

LET US RALLY

A CALL BY THE ALL-AFRICAN CONVENTION

Parliament has met once more. It is a Herrenvolk Parliament, whose primary occupation seems to be the piling up of more and more burdensome laws one after the other against the Black people of this land. It is as if the Herrenvolk were under the irresistible compulsion of an obsession. The sum total of their laws presents a grim picture of a whole country being turned into one vast concentration camp. Each new set of laws adds fresh stakes and barbed wire to a huge network designed to fence in a whole people.

The people against whom these laws are passed have no voice in the Herrenvolk Parliament, no say in the making of the laws. If the laws have the effect of producing hardships and starvation, the weakening of the resistance to disease and increasing infant mortality to a fantastic rate; if, in a word, a whole people is being impaled on the barbed wire of these laws, theirs only is to obey and die. They are not allowed to discuss the laws, not even in their villages; for they are not permitted to hold meetings. Prisoners in jail have the nominal right to express their grievances against prison conditions. But a Black man in this country is not allowed to voice his protest freely. Freedom of speech, of association and meeting are denied him. A whole Black population exists in an atmosphere of permanent martial law.

In a land that has been turned into a huge prison camp, no one has a place he can call his home, neither in town nor country. Those of us who are working in the towns are like rock-lizards, with no security of any kind. No security of job, for the Minister may say he must no longer do that kind of work and find reasons for putting him out of the urban area. Neither has he any security of residence. For he and all the other Africans in the location may at any time be bundled on to lorries and shifted to another location far from their place of work. Each day he does not know if he will sleep with his family that night. For he is constantly in danger of being caught in the drag-net of the innumerable police raids. Even as he goes to bed in the night, he does not know if next morning will find him with his family.

Night raids have become the daily bread of the location dweller. He lives in a perpetual state of harassment and dread, dread of the police who may at any moment pounce on him in terms of one or other of the many laws passed against him. He has a continual sense of scurrying to and fro. Like the rock-lizard whose natural habitat has been inundated by a flood, he cannot find even the narrowest crevice where the claws of the law may not reach into.

A Black man in town is not permitted the security of a home of his own. He can never own the house he lives in. If he was born in the country, he cannot as of right return to his village and build himself a home. The only thing any Black man is sure of is that one day he will be permitted a hole six feet beneath the earth for his dead body to lie in a segregated cemetery.

Those of us in the country, in the so-called "Native Reserves," fare no better. There, too, they have no home they can call their own. They occupy their poverty stricken houses at the mercy of the various Native Commissioners and the Minister of Native Affairs, who, under the Rehabilitation Scheme, or Stabilization Scheme as it is now called, can shift whole villages without granting any compensation for the demolished houses or assistance towards building new ones. Even the cattle and sheep that are registered in their name are on loan, so to speak; for it is the stock inspector or the magistrate who has full authority over them. He may tell the "owner" what stock to keep, where it must graze, and when. If a man slaughters his ox, he has to report to the master. He may not buy cattle or sheep, no matter how much he needs them to provide for his children. He may be ordered to get rid of all his stock at any time. The people who have arable lands registered in their names may not plough what they choose. The magistrate decides what each man shall plough in any season; he gives permission to people to start ploughing. If anyone ploughs before, or fails to start at the time stipulated by the magistrate, he is guilty of an offence. The peasant is a hut-prisoner in his own home. And if any individual should voice a protest, he may be banished as trouble-maker or an agitator.

Our children, too, are growing up in the atmosphere of a concentration-camp. They must get a special kind of education, "Bantu Education," to prepare them to be docile inmates when they grow up. From a tender age they must be taught that they are something different from other humans; they are outside the pale of ordinary human society. In fact, what happens at schools to-day under the Native Affairs Department almost passes belief. No mother who has a child at any of the boarding schools can have a sound night's sleep for worrying about what is happening to him. For at any moment her child may walk in with his bundle to say he has been expelled, or a message may come that he has been arrested with the other children at school. It has become a common occurrence for the police to be in and out of the schools on matters of ordinary school discipline.

