

President-General African National Congress
Johannesburg, 6th April 1952.

I am glad to see you in such large numbers. No doubt you have come everyone of you to take from me a message from the African National Congress. I wish, at the outset, to tell you that today is a memorable day, a historic day, a day that you will always remember. It is a day that will ring down the countless generations of Africans in this land.

Three hundred years ago Jan Van Riebeeck landed upon the shores of this land. Since that day many things have happened. Today South Africa is reminding herself of those events which make the pattern of her story of three centuries ago. In Cape-Town today the Van Riebeeck celebrations have reached an unprecedented climax in the splendour and the pomp, the pageantry and the ceremony ^{that} to mark the occasion. ~~It~~ The white man's cup of joy is overflowing.

The Europeans have every reason to feel happy and to display their joy upon this colossal scale. They have spread themselves upon this vast expanse of land. They have found a land rich with minerals. They have exploited and are still tapping the mineral wealth of South Africa. The soil has yielded abundantly. Their factories, their warehouses and their commercial undertakings show the measure of their prosperity. Taken man for man the Europeans of this land are some of the richest people in the world. World statistics show that they are some of the healthiest people of the world.

But we Africans also look back over that period of three hundred years. We see a record of sadness. We know that 300 years ago Van Riebeeck was sent specifically by the Dutch East India Company to trade with the aborigines of this land. We know how he and his christian European compatriots obtained land from the unsophisticated non-christian non-Europeans. We remember the cattle deals of those early days. We know that the institution of slavery - by which the Europeans in this land held the non-Europeans of this land in bondage nearly two hundred out of three hundred years - came with Van Riebeeck. The first Pass Law passed about a hundred and fifty ^{years} ago.

The Great Trek opened up South Africa to White penetration. It

said that the Voortrekkers would set up their own state in which they would maintain proper relationships between master and servant. When they set up their first republic in Natal they saw to it that a clause was inserted in their constitution that there was to be no equality between the Europeans and the Africans either in the Church or in the state. This was no special whim of the Voortrekkers in Natal because in the Dutch republics of the Free State and the Transvaal that constitutional provision was cardinal. We were looked upon as servants and enemies.

But has the attitude of the white man changed? To remember the 1911 Mines and Works Act which debars us from skilled employment, to remember both the 1913 and the 1936 Land Acts which have allotted to the 5 million Africans about 13% of the land and the 87% to the 2 million Europeans; to remember the Wage and Conciliation Acts which recognize colour rather than efficiency in the matter of salaries and wages; to remember the 1951 Bantu Authorities Act which aims at putting us up into warring tribes; is to come to one obvious answer - No! The attitude of the white man to the Black^{man} has not altered in these 300 years. We have no African Member of Parliament. In the army, in the Navy and in the Air Force the South African Government would rather train European women to defend this country than train one African. The attitude of the white man has not changed.

We have always been kept at arms length. We have never been accepted as partners. To-day at Cape-Town it is clear to the stone-blind that the celebrations are intended for the Europeans only. No African has been invited to take part in the celebrations in any way that would give him recognition and accord respect to his people.

We are said to be influenced by communism. That accusation is loudest when we are most insistent on a just recognition of our rights. Anyone who asserts the rights of the down trodden is labelled a communist. These toy and bogey communists are found in every walk of life. Some of the highest clericals, some of our most eminent men of law, doctors, teachers and professors, factory hands and mine clerks. They are not a party. Any and every^{one} who raises his voice for justice and fairplay is said to be a communist. I wish to state here most emphatically that we, the African National Congress, are not

which make us cry out. So long as they exist and are perpetuated so long will the voice of the Africans go up against them.

That voice no man can silence. Only peace and good-will, the removal of the conditions which breed these unacceptable circumstances will silence that voice.

To-day we should all be rejoicing after 300 years of living together. But everybody knows that we are not all happy. I wish to remind the Europeans of this country that in taking stock of the past 300 years they cannot escape the fact that whatever page they turn in the history of South Africa they find it red with the blood of the fallen, they find ill-will and insecurity written plainly across the pages. I appeal to them to weigh and consider and say if a different course of events over the past 300 years could not have paid them and us better dividends. I appeal to them to give us freedom for that alone will bring peace and harmony in this country. It is upon that foundation of peace harmony and goodwill that the future of South Africa can be secured.

I make these statements and I send these appeals to the Europeans of South Africa because our cause is just. We fear ~~not~~ nothing. We have nothing to hide.

I wish to address myself more directly to you Africans. Why have the Europeans succeeded in the past 300 years to keep you down ?

(a) One answer to this question is to be sought in the introduction of Christianity to you. To you was preached a religion of love and mutual trust. You believed implicitly in all that the Bible teaches about the character of a good man. You trusted your neighbours as good christian men and women ought to do. When, afterwards anybody suggested to you that you would do well to think of the things of this world for those who brought you that religion thought first of the things of this world, you would not believe.

That very religion which has come from the Europeans has torn you asunder. You are broken up into hundreds of religious sects which are ~~put~~ ^{played} one against the other.

(b) You have been divided. Some of you are said to be Reserve Africans others are said to be farm natives, and there are town Natives.

...ring tribes. You are one race. That fact must be uppermost in our minds. It must be the very guiding star of our national endeavours.

It is the aim of the National Congress to seek to further our national aspirations. We have no room for tribal distinctions which are at the root of our weakness in the face of those who seek to make us perpetual hewers of wood and drawers of water. There is no one tribe which can say it has been given the freedom and the rights for which we as a national organisation strive. There is no one chief who can tell us that he has the freedom and the rights for which we, the African National Congress, fight for each one of you individual men and women. The Bantu Authorities Bill is said to give to the African chiefs freedom to rule their own people. But we must know that the ability of an African chief to rule his own people will be judged by how faithfully he carries out the wishes of the Government.

(c) Another explanation why you and the rest of the Non-Europeans have been such an easy prey to the oppression of the white man is that you have been made to look upon the Coloureds and the Indians as foreigners and your enemies. The Coloureds and the Indians have also been made to look down upon you. This is a subtle and pernicious aim to divide you Non-Europeans.

All the Non-Europeans of this country must come together. If they do not, then they have nobody to blame but themselves. But you must know, ~~that~~ and the Coloureds and the Indians must also know, that unless this lesson is thoroughly and truly mastered, you and they will never live to see the dawn of the day of your freedom in this country.

We have come here to-day to take a solemn oath that we will muster all our forces of mind, body and soul to see that this state of affairs, these crushing conditions under which we live shall not continue any longer. We wish to make it clear to the white men of this land and to the world abroad that we bear no man a grudge. But we will do everything possible to fight against the iniquity of the laws under which we are made to live. We go back to our several homes from this meeting determined that what happened to our forefathers will not happen to our sons and daughters.

In conclusion I again appeal to you to maintain calmness

lected. Those are your only true leaders. Those who are imposed upon you are the messengers of those who have ~~imposed themselves upon~~ appointed them. No one should act on his own. By so doing you may expose yourself to victimisation. Those who are not with us are definitely against us.

You must support your organisation - the African National Congress. You must ^{give money} to make your organisation a power to reckon with.

I wish to make a special ^{appeal} to the educated non-Europeans to help our people at this crossing of the roads. Come together yourselves and by your example teach our men and women what it is to organise, what it is to elect leaders and what it is to follow faithfully those whom we have elected. It is in this respect that you carry upon your shoulders a mighty responsibility.

I wish you all success for the future. I am not at all the member organized by the African National Congress. But I am with those thousands and thousands of men and women who, like you, to-day have come to rededicate themselves to the cause of freedom and peace. You and I wish them the very best of luck.

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