qualified for the vote.

QUALIFICATION RAISED

In 1872, Responsible Government was granted the Cape and then began the long struggle to limit the political power of the Non-European by raising the qualifications upon which the franchise was based, efforts which culminated in the 1910 Convention, the Hertzog Bills of 1936 and now, in our time, in the Nationalist Party determination to deprive the Coloured voters in the Cape of their vote on the common roll.

A rapid growth in the African electorate between 1882 and 1886 resulted in the first attempts to alter the Constitution of 1853. In 1887 an Act was passed to prevent tribal tenure of land from being regarded as fixed property for the purpose of qualifying voters. It is estimated that 30,000 Africans were struck off the roll after this measure was passed.

In 1892 the property qualification was raised from £25 to £75 and every applicant for the vote was required to sign his name.

The Liberals of the day, among them Sauer, Innes and Merri-man, implicitly accepted the idea that the African should be satis-

fied with a token vote and should be prepared to remain a minority of the electorate if not permanently, at least for a very long time to come. At the 1893 registration there was a decrease of 3,348 Non-European voters, and an increase of 4,506 in the number of Europeans. The 1892 Native Franchise Act was supported by the old Cape Liberals.

By 1903, the 8,117 African voters on the roll were a significant factor in elections in only 7 out of the 46 Cape constituencies.

By 1930 there were 14,000 Africans on the roll and 500,000 Europeans.

THE HERTZOG MEASURES

By 1936 when Africans were removed from the common roll by the Hertzog measure, there were only 10,028 African voters registered, rigorous administrative action by the Hertzog Government having reduced the number. By this time, Africans formed more than 5 per cent, of the electorate in only 13 out of the 150 constituencies in the Union.

By this time also the extension by Hertzog of the vote to European women had increased the White electorate from half a million to about one million. The effect of laying down qualifications for Africans, even if only a literacy test, has been to exclude more than 95 per cent. of Africans.

UNEQUAL EQUALITY

In the light of past history, it can no longer be argued that franchise rights will be extended to Non-Europeans on a more and more generous scale as they become more "civilised".

A TOKEN VOTE ALONE

Liberals argue that the significance of their franchise policy lies in the fact that it does not discriminate against men of colour; but it gives equal rights to all men on the basis of their civilisation.

To talk of giving the franchise to all men educated to a certain standard, knowing that South Africa's education system mitigates against men of colour reaching this standard of education in any numbers, is to hide the realities of a strictly unequal system behind a deceptive though perhaps happy-sounding phrase

Education and opportunities for "civilisation" are notably unequal in South Africa. While education for Europeans is free

and compulsory, it is neither free nor compulsory for Africans.

Making standard six a qualification for the vote would mean that only a small minority of Africans in the country would qualify for the vote, and spread over the country's 156 constituencies, their vote could affect the outcome of an election in probably no single constituency. This qualified franchise would give the African little more than a token vote. It would mean that the Europeans would continue to be the effective majority and that African political opinion would receive little more recognition and representation in Parliament than it does to-day.

AFRICAN OBJECTIONS

Africans have an outspoken objection to this concept of a qualified franchise. As Mr. P. N. Raboroko expressed it, this system would mean in effect that . . . "the Liberals are extending an invitation to the Non-White intelligentsia and emergent middle-class to share in dominating over and exploiting the mass of their people."

The belief that Non-Europeans are not yet ready for the vote is a concession to the ideas of White supremacy, leaving it to Whites, who are anxious to protect their entrenched interests, to decide when the African has become civilised and should be allowed to share his privileges of citizenship.

Denied a seat in Government, a vote on laws affecting him, the Non-European has for centuries seen his representations ignored, and his interests made a pawn in the political chess game played by contending White parties.

THE VOTE IS THE KEY ISSUE

Many in South Africa argue to-day that the vote is not the most urgent need of the Non-European; that his organisations and his supporters among the Europeans should concern themselves with the more "urgent" needs of better housing, adequate wages, social services and generally less bitterly contentious issues on which European public sympathy for the Non-European would be less readily alienated than by the demand for the full franchise.

