

Chapter Six

COLOURED REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL

Stage of Development

THE COLOURED Persons Representative Council opened its 5th session on 3rd August, 1973. The session was opened by the President of the Senate, the Hon. J. de Klerk.

The development stage of the Coloured Representative Council remained as it was. Instead the CRC approached the near danger of disintegration (see below).

Matters taken up by the Council

The last session was one of the most turbulent sittings in the history of the CRC. There were more demands made by the CRC members for (1) influence (2) power.

Among the issues that came before the CRC were:

The future status of the Coloured people within the concept of Separate Development.

The position of the University of the Western Cape and its future running.

The growing deracination of the Coloured people and their streaming into major urban areas.

Growing restrictive legislation by the Government on Blacks.

Plans for a possible coming election in 1974 (*Cape Argus* 2/8/73).

Coloured usage of the term Black (*Star* 22/8/73).

The CRC tabled a Bill for consideration by 22 September, 1973 on financial assistance for Coloured farmers or prospective farmers. It was felt that Coloured farmers or prospective farmers needed financial backing in the form of loans (*Cape Times* 10/8/73).

A budget of one hundred and eleven million rand (R111m) was passed by 30 votes to 25. The budget was passed in the midst of no confidence in the CRC (*Cape Times* 23/8/73).

Some of the budget would be utilised as follows:

- (a) R21 million would go to the building of Coloured schools, as an additional to money already provided for Coloured Education.
- (b) An extra R2,00 per month would be paid to recipients of disability grants, aged pensions, blind and war veterans pension.
- (c) R2,50 per month extra would be granted to recipients of maintenance grants.
- (d) An increase of 50 cents per month would be granted to recipients of child grants (*Cape Times* 4/8/73).

The status of Coloured persons and their rights have been jointly discussed by the Minister of Coloured Affairs, Dr S. van der Merwe, the Prime Minister and members of the CRC. Topics that have been covered thus far include:

1. The carrying of fire-arms by Coloureds residing in rural areas.
2. The possibilities of consolidating Griqua farms in East Griqualand into a Coloured rural area.
3. The status of the CRC in its certain specific aspects.
4. Permit rights for the entry of Coloureds into Namibia (*Star* 9/11/73).

A motion was raised in the CRC to grant the vote to 18 year olds. This motion did not pass through the vote.

Another motion calling for the removal of the white rector at the University of the Western Cape was narrowly defeated by 27 votes to 24. The Commission of Enquiry set up subsequent to the disturbances at the University, was given support for continuation in its findings (*Cape Times* 10/8/73).

The CRC made achievement with the Government's scrapping of 'Other Coloured' in its race classification clauses. According to the Social Democratic Party leader, Mr E.G. Rooks, this term had for a long time been opposed by the CRC since it was found to be insulting and dividing Coloureds (*Mercury* 3/8/73).

The position of Coloureds in the Transkei was also taken up by the CRC.

This resulted in the Cape Town parliament deciding that Coloureds in the Ciskei and the Transkei would have to vacate the homelands (*Rand Daily Mail* 17/10/73).

The CRC went further into the matter. Until the Minister of Coloured Affairs, Dr S. van der Merwe, had to say that the position of Coloureds in the Transkei had been cleared. According to the Minister, the Coloured people were not compelled to leave the Transkei, except those who wished to do so. The same applied with Ciskeian Coloureds. This assurance of Coloured citizenship was timed well, with the reiteration by the KwaZulu Executive Councillor, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi, that Coloureds in KwaZulu would not be discriminated against (*Star* 10/11/73).

CRC debates on the University of the Western Cape did not go unnoticed. Following the Commission of Enquiry, the Government has appointed the first Black rector-designate for a tribal university. He is Dr R.E. van der Ross.

The appointment of a Black rector for UWC has been seen as a precedent that could be followed by the homeland universities (*Post* 4/11/73).

General Issues

(a) *Deadlock within the CRC* was reached already in 1972 when the Government did not respond favourably to CRC demands. In the previous sitting of 1972, the 4th session, demands by the CRC had strongly been rejected.

Amongst many others, the CRC had:

1. Urged for the appointment of a Coloured rector for UWC.
2. Urged that the South African Railways employ Coloured applicants as stokers, conductors, inspectors, shunters, engine drivers and ticket examiners, and that these be given white rates of remuneration.
3. Asked that Coloureds be trained for service in the Diplomatic Corps with South African embassies and consulates.
4. Requested that Coloureds enter South West Africa (Namibia) without restriction.
5. Asked for detailed programmes to eliminate salary discrimination against Coloureds in the Public Service within 5 years.