In this prison-camp, all prisoners must have their badge and number. At any time any policeman or any official of the N.A.D. can stop a Black man in the street or wake him up at dead of night to demand his pass. Our women, too, are subjected to the same indignities of the pass system and police, search. Even young children attending schools are liable to be arrested if by some chance they leave their passes at home or drop them at play. As if the backs of the people were not already bending under the yoke of oppression, the herrenvolk now propose to pass a law for new taxation of the Blacks to pay for the running of this prison-camp. The old taxes are to be increased-the poll-tax and the hut-tax payable whether a man is employed or not. Our women, too, will now have to pay taxes. Those women who entered domestic service to support their aged and pensionless parents and to send their children to school, are now to be mulcted of part of their meagre earnings-all this to pay for any army of petty officials. How costly is this thing, "Apartheid"!

The corner-stone of the herrenvolk Apartheid plans is the Bantu Authorities Act and the Bantu Education Act. The former seeks to re-organize a whole people, splitting them up into tribalized segments, each with an appointed chief at its head.

These so-called chiefs are to be used as hangmen of the Black people of the nation.

The newly gazetted regulations defining the duties of chiefs show clearly what their function is to be. They are to constitute a glorified police force with powers to search, arrest, prosecute, convict and even order corporal punishment on grown-up men. They are to spy on people's lives, report to the magistrate what people are saying amongst themselves, what meetings have been held, what strangers have been seen in any village, where they slept the night and what they did. These services will be cheap at the price. And what they lack in pay will be made up for with the elevated name of chief. They are to be enlisted in the carrying out of the Rehabilitation Scheme; they are to order the people to get rid of their cattle. They are to order the women to apply for their book of passes and to carry it about on their persons. The latest scheme is to re-arrange the villages. The new plans under the Stabilisation Scheme are that all people who have no arable lands registered in their names have to get rid of all their stock. They themselves are to be shifted from their villages and dumped in new camps where they will live by selling their labour. They will have to buy all their food, milk and meat. No one will be allowed to keep a single beast in these new village camps. The chiefs will have to enforce these violent measures. This is what retribalisation means. This is what restoration of chieftainship means. .

The second corner stone of the herrenvolk Apartheid plans, the Bantu Education Act, seeks to stifle the mind and kill it. Our children are to be denied all education.

Their minds are to be filled with the trash that belongs to a barbaric age. Special books are being written by government servants for use in Bantu schools, all with the purpose of enslaving their minds. All the books that open up a world of knowledge are taken away from our schools and our children are being denied the benefits of human culture, which is the heritage of men and women of all races. Our children are denied the very fruits of a civilization which we ourselves are helping to create.

For without our labour there could have been no civilization in this country.

These two Acts, then, the Bantu Authorities Act and the Bantu Education Act, are the main pillars of the Apartheid policy. They are the most dangerous and the most vicious Acts ever conceived by any herrenvolk mind in South Africa. They are all the more pernicious in their deadly effects on the African population, because their effects are not at once perceived by all. They are like a slow poison that a man takes daily without knowing it. Slowly and steadily it seeps into his body, but it is only when it has penetrated right throughout his system and destroyed his innards, only then does it show itself outwardly in his finger-nails, his tongue and his gums.

But by that time the man is a corpse.

It is these death-dealing Acts that the chiefs have to put into operation. It is their appointed task to see that the Bantu Authorities are established and that the Bantu Education functions as planned. The chiefs and headmen are to police the schools, which are put under their charge. They are to spy on the teachers to see that they dole out the poison to our children every day. The appointed schoolboards and school committees all over the country are to help them in this task. To make sure that no children escape, chiefs are to be created even in

the urban areas, in the locations. This is what the restoration of chieftainship means, together with its Bantu Education.

What is it all about? What is it all for? Is it that the herrenvolk hate us, and would like to destroy the Black population out of spite? No. They do not hate us. Neither would they like to destroy that which produces their wealth. It is their desire to keep us as mere instruments of toil and beasts of burden in their insatiable greed for wealth and more wealth, which we must create in abundance for them.

It is this that makes them pass inhuman laws against us. To achieve this, they devise barbarous laws to stunt the development of our minds, shut our mouths and blind our eyes. They would prevent us from seeing beyond the walls of our concentration camp. For great things are happening outside. The oppressed throughout the world are throwing off the yoke of oppression. Our Black brothers, too, in other parts of Africa, are struggling for their rights. They want to be in Parliament themselves, where the laws are made. It is the natural right of all men and women, except imbeciles, to be in Parliament and have a say in the government of their country. It is because we lack this most important right that it is possible for them to pass these inhuman laws against us.