In Britain during the last century, when working people were campaigning for the vote, it was argued that the English working man was not civilised enough to enjoy the franchise and that the vote was not his most pressing need. In 1830 the Tories resisted the Reform Bill for it was said that seats were being distributed in "savage" areas "where there is hardly a gentleman or a clergyman."

ALL THIS AND MORE

In 1839 in Britain a spokesman for the Chartist movement wrote: "The question of universal suffrage is a knife and fork question, after all, a bread and butter question, notwithstanding all that has been said against it; and if any man should ask me what I mean by universal suffrage I would reply: that every working man in the land has the right to have a good coat on his back, a comfortable abode in which to shelter himself and his family, a good dinner upon his table, and no more work than is necessary to keep him in good health, and so much wages for his work as should keep him in plenty and afford him the enjoyment of all the blessings of life which a reasonable man could desire . . ." (J. R. Stephens)

The British Tories could not stop the Chartists by telling them that they should ask not for the universal suffrage but for more generous alms and for higher pensions. Europeans can similarly not tell Africans to-day that their demand for the vote is precipitate and extreme.

Their demand for political rights is their only guarantee against the legislature continuing to ignore their interests on every plane of public policy.

Nor is this demand for the franchise precipitate and extreme.

The Non-European denies that education and the ownership of property should be the test of the ability of a man to exercise citizenship rights.

The German people of 1933 were probably amongst the best educated in the world, when they elected Hitler's Government to power.

The argument that education is needed to fit a man for the vote should be discarded in this century when the franchise has been extended to illiterate communities in India, West Africa and China.

The Indian Franchise Committee of 1932, headed by Lord Lothian, wrote in its report to the British Government (at a time when all but 8 per cent. of the Indian population was illiterate) "Literacy is by itself no test of wisdom, character or political ability, and illiteracy by no means implies that the individual is not capable of casting an intelligent vote on matters within the range of his own knowledge and experience." The 1935 Constitution for India, introduced by Britain following the recommendations of Lord Lothian's Commission, inaugurated a system by which many illiterate millions voted, deeply conscious despite their illiteracy of the political issues of the elections.

FREEDOM BY THEIR OWN EFFORTS

South African Liberals must shed any illusion that the Europeans will bring liberty to the Non-Europeans. The Non-Europeans will emancipate themselves by their own political action. Any preaching to them of patience while the Whites are given lessons in tolerance; any urging that Non-Europeans restrain their activities and take no precipitate action which the White electorate might not favour is conceding to the Nationalists again that the Whites are the masters of the country, and that the Non-Europeans have rights only by their generous concession.

Above all, this approach ignores the history of every single struggle for progress and political rights in any part of the world, at any time.

If the Liberals believe that it is wrong at this stage in South African development to campaign for the universal suffrage, to challenge the Constitution which entrenches the colour bar, and to champion the extra-Parliamentary activities of the Non-European organisations, is it not inevitable that in time they will begin to pose their policy—to Europeans and Non-Europeans alike—as the wiser alternative to that of the Non-European organisations? From there it would be a short step to suggesting that not only is the policy of the immediate universal suffrage not the correct one, but a body like the African National Congress which advocates this policy is not acting in the real interests of the African people. Arguments would have to be found to urge Non-Europeans to join and work with the Liberals rather than with the African National Congress. That would set off a process of undermining the influence of the African National Congress, which would only divide instead of strengthen African political forces. This process has already begun. Professor T. W. Price, writing on behalf of the Liberal Party in "LIBERATION" (September 1953) strongly attacked the conduct of the Defiance Campaign by the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress:—

"The whole tactical conception of the Campaign was ill-advised, and the concentration of the demonstrations into the East Cape area showed no grasp of realities. It was remarkable that the African people showed up so well while acting under

the hazy, romantic, and over-ambitious plans of their leaders. A good idea was ruined by poor administrative execution” and—

“When mob-murder became, however, unjustifiably, associated with the Campaign in the public mind, the Campaign became a debacle. The present shaky control which African leaders have over their followers is no guarantee that any Campaign of this sort in the future can be carried out peaceably. No constitutional party, however sympathetic to Africans, can in any way encourage or contemplate a movement which, it seems inevitable, will end in useless tragedy for hundreds of Africans—or, for that matter, for Europeans.”

