

INTRODUCTION:

Ever since the inception of the 'New' Congress the spectre of Black Consciousness has been haunting us - sometimes dark & quiet and at others flushed with innovation - but always there with a tenacious presence. We cannot ignore it. It precipitates recognition. We must be wary of fighting it for it is not the main enemy - if enemy at all. How then do we approach it? It is an answer to this question which we intend to offer to-day. It would be futile seeking answers with an inadequate understanding of the problem. Therefore we will attempt to define broadly the concept of Black Consciousness, trace its origins, point out its shortcomings and relate these facts to the fundamental conflict of interests between the N.I.C. and Black Consciousness.

ON RECOGNISING BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS:

After numerous discussions with the proponents of Black Consciousness it would appear that few people understand this concept except themselves - this despite the vast amount of literature which has been circulated and the verbiage which has been generated, we will therefore quote them in defining them - i.e. B.C., we will not refer to the leaders of the 'Black Power' movement in the U.S.A. - we will not quote Malcolm X - for we have been reminded very often that B.C. is not Black Power. We cannot accept that B.C. is 'New' - it has been recognised by writers like Frantz Fanon and politician like Senghor many years ago. We will rely on the ideas supplied by the protagonists of B.C. here in South Africa in trying to understand it. B.C. is essentially a recognition and an affirmation by the Black Man of his true worth - that he is a man, neither superior nor inferior to any other on earth - with special reference to the White Man.

"Black Consciousness seeks to re-establish the true values of man back to man himself".....(1).

The black man needs to assert himself as he has been made to feel inferior through countless measures by the White Man.

"Black Consciousness is a way of life which attempts not only to break the chains of servitude but liberates the Black Man from an induced sense of inferiority".....(2).

How is he to do this? He does this by proposing "alternate life-views - politically, educationally, culturally, religiously and economically".....(3).

This, basically, is B.C.

The obvious and immediate counter to this is that by defining ourselves 2/.....

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ourselves as Black we have fallen into the trap set by the White Man. It is he who has defined himself by his colour - must we follow his perverse logic? Do we have to think of ourselves in terms proposed by the White Man? We have divorced ourselves from both the White Man's view of himself and us and yet at our 1st independent bid we fall into the rut ground by him. We reject colour as a criterion for recogniaing a man's worth and yet define ourselves as Black. That great civil rights leader - Martin Luther King - would, if alive, not have agreed - he wished his children to be judged by the "content of their character" and not "the colour of their skin".

Not only is it politically incorrect to call ourselves 'Black' - it is - and this we must remind you is a minor point - factually incorrect - for we are, all of us - Black, shades of black, brown and shades of white. By definition 'Black People' are: "Those who are by law or tradition politically, socially and economically discriminated against".....(4).

One would be hard put, in the light of this classification, to pin the Japanese and Chinese to one or the other group. Correctly speaking therefore we are 'multicoloured' - the truth of the matter of course is that in the final analysis we are men - regardless of colour.

BLACK RELIGION AND EDUCATION:

A re-examination of education and religion is thought to be necessary in this search for ourselves.

"The educational system is enslaving and it must be rejected and new ones brought in".....(5).

In South Africa this is true but we cannot see how education can be linked with B.C. The aim of education is to prepare children to think clearly and play their role adequately in a just society. Education therefore is purposeful and enlightening or not; many of its truths are universal. There can be no such thing as 'Black Education'; mathematics, geography and biology will always be what they are - not 'Black' or 'White'. There is of course a genuine need for re-writing history - but this is not 'Black History' - it must be simply 'True' History - as objective as man is capable of recording it. Black suggests partiality. There ought to be a faculty for African Studies - but surely this is not 'Black'.

"Black Theology seeks to relate Black People with their God, a fighting God who abhors all repressive regimes".....(6).

We find this difficult to interpret; "our Gods have been scared away by the hells and ghosts of the White Bible"....(7).

We find this 3/.....

We find this loose talk. If it is a cry for the correct application of Christianity we are in full agreement, but surely this is not 'Black Theology' - it is once again simply the true teachings of Christ; if on the other hand it is a plea for the rejection of Christianity then.....!

ON CULTURE:

In all their talk of our past cultures there is always a danger of reverting to forms of life ill-suited to a modern industrial society like South Africa. They would do well to remember that that brilliant spokesman of the third world, Frantz Fanon, believed that the past is only helpful if used for the future and "that it is around the peoples struggles that African - Negro culture takes on substance and not around songs, poems, or folklore".

It is we, who are struggling non-violently for our liberation, it is we who will build our culture in the Here and Now.

Culture cannot exist without political freedom - not true culture that is - Fanon believes that "to fight for national culture means in the 1st place the liberation of the nation, the material key-stone which makes the building of a culture possible". It is only when the conditions possible for the existence of a culture are created, that a culture is possible.

Consciousness and culture will come with change. It is little use telling the deprived and discredited that he is as good as the White Man whilst his socio-economic conditions are miserable. ; All the theorising in the world is of little avail unless the basic inequalities alter and allow of a free and complete expression of the oppressed man.

One of the laudable aims of Black Consciousness is to create Black Solidarity. The methods employed to do so are bound to fail for solidarity comes not so much from religion, customs, tastes and racial affinity as from a similarity in economic and social conditions and from a similarity in a desire for progress and recuperation.

