

SOUTH AFRICA'S ONLY WAY.

A Statement on Policy for Discussion at
the Labour Party Annual Conference to be
held in January 1955.

THE CHALLENGE.

A grave threat to the European population of South Africa lies in its own unwillingness to face the facts of race relations and to consider this problem fairly and dispassionately. Directly, or by implication, most Europeans accept the dangerous policies of the Nationalists because they are not personally or immediately affected. South Africa cannot allow the situation to drift in this way. A catastrophe is inevitable unless the policies of exclusiveness and oppression are abandoned in favour of bold new steps to meet the demands of progress and justice in our developing multi-racial society.

The Government has frightened many people into passiveness and silence. The fear of holding or supporting unpopular political views is creating a dangerous apathy amongst supporters of the Opposition parties. The non-Europeans are deprived of hope for the future and resentment, despair and bitterness is becoming general. The dangers increase as the Government intensifies its campaign against the leaders of the Non-European people. The Suppression of Communism Act is being used to silence the leaders, suppress all opposition to the laws of discrimination and to prevent their legitimate demands for freedom and opportunity to raise themselves from a life of poverty and ignorance. The age-old struggle of the underdog for freedom is named Communism and suppressed accordingly.

Day by day the situation becomes more explosive, yet the small voice of sanity goes unheeded. To all intents and purposes the Union is without an effective Opposition. The United Party has now conclusively shown that in the all important matter of race relations its disagreement with the Nationalists is not one of principle but of degree and emphasis.

Only the Labour Party has a sane and realistic policy to guide South Africa towards co-operation in this multi-racial country. The Labour Party believes that, given the lead, there will be found enough courageous and farsighted South Africans who will realise that the only way to survive and ensure a happy future for themselves and their children is to give the Non-European more freedom and greater opportunity to raise themselves socially and economically.

If concessions are made the Europeans have little to fear for this land of ours is rich enough to provide for all sections and races.

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1. A NON-EUROPEAN POLICY OF PROGRESS IN PARTNERSHIP.

All parties have now rejected total territorial separation of the races as an impossible dream. The Nats. do so by explaining that such separation would take at least 100 years to achieve. The United Party declare that the inspiration of their new policy is the fact of "economic integration" of the races.

The question therefore is, what are to be the rights of the Non-European people in this mixed society? Must they be condemned forever to the role of inferiors, to be the hewers of wood and the drawers of water? Must they be denied forever a share in the democratic councils of the Nation? Must their progress and opportunities be restricted in order to maintain "White supremacy"? Both the Nats. and the U.P. reply to these questions in the affirmative by adopting policies designed to that end.

This is an attitude of despair. It is based upon the "Master race" theory and can be maintained only by means of vicious laws and cruel despotism.

The Labour Party has a different approach. Our aim is the establishment of a society where everyone gives of his best to the whole community and receives the maximum reward for his efforts. We believe that inequality of opportunity is morally unjust and economically crippling to the Nation. We therefore oppose measures and practices designed to hamper or retard the fullest progress of any section of the community. We believe that such a policy, far from resulting in the "swamping" of the Whites would be in the interest of all, would engender racial harmony. It would establish mutual respect and make possible co-existence of the races on a permanent basis.

The non-European policy of the Labour Party proposes certain immediate steps towards that end, including free and compulsory education, the right of the Native workers to sell their labour in the best market, the provision of decent housing at reasonable rentals in urban areas, the rehabilitation of the Native reserves, the training of industrial and agricultural workers and full trade union rights. We propose the increase in the number of Native Representatives in Parliament from three to ten, through a universal franchise for all adult literate inhabitants, and the right of Natives to elect representatives of their own race. We also propose ten Senators and direct representation in the Provincial Councils and in the town Councils.

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2. THE RIGHTS OF LABOUR.