The Liberals are fated to be a minority, marginal party. They themselves recognise that their policies will at present be unacceptable to anything but the fringe of the White electorate. By a policy of compromise concessions to the Europeans, the Liberals are at the same time alienating support from the Non-Europeans. To-day the offer to Non-Europeans of political rights which the latter consider only half measures and an attempt to dilute their political demands will achieve no race-bridge-building. Trying to water down the content of Non-European aspirations will on the contrary create deeper schisms between European democrats who wish to co-operate with Non-Europeans and the Non-European political organisations.

Twenty or thirty years ago the offer of the hand of friendship of the White man, and the creation of Joint Committees to meet the Non-European on some equal footing was a timely and even revolutionary advance towards race co-operation. South Africa has changed since then. Non-Europeans have built political organisations, have tested the temper of battle for political rights in a sharpened form not seen before, and are facing in their present adversary, the Nationalist Government, the issue of their very survival. Race relations have reached an inflammable and explosive stage in South Africa because the opinion of the Non-European majority is repeatedly disregarded and national policy is framed on the basis of the interests and needs of the White minority, the electorate, alone. To-day, if Europeans talk to Non-Europeans of co-operation, it must not be on terms deemed adequate by the Europeans alone, but on the realities of the aspirations of an articulate Non-European political movement.

NO WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

To thinking South Africans it must daily become more evident that South Africa's problems cannot be solved by the voter—the White man—alone. The pretence that the Non-European can be ignored as a political force and treated just as a “problem” possible of solution without his full participation, must be abandoned.

To talk of taking the Native question out of the party political arena is a contradiction in itself: **the** crucial political question in South Africa is the treatment of the Non-Europeans and the relations between Black and White, and always has been. Removing the whole question from the realm of party-political disagreement does not make it in any way less contentious or easier of solution. It means only that the European political parties should drop their quibbling and build a solid White front against Non-European aspirations.

Such a united front can only be on the basis of the Nationalist policy of repression, for obviously their predominant position in the camp will ensure them the bigger hand in declaring the terms of the bargain; it will create only a more and more dangerous problem for our future. It would mean a future of open colour-conflict. It would mean turning South Africa into an armed camp, based on permanent police rule of the millions of Non-Europeans, and on fascist policies.

THE “MAU-MAU” MYTH

The aim of Nationalist propaganda has been to convince the European public that Non-European political organisations are subversive and anti-White, aiming to wreak vengeance on the Whites, using terrorist methods and threatening the personal safety of every White South African. This has been the justification for the increasing harshness of police methods against the Non-European communities, their organisations and leaders. Opponents of rights for Non-Europeans express the fear that once Non-Europeans have the vote all Whites will be “driven into the sea”

But this is based on the assumption that race hostility will continue when the causes of race hostility, political, economic, social

and cultural, have been removed. Race hostility in this country is intensified by a hundred and one laws and practices which humiliate, degrade and antagonise the Non-European, submit him to indignities and injustices and develop in him a feeling of hostility towards the White man and his works. The contrast between the life of the Black and the White impinges at every turn. The lowly may not try to raise themselves by their own efforts into the ranks of the more privileged. The colour bar blocks the way. The inflexible caste system maintains the barriers and makes skin colour, not ability, the judge of a man's status in society.

This is the system which has bred in the Non-European a deep sense of grievance and which makes inevitable his search for political organisation and expression to improve his lot in society.

NON-WHITE POLITICAL MOVEMENTS : ALLIES FOR DEMOCRACY

For many decades the Africans canvassed their grievances, patiently persevering, despite the rejection of their case time after time. When representative machinery of a limited sort, like the Native Representative Council, was set up, they made use of the facilities it offered; their representatives aired their viewpoints, only to be told they were using the Council for purposes of agitation and, when their case became completely unacceptable to their rulers, only to see the Council itself abolished.