The Government response was negative.

1. When a vacancy occurred at UWC, a white rector Prof. Kriel was appointed Rector as from January, 1973.
2. The Government claimed it unpractical and impracticable to

- readily provide vacancies for non-whites in the Railways Department other than as artisans' assistants, helpers, cooks, deckhands, porters.
3. The Government actually considered it more effective to have Coloured leaders going abroad 'on their own' rather than have Coloureds in the Diplomatic services.
 4. On the question of unrestricted entry into S.W.A. (Namibia) the Government turned down the request after 'thorough consideration of all facts'.
 5. The Government promised it would narrow the wage gap existing in the Public Service.
 6. A CRC resolution that Coloured women be trained as hostesses for the South African airways was rejected.
 7. Also rejected was a CRC resolution calling for a Government let-up in taxi apartheid.
 8. The Government rejected a CRC call for Coloured pensions to be equal to those of whites (*Cape Times* 10/8/73).

(b) *Multi-Racial Commission*: The State President appointed a multi-racial commission of enquiry which would investigate the future development of the Coloured people.

The 20-member Commission of Enquiry was to be led by a white sociologist, Professor Erika Theron. Included in the Commission were members of both the Nationalist Party and the United Party. Two M.P.'s representing the 2 parties were also included.

Coloured representatives in the Commission included Dr R.E. van der Ross, a Cape Town educationist and the newly appointed rector-designate of UWC, and Mr J.A. Rabie, a member of the Coloureds' Representative Council (*Cape Argus* 24/2/73).

Matters affecting the Coloured people that the Commission had to make findings on were:

Progress of the Coloured people in the social, educational, economic and community development.

Progress of the Coloured people's participation in commerce, industrial development and agricultural development.

Occupational participation and all matters related thereto.

Development in constitutional matters and all other matters relevant thereto.

Progress in the Coloured people's participation in sport, culture etc.

The Commission of Enquiry would further investigate hinderances identifiable as obstacles in the fields examined.

Any other matters relevant to the enquiry in any form would be investigated (*Cape Argus* 24/2/73).

(c) *Reaction to the Commission:* The appointment of the Commission of Enquiry was largely seen as a rejection of homeland plans for the Coloured people.

Its multi-racial composition was interpreted to mean that the verlig opinion which identifies Coloureds as belonging to the white sector were succeeding (*Sunday Tribune* 25/4/73).

Mr Myburgh Streicher a United Party M.P., remarked that the inclusion of Coloured persons in the Commission was an indication of goodwill (*Cape Argus* 24/2/73).

The Administrative Secretary to the Federal Party, Mr P. Swartz, welcomed the commission.

Different reaction came from the Progressive Party leader, Mr C. Eglin, who criticised the exclusion of 'an important part of the political spectrum'.

The Head of the Department of Philosophy at U.W.C., Mr Adam Small, remarked that the Commission could only be looked at 'as rather a waste of time' and could not be taken seriously.

A stronger rejection of the Commission was expressed by Labour Party leader Mr Sonny Leon who said the Commission was biased since it was composed of persons supporting separate development and thus the composition of the Commission was unacceptable to Coloured people (*Cape Argus* 24/2/73).

The Commission of Enquiry was not a new idea. Three years ago a United Party member of Parliament suggested that the Government appoint a Commission of Enquiry on the affairs of the Coloured people. This motion was rejected by the Government on grounds that liaison with the Coloured people was sufficient (*Rand Daily Mail* 23/7/73).

Serious concern at the lack of progress and meaningful function of the CRC was expressed by both the Federal Party and the Labour Party members. The move to set up a commission was therefore seen as appeasement against the growing dissatisfaction in Coloured politics (*Rand Daily Mail* 23/7/73).

The Different Parties, their Activities

(a) *Federal Coloured People's Party:* The Federal Party stood severe tests as the ruling party within the CRC. Its Government-appointed member of the CRC, Mr M.B. Saval, resigned from the party to take seat as an Independent. This resignation threatened the position of the Federal

Party who were left with 29 votes against the Labour Party's 29.

However, the FCPP did gain a member from the Labour Party. The member who defected Labour to join the Federals is Mr J.D. Petersen. The Federal Party was also the only party in the CRC to have a member sitting on the Commission of Enquiry. The member, Mr J.A. Rabie, is a Government-nominated member of the CRC.