The question we must ask ourselves is: What are we Africans and the other Non-European oppressed doing about it? For they, too, have fared no better. The Coloured people, having been robbed of their last remaining voting rights, are now being hounded into locations, with no longer the right to buy land where they choose. The Indians, too, under the provisions of the Group Areas Act, are being robbed of their properties worth millions of pounds. They are to be thrown out of the towns which they have worked hard to develop, and are to be sent into the bushes, where they must live as paupers. They, too, like ourselves, must go and work for the herrenvolk for a pittance. What, then, are we all doing about it?

We hear of the isolated struggles here and there throughout the country. We hear of the women in Zeerust in the Transvaal facing imprisonment because they refused to be photographed for the book of passes. Elsewhere in the same district both men and women were arrested because they rejected the Bantu Authorities Act. There were the 3,000 African women of Pietersburg who refused to accept the book of passes. We hear of the people of Peddie, of Zululand and the various districts of the Transkei, rejecting the Bantu Authorities Act and opposing the Rehabilitation Scheme. We hear about the teachers facing dismissal in the struggle against Bantu education. We hear about the magnificent struggle of the people of Alexandra and other locations in Johannesburg and Pretoria, and their almost superhuman spirit of endurance during the bus boycott. But all these are isolated episodes. While they reveal a common desire and a determination to resist oppression, and while the people learn from these experiences, yet we must understand that they cannot succeed by themselves in bringing us near our goal. For they are spasmodic and unconnected efforts; they dissipate our energies. Such isolated struggles must end in failure which in turn leads to despair and a sense of frustration. It is true that these isolated struggles have seriously alarmed the herrenvolk; so seriously that in some instances they have temporarily stayed their hand. This must not lull us into thinking that we have scored a victory. The herrenvolk pauses only to play for time and to think out more effective methods. They will come back—as they must—with greater ruthlessness to carry out their plans.

We must learn to see the struggle as a whole, and, while tackling the single issues, we should at the same time keep our eyes fixed on the goal and direct our energies towards it. It must be a concerted and sustained effort, which alone can give the people the necessary strength and power to put an end to oppression. No one will come from outside to help us. The international situation may create conditions favourable to our struggle, but we have to do the job ourselves. All the oppressed people, in whatever part of the country they are, should see themselves as part of one vast army of the oppressed and centralise and co-ordinate their struggles. Each organization, however small, should see that it links up with other organizations in the All-African Convention. It is this body that federates and gathers together all the African organizations in town and country.

There are many amongst us who pose as our friends, who say they are going to help us liberate ourselves. But what do they do? With us, they shout loudly in protest. But they do not allow us all to come together. They keep us divided.

Indeed they do everything in their power to split our ranks. They see to it that some organizations of the Africans refuse to join those of their brothers in the All-African Convention. They throw dust in the eyes of our brothers, pretending that they are going to lead them to salvation. What kind of help is this, that weakens our struggle by splitting our organizations and keeping them divided? At one time the African National Congress was with us in the Convention. It helped to found the Convention. But with whom is it to-day? At one time the Ministers' Associations were with us. But with whom are they collaborating to-day? If the liberals were our true friends, would they not have seen to it that all the African organizations went back to where they belong, to the All-African Convention, with its IO-Point Programme?-that body which was established to stake the claim for full equality for all people in South Africa; that body which has refused to be hoodwinked and diverted from its clear path in the march for freedom; that body which gathers together all the African organizations and unites them with the organizations of other oppressed Non-European people in the Non-European Unity Movement.

The task before us is an extremely hard one; the road is arduous and the obstacles are great. We can never reach our goal by each one travelling in a different path. There is no short cut to liberation. We must bend all our efforts in a united, concerted struggle. At every turn there will be those who will seek to disrupt our unity. For there is nothing the herrenvolk fears so much as the coming together of all the oppressed. Let us say again, that every African man and woman, wherever they are, in town or country, in the cities, dorps and villages, should see to it that their local organization is linked up with the All-African Convention, which leads to the greater unity of all the Non-Europeans of South Africa in the Non-European Unity Movement. This is the road, the only road that leads us out of the vast prison-camp. This is the road that will lead us to Parliament where all the laws are made. This is the road that leads us to equality and freedom for all.

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