The Labour Party stands by the right of all workers to associate and combine for the purpose of furthering their interests. All workers, irrespective of colour, must have the right to organise and belong to trade unions. They alone must decide whether to associate in racially mixed or separate trade unions.

Workers' organisations should be entitled to full legal recognition and be allowed to conduct their own affairs in the traditional, democratic way, without Government interference or pressure. There must be no restrictions on the worthy aim of securing the greatest strength and solidarity in order to protect workers against exploitation and to provide them with the maximum assistance and benefits.

As fully set out in our Non-European policy, we stand by "economic equality", i.e. equal pay for equal work. We oppose the exploitation of one section of the workers at the expense of another, on the grounds of colour. At the same time we advocate the training of Non-Europeans to enable them to play their part in all sectors of our economy.

Since the accession to power of the Nationalist Party the organised strength of the unions has gravely deteriorated. Disunity has made the movement defenceless in face of constant Government interference. The Industrial Conciliation Bill, which the Labour Party bitterly opposed and will continue to fight, did galvanise some trade union leaders into action and their efforts have brought into being a new Trade Union Council, which promises to become the most powerful Federation of trade unions in the country's history. This T.U.C. is confined to registered trade unions and excludes Native workers, but the Labour Party welcomes the undertaking of the Council to organise Native trade unions along parallel lines.

We believe that the sound organisation of Native workers in trade unions is essential in the interests of all workers and an essential part of civilised society.

3. CIVIL LIBERTIES.

The curtailment of democratic rights and freedoms in South Africa has become a major threat to democracy.

On the pretext of suppressing Communism and applying its policy of Apartheid, the Government has circumscribed many important human liberties such as freedom of expression, freedom of association, freedom of movement, the sanctity of the home, and the protection of the rule of law.

The banning of trade union leaders, the prohibiting of persons from attending gatherings, the intrusion of police at public
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meetings and the taking of buses, the refusal to grant passports, the suppression of newspapers, the censorship of political publications and the banishment of Native leaders, have become commonplace events in South Africa.

The Labour Party condemns these acts of intimidation and despotism. They are instruments of dictatorship and have no place in a democratic society. The Labour Party will fight for the restoration of democratic rights and freedoms already taken away and oppose all attacks on civil liberties. It will also fight for the repeal of all tyrannical and despotic laws.

4. PRICES AND LIVING COSTS.

While the Government has not been slow in interfering in the domestic affairs of the workers' organisations, it has shown a complete neglect of the economic well-being of the workers themselves.

This is revealed in the ever-rising cost of living and the reluctance of the Government to limit profits and raise cost-of-living allowances. For most workers statutory cost-of-living allowances are pegged at March 1953 levels, although living costs have risen considerably, as shown by the Retail Price Index.

The Labour Party demands that the following steps, at least, should be taken to alleviate the position:-

1. Adequate increases in cost-of-living allowances to be gazetted immediately, and all C.O.L.A. to be incorporated in the basic wage or salaries.
2. A new sliding scale of statutory allowances to be made applicable to all workers.
3. Review all profit margins on essential commodities.
4. Apply rent control to all dwellings.

5. HOUSING AND RENTS.

Towns throughout the Union are now feeling the effects of the Government's housing policy. Shortly after assuming power the Nats. amended the Rents Act, exempting from control all premises erected after the 21st. October 1949. Their intention was to encourage builders, financiers and speculators to invest money in new buildings and so meet the heavy demand for homes. While thousands of blocks of flats have been erected in the urban areas, rentals are excessively high and most families are paying far more than they can afford. In many cases rentals are taking as much as 40% of the family income. Landlords are exploiting the housing shortage for their own gain because people must pay the rents demanded in order to have a place to live.

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With new building being mainly confined to the creation of high rental flats, few houses are becoming available and parents are compelled to bring up their children in the cramped and unsuitable conditions of flat life.

The Labour Party calls for a bold and progressive Housing programme, aimed at providing decent homes for both European and Non-European, with special steps against overcrowding and the creation of potential slums, through co-operation with local authorities.

