

P.O.Box 2409,

LUSAKA. 22.4.1969.

The Chairman and Comrades A.N.C.SA Consultative Conference,

Dear Comrades ,

It is with great sorrow that I have been forced by circumstances to cancel my attendance to the conference. I realise the importance of this meeting, perhaps the most important in the history of our movement. I hope it will be a historical occasion, a turning point in our struggle to achieve freedom in our life time.

Since I am unable to attend, to be with you in person, I hope you will be patient enough to hear something of my thoughts.

I am going to speak about our trade union work, because it is this more than anything else that has been the main centre of my activities for the past 39 years, I do not mean by this as something to be isolated from the political struggle. On the contrary trade union work has always been for me a way of drawing workers into the political struggle, a way of giving the workers political understanding and organising them to struggle and win liberation from racial, national and class oppression.

It is for this reason that I regret the virtual collapse of the trade union movement that was built up so painfully over the past 50 years. The movement whose foundations were laid by such devoted comrades as J.B. Marks, Moses ~~Kotane~~ Kotane, Thibedi, John Gomas, James LaGuma, James Shuba, Henry October, John Mtini and others. Of all the many unions that were formed in the past years only a handful have survived and of these not more than two can be relied on to give <sup>correct</sup> leadership to the workers.

I can think of many reasons for this situation. One day it will be necessary to examine those reasons. I am not going to do it now, except in so far as I want to make one point. This is that no trade union ever succeeded in holding the loyalty of the workers, of obtaining the workers following, as long as it neglected the workers material needs for purely political ends. Don't misunderstand, I am not advocating "economism", I am not saying the trade unions can live by bread alone, what I do say is that they cannot live without bread.

We must mobilise the working people to lead and execute the struggle for liberation. To achieve this, we must attend to this matter. We must understand to give leadership to the workers' daily needs - for higher wages, better working conditions, against the colour-bar, against the White thugs who feed on the fruits of our people's labour. We must organise them for economic as well as political objectives.

Let us acknowledge that we have failed in this work. NACTU - part of the Alliance has done great work in exposing the White minority regime in

its treatment of the working people. SACTU has done a great service in presenting our case before the world labour movement. SACTU has taken our message to the workers in the Socialist countries as well as to the workers in U.K. - It has made appeals to the ILO WFTU and has received great support. The ILO to-day is not what it was 40 or even 20 years ago. It has issued a vast amount of printed material exposing the slave conditions prevailing in S.A. All this is very useful and essential in our work.

More has to be done. There are still areas that require special attention by us - Japan, USA, France & Italy. But the most urgent task is to rebuild a militant trade union movement in S.A. This is not something that we can expect the ~~minors~~ unions to undertake, that leadership have moved far away from their class roots. They regard themselves and act as part of the ruling section, part of the White supremacists. We must and can find our new leaders amongst the exploited, amongst the African, Coloured and Indian workers. To find the new leaders, we must in the first place select and prepare special comrades who will be able to find these leaders. Selected SACTU comrades in exile must plan, direct the organisation of the African workers at home. By organisation I do not mean trade union organisation as known and understood everywhere for the past 300 years. We must think of new methods of getting access to the people at the point of production. By organisation, under our conditions, with such formidable enemies - we must organise under any name - Mutual Benefit Societies, Co-Op. We may even have to consider of utilising the 'Works Committees'. It was the Works Committee at Durban Docks that led the dockers strike this month. At all times we must carefully nurse our leaders and their work and not ~~having~~ a 'flash in the pan' ~~that is not~~ nor must comrades say, we have no time for this work, as I heard said before. Unless we do these painstaking work we shall not have the necessary bases, leaders and above all sustained achievements in our struggles that will lead to ultimate victory.

I have prepared two lengthy documents: one is S.A.'s Labour Force the second The Present Position of the Trade Union Movement, which I hope will be useful in formulating policy.

I hope Comrade Chairman and comrades, that this conference will rise to heights of clarity and boldness which the situation and our people require, that the conference deliberations will make it possible for our movement to hasten the day of liberation! ~~FOR~~ - AMANDLA? RBN