

THE BLOEMFONTEIN CHARTER

The African people of the Union of South Africa, at the invitation of the Inter-denominational African Ministers' Federation, assembled in a national conference in Bloemfontein from 4 to 6 October to consider the Tomlinson Report. The representative character of the conference was indicated by the fact that 394 delegates, drawn from all parts of the country, both urban and rural, and representing all shades of African political and other opinion, were in attendance.

After detailed examination of the principles and policies enunciated in the report the conference desires to place on record its total rejection of the report as a comprehensive plan for the implementation of apartheid in South Africa for the following reasons:

"The Tomlinson Report concedes that a solution of this problem will only have been achieved when a satisfactory arrangement in regard to the political aspect is arrived at. This conference can find nothing in the report remotely resembling a satisfactory arrangement in regard to the political aspect.

"An arrangement on the commission's own premises could logically mean only sovereign independence for the so-called Bantu areas."

"This conference does not subscribe to the view that the choice before South Africa consists only of two alternatives—'ultimate complete integration' or 'ultimate complete separation between Europeans and Bantu.' The conference maintains that a proper reading of the South African situation calls for co-operation and inter-dependence between the various races comprising the South African nation and denies that this arrangement would constitute a threat to the survival of the White man in South Africa.

"The conference finds that the net result of the implementation of the Tomlinson Report will be a continuation of the status quo and indeed an aggravation of the worst evils of the present system, including their extension to the Protectorates. Under the present conditions the policy and practice of apartheid denies the African inalienable and basic human rights on the pretext that the African is a threat to White survival and denies him:

"(a) A share in the government of the country.

"(b) The inviolability of the home.

"(c) Economic rights, the right to collective bargaining and to sell labour on the best market.

“(d) The right to free assembly and freedom of travel, movement and association.

“(e) Inviolability of person.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

“This conference has examined the detailed plans for the economic development of the reserves put forward by the commission, but can find no justification for the view that this development should be linked with the application of the policy of apartheid.

“The conference maintains that any programme of rehabilitation and development of these distressed areas of the Union, based upon this ideological approach, will not command the desired support and co-operation of the African people.

“The general economic development of the resources of all parts of the country in which the skills and abilities of all its peoples are utilised is sound policy. But a separate plan of development of the Native areas, based on the policy of apartheid, and the concept of separate national homes for the Africans coupled with deprivation of basic and economic rights and opportunities in the rest of the country is something totally unacceptable to this conference.

“Furthermore, this conference notes that the Government itself in its White Paper on the report has rejected some of the principal and most significant recommendations of the commission and has thus undermined the goals which it sets out to achieve. Thus the claim that the Government is moving in the direction of these goals emerges as a hollow political bluff.

CIVIL RIGHTS

“In dealing with the question of civil liberties, the Tomlinson Report is at pains to prove that in regard to their wider civil rights the Africans are ‘substantially in no worse position than other sections of the population’.

“This conference rejects this false picture of the South African situation which seeks to gloss over the glaring inequalities and disabilities from which the Africans suffer under the mounting discriminatory legislation of a Parliament in which they have no effective representation.

“The continuation of this policy has already created a grave situation in which orderly government and the foundations of South Africa as a viable State are seriously threatened.

“Police raids, banishment orders, dismissals for political non-conformity, extension of the pass system to women, detention camps, farm prisons, convict labour, the slave markets euphemistically called the labour bureaux, and all the other trappings

of a Police State constitute an intolerable burden to the African people.

“The conference reiterates the demand of the African people for the abolition of discriminatory laws and the extension of full citizenship rights to all, which alone will guarantee peaceful and harmonious relations between Black and White in South Africa.

EDUCATION

“The recommendations of the Tomlinson Report on education are unrealistic as they propose to prepare pupils for a life in a society which is non-existent—a mythical Bantustan. Economic and world forces tend to channel African development in the opposite direction of co-operation and inter-dependence.