Despite lack of popular support the Federal Party managed to defeat some motions raised by members of the opposition Labour Party. Important motions defeated by the Federal Party were:

A motion called by the Labour Party that the vote be given to 18 year old Coloureds.

The motion was defeated by 28 votes to 24.

A Labour Party move that the white rector of the UWC be removed from the post of rectorship.

The motion was rejected by 27 votes to 24.

A motion that the CRC disband during the debate on the budget.

The Federal Party managed to win a vote on the closing of the 5th session by 28 votes to 19 despite Labour's urgings for continuation of the session.

Mr J.A. Rabie, a Federal member, called for freehold rights for Africans in the towns (*Cape Times* 24/8/73) whilst Mr Tom Swartz called for the retention of the Griqua Trust and the giving back of more land taken from the Griqua people (*Cape Argus* 24/8/73).

A motion raised by the Federal Party member, Mr J.A. Rabie, that December 1 be declared a public holiday in commemoration of the emancipation of slaves received unanimous support from the CRC house in session. The CRC was asked to negotiate with the Government on the motion (*Cape Times* 17/8/73).

It was a 'victory score' for Coloureds in terms of Government concessions, when the Federal Party leader, Mr Tom Swartz, announced that Coloured mechanics would get an equal rate of pay as that of their white counterparts. Mr Swartz claimed to have received assurances from the Department of Labour in Pretoria that as long as Coloured mechanics were duly qualified, facilities and fringe benefits would be the same as for whites. The only difference was that they would only be allowed membership of Coloured trade unions (*Cape Times* 15/8/73).

The Federal Party did openly express itself against Government actions when, following a statement by the Minister of the Interior, Dr Mulder, the leader of the Federal Party moved that the house in session make a protest adjournment. An all-party committee was to be formed to make de-

putation to the Minister of Coloured Affairs, Dr S. van der Merwe, and to the Minister of the Interior, Dr Mulder (*Star* 27/8/73).

Federal merger with NCPP: The Federal Party and the National Coloured People's Party merged into one party. The merger followed a decision taken at the Annual Congress of the NCPP. The leader of the NCPP is Mr Clarence September.

No new name was issued following the merger since it was the NCPP amalgamating into the Federal Coloured People's Party by unanimous vote (*Rand Daily Mail* 8/10/73).

The Federal Party showed a token of Black solidarity with the opposition Labour Party when the leader of the Labour Party, Mr Sonny Leon, was refused a passport by the South African Government.

(b) *Social Democratic Party:* The Social Democratic Party (SDP) did not show much initiative within the CRC in 1973. Nevertheless a significant motion raised by an SDP member of the CRC, Mr E.G. Rooks, was carried through with unanimous support. Mr Rooks had moved that white inspectors in Coloured education be replaced by Coloureds.

The reasons for the motion were:

That there were already Coloured inspectors who managed the positions fairly well—he cited an example of 2 Natal Coloured inspectors;

That white inspectors by virtue of higher salaries failed to recognise Coloured inspectors except as assistants;

That because of harassment by white inspectors there were Coloured teachers who were leaving the profession and;

Already there were 16 Coloured inspectors for education and 10 subject inspectors.

The motion also called for the replacement of all inspectors who had reached retiring age with Coloured men (*Cape Times* 17/8/73).

It was also largely owing to Mr Rooks that the persistent refusal by Coloureds to accept the term 'other Coloured' in race classification finally registered on the Government's conscience. The term, regarded by Coloured spokesmen as insulting the Coloured people has subsequently been scrapped from official usage.

(c) *Independents:* Independents are CRC members with no party affiliation in the CRC but at liberty to vote for either of the two main parties during session debates.

The Independents increased their seats from one to three in the CRC.

They are Mr Lofty Adams, Mr Solly Essop and Mr A.B. Savhal. Messrs Essop and Savhal are former Federal members who left their party on points of principle.

Mr Adams is the one member of the CRC who threw focus on Black Consciousness in the CRC. He is also a former Federal Party member (*Cape Times* 2/8/73). Mr Adams brought controversy into the CRC house in session when he moved that the Coloured Persons Representative Council adopt the term 'Black' to mean all persons of colour other than white and that the term 'Black' be used officially in the CRC.

(d) *Labour Party*: The Labour Party began the year on a bumpy course. Labour members had first seen the Government appoint a Commission of Enquiry into all the socio-economic and cultural aspects of the Coloured community (*Sunday Tribune* 25/2/73).

