



19. SEME, Pixley Ka Isaka

1. Seme was born in Natal - 1880. He grew up on the Inanda Mission Station, and the Rev. S. Pixley, an American Congregationalist minister, sent him to school in Massachusetts. He graduated B.A. from Columbia University in 1906. He studied law at Jesus College Oxford, and in 1910, after being admitted to the bar at the Middle Temple, he set up as attorney in Johannesburg.

Cartoon: Seme in legal robes in the grounds of the Middle Temple

2. He turned to politics. He was farsighted enough to see the need for a nation-wide African organisation, and was the principal founder of the South African National Native Congress, later called the African National Congress (A.N.C.). Among his co-workers were Plaatje and Dube. Meanwhile he built up a large legal practice, married ^{the} Zulu Paramount Chief's daughter, and was awarded an Hon. LL.D by Columbia.

Cartoon: Sorry there is little action here. Can only suggest Dube in chair of the founding congress of the S.A.N.N.C., flanked by Plaatje and Seme.

3. Seme feared Communist influence on the A.N.C. He rallied conservative support and was elected president-general in 1930. With Matthews, Jabavu, Msimang and others, he opposed interference with the Cape African franchise. Because of his caution and his conservatism he was ousted in 1937 by the Rev. Z.R. Mahabane, also by today's standards a conservative. He continued busy but not prominent till his death in 1951.

Cartoon: I know we have already used the theme of Matthews, Jabavu, Msimang and Seme arguing with the PM General Hertzog, but it is a central theme of our history.