

THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS MOVEMENT

BLACK PEOPLE'S CONVENTION

EXTERNAL OFFICE

WHY WE DECIDED TO ESTABLISH AN EXTERNAL OFFICE

One of the major decisions taken during the annual congress of the Black People's Convention held in December 1976 in Durban was that of establishing an External Office under the direction of the Director of External Affairs.

This director is in turn under the direction of the Secretariat in charge of external affairs. The Secretariat, however, is based inside South Africa whereas the external office, under the supervision of the Director, is currently based in Botswana.

The resolution establishing the External office and its director also mandates the director to establish offices throughout the world. So far the Director has established offices in the United Kingdom, Europe, and West Africa and is currently in the process of establishing other offices in East Africa, North Africa and Central Africa.

It is also the intention of the External Office to establish offices in the United States, Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East.

Perhaps the major question which comes to some people's mind is what motivated us in the Black Consciousness Movement to establish an external office? It has to be admitted from the onset that the decision to establish an external office was not an easy one. Hence this belated move to establish an office more than four years after the founding of the B.P.C. and more than eight years after the birth of the Black Consciousness movement in South Africa.

The main reason, as reflected in the resolution setting up the external office, behind the establishment of an external office is the growing number of exiles belonging to the Black Consciousness Movement. This exodus of our members from South Africa was further accelerated last year after the June 16 uprisings which resulted in a massive crackdown on the Black Consciousness Movement by the white minority regime in South Africa.

The need then arose to cater for the political, material and ideological needs of our exiled members.

The other major reason why we decided on the establishment of an external office was the growing need to present and clarify our political outlook and ideology regarding the liberation struggle in South Africa and Southern Africa as a whole.

We realized that many people did not have a clear grasp of the Black Consciousness Movement in South Africa and the role that it is playing in its quest to create Azania. Thus in this article we will provide a short expose of our philosophy and policies.

Thus the external office will be responsible for the distribution of all information material on the Black Consciousness Movement.

Perhaps it should be clarified that although the decision to establish an external office was taken by the Black People's Convention, the office however, will cater for the whole Black Consciousness Movement simply because we belong to one harmonious family. But it was only logical that BPC should establish the external office because it is the mother body and also a political organization.

THE MEANING OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS

The concept of Black Consciousness implies an awareness and pride in their blackness by Black people and implies that Black people should and must appreciate their value as human beings.

Black Consciousness also means that Black people should be aware of the significance and importance of their own value systems, i.e. their socio-economic, political and cultural values. Implied in this appreciation of their value systems is the need to reject those foreign alien value systems which were forced down Black people's throats as part of the oppressor's logic of maintaining and perpetuating its brutal system of exploitation and emasculation.

Thus the essence of this search for our indigenous value system is the need to redefine ourselves and our value systems which are today engulfed in the foreign and alien exploitative and oppressive values which have been imposed upon us, both physically and psychologically, by our oppressors in order to make us malleable to subjugation. The challenge of Black Consciousness for any Black man in South Africa today is the need for a new and incisive redefinition, reidentification and reappraisal of the Black totality in the context of a capitalist, racist and exploitative South Africa, presided over by a self-appointed white minority acting as the missionary of international capitalism and finance capital.

Another significant aspect of Black Consciousness is the call for cohesive group solidarity, i.e. Black solidarity. Thus the quintessence of Black Consciousness is the realization and acceptance by Blacks in South Africa that, in order to play a positive role in the struggle for liberation and emancipation, they must effectively employ the concept of group power and thereby build a strong base from which to counter the oppressor's policy of divide and rule. The philosophy of Black Consciousness therefore means group pride and determination by Black people in South Africa to rise together from the death bed of oppression and exploitation.

At the heart of Black Consciousness is also the realization by Blacks that the most potent and effective weapon of oppression and exploitation in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed. In South Africa, the oppressor has attempted to twist and manipulate our minds to make us mentally and psychologically pliable to his exploitation and manipulation.

Black Consciousness therefore calls for a psychological revolution in the Black community; this will be a revolution which is directed towards the elimination of all stereotypes by Blacks about themselves and one which is directed towards the complete eradication of the slave-mentality and feelings of inadequacy characteristic of an oppressed and exploited society. The basic logic inherent in Black Consciousness is that no people can wage a meaningful war of liberation unless and until they have effectively eradicated their slave-mentality and accepted themselves as full human beings who have a role to play in their own salvation.

Black Consciousness therefore forces Black people to see themselves as full human beings, complete, full and total in themselves, and not as extensions of others.