Furthermore, the Labour Party considers that the rents act should be amended in order to lessen the demands of landlords for increased rentals, which in many cases are unwarranted. The act should also be amended in order to bring all dwellings under control.

6. NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE.

The cost of ill-health is a constant anxiety for working people. After the war there was some promise of South Africa having a National Health Service as part of a wider Social Security Scheme. The National Health Services Commission recommended it and the Provinces partially introduced free health services. Now they are turning away from that policy. A National Health Service has gone the way of most war-time promises.

The Labour Party holds the view that all citizens are entitled to full and free medical attention and that no one should be crippled financially as a result of ill-health or accident. We advocate the establishment of a comprehensive, unified Health Service for all the people of South Africa, aiming at the promotion of health, the prevention and treatment of disease and the rehabilitation of the unfit. This Health Service should be:-

- (a) Controlled and financed by the State.
- (b) Planned and organised by a body of experts representing the various interested departments of the Government, the public and the medical and allied professions.
- (c) Supervised and regulated in matters of technical administration by the elected representatives of the professional personnel engaged in the service.
- (d) With adequate safeguard for critical investigation by the public.

The Labour Party believes that the regional, financial and technical difficulties that are being used as arguments to oppose a National health Service are not valid. These obstacles can be swept away once there is a desire to establish such a Service. As an interim measure we advocate the immediate alleviation of the high cost of illness by a remission in

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taxation on amounts spent on medical and allied services.

7. PENSIONS WITHOUT A MEANS TEST.

Pensions to-day are quite out of proportion to the high cost of living. With the depreciated value of the £ and the extremely high costs of basic needs - foods, clothing and shelter - pensioners cannot exist on what they are receiving today.

The Labour Party demands substantial increases in veterans, old age and other pensions.

The application of a means test to pensioners, while aimed at excluding from benefits those who are economically self-supporting, results in many hardships. Pensions should be considered a right and not as charity.

The Labour Party is opposed to the means test and presses for its abolition.

8. THE REPUBLICAN ISSUE.

The recent changes in the leadership of the Nationalist Party brings added emphasis to their Republican campaign. According to various declarations they have made in the past, the Nationalist objective is a "Christian-National Republican State" to supplant what they describe as "the foreign, British, liberalistic democracy now existing in the country".

Such an objective despite its crude conversion of the words "Christian" and "National" is an open threat to all progressive, freedom-loving people. The real question therefore, becomes, not whether South Africa should be a Republic, but whether its people are to be governed under a democratic or authoritarian constitution.

Today South Africa is an independent, sovereign State, complete master of her own affairs. Despite the symbol of the constitutional monarchy, Britain does not and cannot interfere in the government of South Africa. The South African Parliament is the nation's only lawmaker and is subject only to its own Constitution.

Membership of the Commonwealth is of great benefit to the Union in many ways, particularly economically. The Labour Party is of opinion that to leave the Commonwealth would be to abandon our greatest opportunities for solving the immense problems that confront us in the peaceful and orderly development of Africa. Our multi-racial Commonwealth provides the means of consultation, co-operation and joint endeavour that should not be lightly discarded.

To disturb the present position would mean to introduce new strife and bitterness and still further divide the different sections of the people of South Africa, without any advantage except to satisfy the sentimental feelings of some.

THE ONLY WAY.

At no time in the history of Parliamentary rule in South Africa has there been so urgent a need for a strong Opposition as at present, yet the acceptance by the United Party in principle of so much of the Nationalist Party programme has brought about a situation which makes the Labour Party, in spite of its small representation, the only effective party of the Opposition.

In these circumstances we appeal to every individual with a progressive outlook to come to our aid and help strengthen the Labour Party. Sooner or later our Non-European policy will be accepted by the people of this land as the real solution to our racial problem. It is a policy that is fair, sane and realistic.

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