Growing criticism and opposition against the Pretoria Government were seen as possible reasons that would lead to further moves by the Government to want to muzzle opposition and criticism. The leader of the Labour Party, Mr Sonny Leon, expressed the feeling that the outspoken views of leaders like Chief Kaizer D. Matanzima and Chief Gatsha Buthelezi—both lashing against apartheid and the finality of its concepts, were really bugging the Government (*Cape Times* 2/3/73).

It was with this kind of directive that the Labour Party began its annual conference in Durban on April 20. The Conference was opened by the Chief Executive Councillor for KwaZulu, Chief Gatsha Buthelezi (*Leader* 20/4/73).

During this conference the Labour Youth Organisation (LYO), the militant wing of the Labour Party, demanded that the Labour Party take a definite stand on Blackness and Black Awareness. The youth organisation raised a motion that the Labour Party be open to all races for membership.

Though the Party leader, Mr Sonny Leon, had openly stated in his opening speech that the CRC was a necessary channel for the Coloured people, LYO urged that the step of opening ranks was of vital necessity even if it meant the Labour Party's withdrawal from the CRC (*Star* 23/7/73). This move, LYO argued, was a test against the Government's Improper Interference Act which does not allow political activity across colour lines. The Act, LYO stated, was created specifically for the separation of races in political involvement.

After heated debates on the possibilities of open membership, the Party voted in favour of allowing persons other than Coloured into the Labour Party. Mr Leon endorsed the decision taken. Labour was thus challenging the Improper Interference Act and its white frame of reference amidst Black Consciousness and the Black experience.

The Labour Party also refused to have anything to do with the Government's Commission of Enquiry on the economic, social and political future of the Coloured people. The Party would prepare a memorandum on the lines of the Declaration of Human Rights and circulate it amongst the people of South Africa. A Labour spokesman pointed out the inclusion of members of the Broederbond in the Enquiry Commission (*Rand Daily Mail* 23/7/73).

The Labour Party proved militant and challenging for the CRC platform. Having adopted Black Consciousness as the philosophy that could bring about Black solidarity and common purpose against the Government, the Party went on to make demands and register reactions for the Coloured people and for all Blacks.

Amongst these were:

A demand by a Labour member of the C.R.C., Mr Oosthuizen, for more schools for Coloureds in the Boland (*Cape Herald* 2/6/73).

A call on the central Government to shelve its expenditure on armaments so that the money could be used on the education of Blacks (*Mercury* 23/4/73).

That a test case be made on the Party's decision to open ranks in the Party's Youth Wing to all races, as challenge to the central Government's Improper Interference Act (*Rand Daily Mail* 21/5/73).

That the Government improve the living conditions existing in the country for all race groups rather than focus a terrorist threat which was caused by alienation of the majority of the people in the country (*Rand Daily Mail* 31/5/73).

That the Verligte Action Movement expect no co-operation from Blacks if it followed the path of white political parties (*Rand Daily Mail* 2/7/73).

That Blacks had to decide their future and the future of the country (*Rand Daily Mail* 28/7/73).

That the education of Coloured people go into the hands of the Coloured people themselves.

That farm workers be given consideration as to their wages and the Masters and Servants Act be repealed.

Two major controversies that affected the policies of the Labour Party almost led to the disbandment of the CRC. The first was the Government's appointing of a Commission of Enquiry to investigate the whole situation of the Coloured people. The second was the Government's withdrawal of a passport from the Labour Party leader, Mr Leon.

The withdrawal of Mr Leon's passport, caused country-wide concern

over the Government's policies of not allowing leaders of its platform to operate freely.

The Minister of the Interior then made certain remarks on the CRC and the CRC leader Mr Tom Swartz.

Mr Swartz and the CRC made a protest move by adjourning the CRC session for the day. Unanimity on this issue was expression of commonness of situation for all members of the house as Coloured people (*Cape Times* 25/8/73).

A Labour motion to have the CRC adjourned for the rest of the year was narrowly defeated by the Federal Party by 28 votes to 27 (*Rand Daily Mail* 31/8/73).

Mr Sonny Leon, the Labour Party leader, has said that if he won the elections for the fully elected Coloured Parliament he would see to it that this Government-created institution, the CRC, is closed down immediately. This would be in keeping with contention held by the Labour Party that this party claims to be in the CRC so as to legally register the will of the people (*Cape Times* 4/8/73).

On the opening day of the 5th session of the CRC Labour members boycotted the official opening by a Government Senator and in the initial debate moved that the CRC disband since it was ineffectual and only wasted taxes paid by the people. The motion was defeated by a narrow vote.

Two Independent members of the CRC joined in the boycott of the opening.