Some people have accused proponents of Black Consciousness of rejecting and spurning a coalition between white liberals and the Blacks. However, assessment and evaluation of the history of the involvement of the white liberal establishment in the Black struggle has convinced us that white liberals have indeed been criminally responsible for arresting and aborting the struggle by playing the role of a bulwark, a kind of buffer zone between the Blacks and the White system which has been oppressing us for centuries. In fact, to us the white liberal establishment is part and parcel of the white system; indeed, the driving force behind the white liberal establishment's involvement in the Black struggle is its desire to kill the revolutionary zeal of the Black masses by promising them a "controlled" change which will result in some mystical "mosaic" multi-racialism. This multi-racialism is never defined precisely lest it reveal to Blacks that it is nothing but a polished and sophisticated version of the racist system which has been responsible for the dehumanization of Blacks in South Africa.

THE ECONOMIC POLICY OBJECTIVES

Our major and fundamental objective and aim in the future of Azania is to build a society in which there will be no economic exploitation, emasculation and dehumanization of man by man.

We therefore intend and are determined to create an Azania from which capitalism of any complexion will be banned and replaced by what we call Black Communalism.

It is not necessary here, to us in any case, to explain why the future Azania we are striving to create will not be a capitalist Azania since to us it is obvious that capitalism is the most vicious and exploitative system mankind has ever invented for the destruction of mankind.

Indeed our struggle in South Africa to create Azania is a struggle against capitalism. Perhaps it is essential to explain what we mean by Black Communalism, although the few remarks made above already indicate what we mean by Black Communalism. By Black Communalism we mean an economic system based on the principle that there should and must be an equal distribution of wealth and resources of the society amongst its people.

Implied in this definition is the principle that all the resources and wealth of the society will and must be owned by the society itself and it is the society through its machinery which must be responsible for the distribution of these resources and wealth as we have stated above.

It is therefore on the basis of this philosophy that our policy is that land and all industries must be owned by the society. It is therefore our policy that all land in Azania shall be owned by the state and there shall be no private ownership of land or any property.

In practical terms therefore, our policy means that.

LAND

In line with our policy as we tried to explain above, all land will vest in the society through its state machinery. No individuals will have a right to own or be allowed to own land.

All agricultural activity will centre around the formation of people's Cooperatives which shall be entrusted with the task and responsibility of spear-heading agricultural development in consultation with other state organs involved with the development of agriculture and other related industries.

In pursuance with this policy of state ownership of land and the formation of people's cooperatives and other collective agricultural institutions, rural life shall be reorganised in order to make it economically viable. This will also entail the establishment of economically viable villages which also form integral parts or components of rural development and the development of the whole country.

It will, however, be the duty and responsibility of the state to create conditions which will be conducive to the development of agriculture and the marketing and distribution of all agricultural products for both domestic and foreign consumption.

COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

The state shall be the sole owner of industry and the planning and development of commerce and industry shall be the sole prerogative and monopoly of the state.

This policy will of necessity entail the complete nationalization of the existing industries and also the setting up of new ones by the state. No private ownership of industry shall be allowed. The state will, however, encourage and stimulate the setting up of community or village-owned small industries and other commercial activities.

The level of foreign participation in commerce, industry and agriculture shall be kept at a minimum. Villages and other communities will be encouraged to participate in the development of commerce and industry through people's cooperatives and other institutions which will be set up for the purpose of creating avenues for village and community industrial and commercial ventures.

LABOUR/WORKERS

Workers will be given a direct say in the running and operation of all industries in the country. The state shall create machinery through which workers will be able to participate in management and other related institutions in industry and commerce. Trade Unions of workers shall be encouraged.

These trade unions will however, be expected to develop as an integral ingredient of the working class and to advance and promote the struggle of workers against capitalism of any complexion.

EDUCATION

Education shall be the responsibility of the state and it shall reflect and promote the ideal of an egalitarian society and be fiercely against capitalism and all capitalist educational notions which are now an integral part of the present educational system.

The basic and fundamental objective of our educational system will be that of liberating man from all oppressive and exploitative values and ethics which colonialism brought in their train.

Furthermore, our education shall be geared towards to a sense of self reliance and self initiative in the people and it shall be devoid of any elitist tendencies. It shall be free and compulsory.

HEALTH SERVICES

All health services shall be the sole responsibility of the State and no private health services shall be permitted. This means the setting up, planning and development of the health services shall be done by the State. As in other instances, villages and communities shall be allowed to set up their own health services. This will be in line with the policy of self-reliance and self-initiative.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS

All public transport and communications services shall be owned by the State and it will be the responsibility of the State to provide all these services.

No private ownership of public transport and communications shall be permitted.

HOUSING SERVICES

Housing services shall be provided by the State and no private individuals will be allowed to provide housing services.

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