On Advisory Boards the length and breadth of the country, Africans have made their suggestions and representations to town and city councils, only to find them ignored whenever they conflicted with the intentions of these Councils.

They have sent deputations to the Government and the Native Affairs Department, used the courts extensively to try to assert and test their legal rights; and in all manner of ways have urged consideration of their case.

To-day they have fewer political rights than ever, they face a future of considerably worsened conditions. And there exists among many a feeling of deep political frustration.

Just because they have been excluded from the political group-

ings in the country and been denied a voice in the government, they naturally turned to build their national and political organisations to campaign for an amelioration in their conditions and for human rights.

FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS

Their political action since the 1880's has been translated into a number of organisations, movements and campaigns, culminating in the Defiance Campaign of 1952 in which representatives of all the Non-European people participated. The Non-Europeans turned to the use of extra-parliamentary methods because they have no parliamentary rights. But the pattern of this campaign has a precedent in every country during the years of the birth of parliamentary democracy. The methods of the suffragettes in England, the Chartist campaigning for his programme, the "no taxation without representation" movement in the American Colonies—all have their echoes here.

As limited as their rights for organisation and political expression have been up to now, the Nationalists are pursuing a policy of stifling all protest, terrorising the Non-Europeans into submission, and smashing their organisations. Their trade unions are to be hampered at every turn; strike action is illegal and subject to extremely heavy penalties; their parliamentary representation, limited to three members in the Lower House and four in the Senate, is subject to the veto of the Nationalist Party. Religious meetings in the locations are now being prohibited. Scores of Non-European leaders have been banned from attending gatherings and from moving about the country. Police surveillance is ever present. If forever the aspirations of the Non-European people are thwarted they will inevitably turn to violence.

FOR ALL SOUTH AFRICANS

The African and Indian Congresses have made it clear that their movements are not anti-White or in any way racialist.

They want democratic rights for all, and not any substitution of a Black Supremacy for White domination.

In announcing the start of the Defiance Campaign, Dr. Moroka, then President of the African National Congress, stated clearly the principles which were the kernel of their political demands and their struggle for freedom:

“All people, irrespective of the national groups to which they belong, and irrespective of the colour of their skins are entitled to live a full and free life on the basis of the fullest equality. Full democratic rights with a direct say in the affairs of the Government are the inalienable right of every South African—a right which must be realised now if the country is to be saved from social chaos and tyranny and from the evils arising out of the existing denial of the franchise for the vast masses of the population on the grounds of race and colour. The struggle which the national organisations of the Non-European people are conducting is not directed against any race or national group, but against the unjust laws which keep in perpetual subjection and misery vast sections of the population. It is for the creation of conditions which will restore human dignity, equality and freedom to every South African.”

The Congresses have condemned terrorism and violence. They have urged discipline and restraint from their followers. In their official constitutions and programmes they advocate race co-operation.

By contrast, the Nationalist Government has done everything in its power to encourage the growth of a black racialism and to hinder the forces working for co-operation between black and white. They would like to see all Europeans ranged in one camp against the Non-Europeans.

Europeans of democratic and liberal views would be failing in their duty to themselves and South Africa if they did not take immediate steps firstly, to demonstrate that there still exist many White people who are not hostile to the legitimate human aims and aspirations of the Non-Europeans and who sympathise with them in their struggles; secondly, to work for the overthrow of the present unjust and dangerous system which will ultimately bring disaster to this country.

NO THIRD COURSE

It should be borne in mind that a return to the old policy of the United Party, even if that were possible, will not offer any permanent solution, for that party when in power was responsible for most of the laws and practices which are resented by Non-Europeans

All the Parliamentary opposition groups in this country share the one major shortcoming. They accept the principle of a

democracy limited to a privileged White group; and they fail to recognise that their own strength is insufficient to defeat the Nationalists as long as they limit their fighting power to "Europeans only". It is the Non-Europeans who, above all, have the strongest interest in removing the Nationalist Government. Their grievances cannot be outlawed because they are born of wretched conditions.

