

DR. J.S. MOROKA'S ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF THE SOUTH  
AFRICAN INDIAN CONGRESS CONFERENCE.

16th SEPTEMBER 1950 - JOHANNESBURG.

I wish to thank you ladies and Gentlemen - members of the Executive of the South African Indian Congress - for the kind invitation you have extended to me to perform this very happy ceremony of opening this annual conference of your Congress. We are satisfied with the presence of the Indians in South Africa. They came here under the same conditions as those under which the Europeans came to South Africa. The circumstances which brought them here were not of their creation. The circumstances which have placed the Coloureds in South Africa were not the creation of the Coloureds. The circumstances which have placed the Africans here were not the creation of the Africans. When Providence decided to determine the pigmentation of the skin of each of these racial groups none of us in South Africa was there to give consent or to say nay; and surely none of us can be justifiably blamed or made uncomfortable or unhappy on account of the colour of his skin. We are all --- South Africans Europeans, South African Indians, South African Coloureds and South African Africans --- South African nationals. South Africa is the only home we know and own for ourselves and our posterity. Any conception, any suggestion or any propaganda which purports to contradict this claim is out of touch with reality and is contrary to all sentiments of truth and fairplay and justice.

I wish to tell the Indian section of the population of South Africa that they must be careful --- very careful --- not to be worked into a frenzy, and not to be tricked into believing that it is the wish of the Africans that they should be hurried out of South Africa. Any insinuations of that nature are the desperate efforts of desperate minds deliriously clutching at every straw to further their own ends and not in the interests of the Africans. You should not be packed off from this country. Those of you who go when they want to and wish to remain when they want to are not only letting down their own people, but they are also taking the wind out of the sail of all those in South Africa who fight for

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If the South African Indians should go back to India, it must be of their own free will. To those who go back to India because some people do not want them, I wish to emphasise that it must not be said that the Africans do not want them here. There has been a great deal of talk about the exploitation of the Africans by the Indians. It is right ~~there~~ if there is any unfairness of one racial group towards another such unfairness should be decried. But we do know that the Indians are not the only people with whom we have trade and commercial dealings in South Africa. We know also the ages-old stunts of the salesman who pours ceaseless condemnation on the articles, methods and motives of his rival, when his articles, methods and motives are not a jot superior.

Democratic South Africa ---White, Asians, Coloured and Black - has condemned and will always challenge the recent action of the municipality of Durban to dismiss from municipal employment a number of non-Europeans as a result of their participation in the Protest Day activities. It was a day of prayer organised by the leaders of Non-European communities. This uncalled for action on the part of the Durban Municipality was intensified against the Indians to intimidate them and to foster the idea of repatriation. It was an action which could not be defended on any democratic basis.

If the Indians must go back to India, then the Europeans must go back to Europe: and I suppose the Africans must go back to the Central Lakes of Africa. That is the wish of nobody. The Europeans have done a mighty lot of good towards the development of South Africa. But this they have not done alone. To this progress and prosperity the Indians, the Africans and the Coloureds have added their inestimable shares.

There are far too many people who, without reference to, or consultation with African leaders, most preposterously tell our friends how much we dislike them and our enemies how much we like them. When I speak of African leadership, I certainly do not mean the sorry spectacle of leadership imposed upon the Africans. I do

South Africa is the only home the Africans, the Indians, the Coloureds and white South Africans know. It is a small country in which it would be both impossible and highly dangerous to have four distinct and unrelated cultures fostered. We could not have, and if we could, we should not have, Indian culture, Coloured culture and European culture nurtured along parallel lines in one country. I repeat that these differentiations are unnecessary, unwise and if possible, are a keg of high explosives of racial bitterness and prejudices based on false conceptions and sometimes short-sighted and misguided self-interest. They will lead to racial antagonisms, strife and all these monstrosities which would spell the sure ruin of this country. We shall be the poorer and the losers. Our children after us will reap a rich harvest of ruin, poverty, want, retardation in the progress of the world. Those who thought they could make South Africa safe for themselves and for their posterity by fostering that idea of a multi-cultural South Africa are heading for no better future than that which I can foresee.

These differentiations are made by those who wish to divide us to rule us and to exploit us. What I have outlined of the dark future ensured by these differentiations are some of the main objections to the Group Areas Act by all the freedom-loving people of South Africa. They are our objections to that law.

What we want in this country is not to run up and down South Africa kicking anybody or any racial group out of the country. All we ardently desire is opportunity for all, freedom of movement and speech for all. We want such educational facilities for our children as obtained for the children of the Europeans in South Africa. We want no obstacles to hinder our youth from availing themselves of scholarships such as are offered by the Government of India to Non-European students in South Africa. We do know (in spite of what the Government of South Africa has said, and may say again, at UNO and elsewhere) that in South Africa there are more

those for whom educational provision is made. It grieves us to know that even when qualifications are identical there is discrimination made into the salaries of teachers according to whether they belong to one group or the other. We are satisfied that such discrimination is always at the disadvantage of the Non-European professional.

We want direct representation in the councils of the state of South Africa. We believe that unless and until our voices can be heard not by proxy, but directly, the South African Government can never know all the true and intimate facts relating to the conditions of our lives. We believe further that unless and until we take direct part in the framing of the laws of this country, then we are only in the state but we are no part of the state. We believe that this state of affairs is not calculated to develop in us a sense of responsibility. It does not help us to take a pride in our country.

If anybody thinks that we are unnecessarily petty, and such a person or any other person wishes to refute or to substantiate for himself these statements I have made, let him send an impartial observer to study how we live, what we are paid, our pass laws and how they affect us, and the numerous other features of the circumstances of our lives. Let such an observer gather information from sources that are not controlled. Let him be free from Government-prescribed routes. Our conditions will bear the light of unbiased criticism.

The South African delegation at UNO does not represent us. The opinions it expresses about us are not our own opinions. We are not represented on the councils of UNO. The opinions about us there are only about us. They are not our own opinions. The world hears so much about us. But we would like to tell the world ourselves. We want to put our case ourselves: and our stand at UNO is a plea for peace and harmony in our country.