During the debate on the budget, a Labour Party member asked that the Federal Party reject the budget and leave it to the Minister of Coloured Affairs to pass. This, the member said, would bring about desired confrontation with the Minister. Meanwhile the Coloured leaders would be approaching the people on the issue. Dialogue between the Minister and the Federal Party were deemed fruitless. The Coloured people, the member said, could not be grateful for such a budget (*Cape Times* 16/8/73).

Mr Sonny Leon said that unless foreign investment meant that foreign investors were prepared to share in the upliftment of Blacks in this country then they (foreign investors) were of no help to Blacks. It was best that foreign investment cease (*Rand Daily Mail* 9/11/73).

Labour raised a motion that the vote be given to 18 year olds. This move, had it been passed through, would have given Labour a wider support especially from the Labour Youth Wing (*Cape Times* 15/8/73).

Though the Labour leader was accused of taking a soft line on issues such as foreign investment and Black Consciousness he did go to the extent of suggesting that Black leaders call a meeting so as to discuss the plight of the Blacks and 'the urgent need for change'. On the other hand he did state that

he was against Black Power (*Rand Daily Mail* 5/7/73).

Following the banning last year of a Labour Party leader in Natal, Mr Dempsey Noel, the Government issued banning orders on another Labour Party leader, Mr Achmat Dangor. Mr Dangor was leader of the Labour Youth Wing.

A banning was also imposed on the man who led Labour Youth at the last congress of the Labour Party. Mr Don Mattera, who resigned as Public Relations Officer for the Labour Party and joined the Black People's Convention, was also issued with a banning order during the year.

Crisis within the CRC

A growing opposition against the limited powers of the CRC was registered by several CRC members during the session of 1973. The 5th session of the CRC opened amidst rumours that the Labour Party members of the Council would boycott the opening speech by the Senator, the Honourable Jan de Klerk, President of the Senate.

The official opening was boycotted. Then after lunch the opposition members tabled their non-confidence motion (*Cape Times* 3/8/73). The motion was ruled out of order by the Chairman of the House.

The urges for walk-outs were pretty common during the session. One motion even came from the Federal Party. Federal Party member Mr A.C. Jacobs declared during the budget debate that the CRC should be abolished in protest against the diabolical system of discrimination under which the Coloureds lived (*Cape Times* 16/8/73).

Point of crisis came when the Minister of Interior made allegedly harsh statements against the leader of the CRC, Mr Tom Swartz, on the Leon passport issue. On August 31 the CRC decided to close its 5th session until September 12 in protest against actions and statements of the said Minister. The two major parties in the CRC were unanimous on this move.

It is worth noting that the Federal Party managed to pass resolution that the heated CRC session for 1973 be closed. This was on 9 September. Almost 2 weeks after the Labour move on the closing of the session had been defeated.

The move to close session was now being opposed by the Labour Party who claimed that there were still about 27 motions to be discussed. All of them of vital importance to the CRC.

By 28 votes to 19 the CRC session was adjourned until July 19, 1974 (*Cape Times* 14/9/73).

Opposition to the CRC

The CRC went into its fifth session in the face of a growing opposition against its existence from outside and from within its own ranks.

Pressures against the operation of the CRC were mounted when the Labour Youth Organisation (LYO) won a motion to open the youth movement to all races, even if this meant withdrawal from the CRC by the Labour Party. Urging Black solidarity, leaders of LYO threatened that LYO would join the Black People's Convention unless the motion was passed. The chief movers of the motion were Don Mattera and Achmat Dangor. The two leaders have since been banned by the Government.

A resolution was passed allowing all races to the Labour Youth Organisation (*Daily News* 23/4/73).

SASO continued to reject the CRC as a Government-created platform instituted for the propagation of Government policies which SASO opposes. SASO has called for a total boycott of Government institutions by all Blacks and has urged the various Black groups to work in concert for their survival (*Mercury* 7/3/73).

The Black People's Convention also maintains its rejection of the CRC and all other Government-created platforms. BPC had its score of victory when the Public Relations Officer of the Labour Party, Mr Don Mattera resigned from his party to join BPC. Mr Mattera was leader of the Labour Youth Wing of the Labour Party. It is through the forceful steering of Mr Mattera that the Labour Party agreed to open the Labour Youth Wing to all races.

A Labour Party member resigned from the CRC on grounds that it is useless as a vehicle for the Coloured people's aspirations. He is Mr L. V. du Preez, member for Newclare (*Cape Argus* 7/8/73).