“One of the tests of a good educational system is whether it is able to throw up leaders of ability and character. In spite of the promise of full development opportunities in the future separate sphere, it seems that training of leaders does not occupy a very high place in the priorities of the new system. Thoroughness, breadth of vision and individual excellence are being played down as over against the superficial education of the mass of the people.

“Further, the compulsory use of the African languages as media of instruction throughout the educational system will tend to reduce horizons and make true university education impossible by diminishing the opportunities of intercommunication between the African groups themselves and the wider world in general of which they form part. The contemplated establishment of a Bantu University of South Africa with constituent colleges organised on an ethnic grouping would be a further threat to academic freedom.

“The colleges established under such a scheme of differentiation would not only be starved of adequate financial support but would also lead to isolation from other university institutions of the country and deterioration in academic standards.

CHURCH AND STATE

“The commission looks upon the Church or Churches as something to be controlled and used by the Government to further its own schemes. The conference disagrees with the commission on the grounds that the Churches are the instruments of God for the establishment of His Kingdom on earth and therefore answerable only to God with a right to intervene in moral issues affecting the nation as a whole.

SEPARATE AREAS

“The conference rejects the theory that there can be in South

Africa so-called European areas and Bantu areas. Africans and other non-Europeans claim that there is not an inch of South African soil to which they are not entitled on an equal basis with Europeans.

“The conference therefore asserts that Africans and other non-Europeans are entitled to all rights, privileges and immunities enjoyed by Europeans wherever they live and work. Conference therefore rejects the mass removals of non-Europeans and their dispossession of freehold rights under the Native Resettlement Act of 1952 and the Group Areas Act of 1950 (as amended) and similar legislation.

“Conference rejects the concept of national homes for Africans in certain arbitrarily defined areas for the following reasons: Africans are the indigenous inhabitants of the country with an indisputable claim to the whole of South Africa as their home.

“There is no part of the country to the development of which they have not made their full contribution. Such a concept facilitates the exploitation and economic strangulation of the Africans and perpetuates White domination.

“The Tomlinson Report has suggested a revision of the direct taxation paid by the Africans ‘with a view to an increase in such taxation commensurate with their high earning capacity and the low monetary value of the pound’. In the opinion of the conference it is difficult to appreciate the commission’s suggestion and reason, because for precisely the same reason of a low monetary value of the pound, the earning capacity and the ability to pay direct taxation of the African are affected.

SAME TAX BASIS

“It must be noted further that the commission seems to have taken no account in recent years of the number of Africans who pay income tax on the same basis as Europeans. The commission has also not considered the inequity of the present system of direct taxation of the African upon which it has based its recommendations nor can direct taxation alone be a true index of the full contribution of the African people to the total revenue of the country without taking into account their contribution in indirect taxation.

“The belief so widely held by White South Africans, that it is so-called White monies that are financing African services and welfare, is in total disregard of the fact that the very profits and incomes made by Europeans are the result of the use of Africans as an essential factor in production, and a low wage is paid to them. In other words it is the Africans who are subsidising the Europeans and not vice versa.

“This conference is convinced that the present policy of apart-

heid constitutes a threat to race relations in the country. Therefore, in the interests of all the people and the future of the country, this conference calls upon all national organisations to mobilise all people, irrespective of race, colour or creed, to form a united front against apartheid.

"This conference welcomes the initiative of the Inter-denominational African Ministers' Federation in bringing together African leaders to consider the Tomlinson Report and its implications for South Africa, and appeals to the Christian Churches in South Africa to take a clear and unequivocal stand in the defence of Christian and human values now being trampled underfoot in the name of apartheid.

POWERFUL BODY

"We appeal to that strong and powerful body, for which the Dutch Reformed Church speaks with recognised authority, to re-examine its approach to the race question. We call upon all South Africans who realise the dangers and effects of apartheid to take a positive step to break down the colour bar in group relations. We urge them furthermore to ensure that democratic and Christian opinion expresses itself on discriminatory legislation in ways most likely to impress on the mind of the people of South Africa the urgent need for a positive alternative to apartheid or separate development."