At the start of the Industrial Revolution in Britain, talk of trade unionism among the working people brought the Tories and the Liberals to a state of fear and trembling. Trade unions are accepted in Britain to-day as one of the features of the modern industrial state. Ten years ago talk of independence for India savoured to Whitehall and the Foreign Office of anarchy let loose among wild, illiterate and savage tribes. Today India is a powerful state on the international scene, and her services as a negotiator have been called in to help solve more than one international dispute.

Democrats have the opportunity to-day of recognising that the political forces of the Non-Europeans are on their side; that the Non-Europeans could be their allies for democracy; and that the only sure way to entrench democracy is to extend it and give the majority of South Africans a stake in it.

Race conflict **can** be avoided not by suppressing the Non-European political movements, but by recognising their claims. Democracy in South Africa **can** be entrenched, not by making it more and more exclusive, but by extending it. This is the only alternative to the Nationalist Government, its brand of fascism, or any other brand. The ten million Non-Europeans are our natural allies in defence of democracy. We must find the way to build that alliance, by striking out boldly on a new, democratic path.

FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATS

A genuine opportunity for Europeans to strike out boldly for that alliance is offered by the policy of the Congress of Democrats. Every act of the Nationalist Government abrogating the rights of some section of the South African people has impelled more and more people to the realisation that only the united opposition of

White and Non-Whites in a mighty political alliance, operating both in the Parliamentary field and outside it, can stop the advance of fascism, and bring into living reality a democratic society.

The Congress of Democrats has taken its stand firmly on the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

A FAITH WORTH FIGHTING FOR

Its Constitution states that the Congress is "against all forms of inequality and discrimination. It repudiates as false the doctrines of racial inequality, of White supremacy, of "Apartheid", Trusteeship and Segregation."

It works "to secure for all South Africans, regardless of race, colour or creed, the rights laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with particular reference to:

Equal civil liberties:

the freedom of thought, speech and press;
the freedom of movement and assembly;
the freedom of organisation and religion;

Equal political rights:

the right to vote in and to stand for election to state and local law-making bodies on the basis of Universal and Equal Adult Suffrage.

Equal economic opportunities without discrimination based on race or colour:

to qualify for and engage in all trades, crafts, occupations and professions;
to acquire and own land and property, and to freely form, join and administer Trade Unions.

Equality of social status:

in every field of state and administration, public activity, education, culture and recreation, and the preservation of family life with no interference which would lead to its disintegration."

TOWARDS SINGING TO-MORROWS

South African affairs are moving to a decisive clash, in which are ranged on one side all the forces of South African reaction, gathered under the slogans of apartheid and white supremacy; and on the other side all the forces of democracy and progress, gathered

under the banners of ending race discrimination and establishing a living and all-embracing democracy. That clash has been a long time in the making—all South African history has been pregnant with it—but until recently it has been possible for people everywhere to avoid taking sides, to put off the day of decision till to-morrow, or to convince themselves that the clash would somehow, miraculously, be postponed for decision by a later generation.

There is no longer room for any of these illusions; and that fact has been driven home inescapably to every thinking South African of every race or colour.

Here, in the Congress of Democrats, is an organisation offering a home to all those who have broken with these illusions, who believe that South Africa needs, for her very survival, the abolition of racially discriminatory practices which are the cancer within her body politic.

Working closely together with the African and Indian Congresses, the Congress of Democrats is helping to forge a mighty, united peoples' alliance against fascism. Here is an opportunity for thinking people who realise that only such an alliance and such a force, inspired by a programme of full democracy for all, can defeat the Nationalists. Here is an opportunity for YOU to act for democracy which will have meaning and will bring new life to all the people of our country. It is time for YOU to be with the Congress of Democrats, and in it!

I should like to receive further information about the
SOUTH AFRICAN CONGRESS OF DEMOCRATS.

Name

Address

Send this form to P.O. BOX 4088, JOHANNESBURG.
or to P.O. BOX 4347, CAPE TOWN.