THE ORIGINS OF BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS:

At about the turn of the 19th century the 'white countries' of Europe and Britain, armed with the twin ideals of Democracy and Christianity, rolled on by the wheels of industry, descended on Africa and the rest of the world. The White met the Black. The Black had to be oppressed for the White's socio-economic benefit. Jean Paul Sartre believes that the White Man's ethics restrained him from treating another human being with such

utter and total 4/.....

utter and total disregard and cruelty. The White Man rationalised. The Black is less than a man - he could therefore be easily oppressed. The White Man was 'superior' and the Black 'inferior'. The White thus developed his superior white consciousness and culture.

The black was left with nothing. The reaction to whiteness resulted in an assertion of blackness, this leads to a liberation of the personality which will reject negativeness and finally discard inferiority.

B.C. is a reaction to this white consciousness and nothing more. Adam Small says "Blackness is an historical necessity." Daphne Maskella denies history when she announces "B.C. is not a product of frustration or rejection by Whites, it is a product of self-realisation".....(9).

How little they appear to understand themselves! Strini Moodley in a paper on B.C.(10) outlines the colonialist oppression of Blacks and states that this gives rise to "Psychological Oppression". Our answer to him is the only possible one - only a reversal of oppression can free the Blacks Psychologically - no amount of cultural elevation can. Like Fanon we are sometimes inclined to think that man's greatest problem is that he was once a child. For all the narrow prejudices of his parents, the closed interests of his family and the parochial attitudes of his particular society brand him with an almost indelible resistance to change. Thus is an Indian an Indian, a Jew a Jew and an Afrikaner an Afrikaner - all with their own stifling and oppressive beliefs and views. The nexus between man and man is ignored or at best played down and his natural and environmental dissimilarities accentuated.

We believe that B.C. is an extension of this very same logic and goes against a form of a broad and all-encompassing humanism which we envisage for society. Here of course 'Blackness' is the rallying point. We also believe that there are genuine dangers in B.C. leading to a form of B.P.

(11) "Blackness" - Adam Small says "is not racism but speaks of persons with worth while endeavours". That may well be - but our knowledge of man's past tells us that this which is not 'Racism' now, has the grave potential of racism and exclusiveness. A quick glance at groups in history similarly fired with a narrow enthusiasm tells us what to expect. The Nazis in Germany whipped a national fervour over their "German-ness" and gave rise to one of the most explosive and repressive regimes in history. India and Pakistan, Ulster, and Bangla Desh are examples for us to learn from; we are not saying their

particular 5/.....

particular problems and wars were good or bad - all we are saying is: this is the course such movements take.

B.C. is therefore fraught with danger. William Davis - writing in the British Guardian (8.4.72) observes: "Its called B.C. here, rather than B.P., but in all essentials it amounts to the same thing. On the other hand it clearly fits in with Nat. ideology for separate dev.". You may well say "Better Black Domination than White,". We cannot agree.

We have had enough of Domination! We want a free and equal life for all our citizens - Black and White. We can set our course straight now - lets not ignore that. We owe it to the Future Generation of this country and Humanity at large. The Proponents of B.C. say it is a tactical manoeuvre until a normal situation is reached. That millenium will never come; as we have pointed out - the chances are that the manoeuvre will Become Ultimate Belief.

Let us examine the political manifestations of B.C. as we have had the opportunity to observe it in Africa. We dare not say that individuals exemplify a cause, but they certainly indicate some of its realities.

Black Consciousness, by that name or any other, has already played a role in emerging Africa. The pre-independence struggles of certain African countries were centred around B.C.; but B.C., has become evident after independence, is not sufficient unto itself - it is an inadequate programme for the creation of an egalitarian society. The pre-independence tenor of Senghor of Senegal and Rabe Manjardan of Madagascar was negritude, very akin to B.C. What happened when independence was obtd.? Both of these stalwarts voted against the Algerian people in the general assembly of the U.N. This was hardly likely to engender a solidarity amongst the colonised oppressed of Africa.

Black politicians cannot be effective in the purview of B.C. alone - they are only relevant in the type of societies they create i.e. their influence on social relations, humanity's future and a just society. It is also clear that once the mainstay of B.C. - i.e. colonialism - disappears - it falls apart itself. There is no reason to believe that colonialism has long to survive, though its parallel evil - oppression by racist regimes may still last for some time. What are the answers then? What do we, in the N.I.C., propose?

WE RECOGNISE:

1. The existence of an oppressor class and an oppressed class in S. African Society.
2. Oppression exists in its most obvious and blatant form in the person of the White racist who has both economical and political 6/.....

political advantages.

3. The Black who deprives his fellow Black of economic advantage is much an oppressor.
4. The White who feels and therefore is oppressed, is, in part, allied to the oppressed Black, but because he is White with White privilege he cannot be wholly accepted.
5. The contradictions in our society therefore involve:
 - (a) Whites and Blacks.
 - (b) Blacks and Blacks.
6. The primary contradiction in our society is a combination of (1), (2) and (3). Number (4) is a secondary contradiction.

We feel that B.C. does not afford us a correct perspective of the inequalities and injustices which exist in our society. It appears to concentrate its efforts against the wrong target - the White Liberal. The liberal is not our main enemy. It seems to us that B.C. devotes too much of their energies to this group. One last point - the proponents of B.C. seem unduly perturbed (like the Govt.) about communists amongst us. This is successful indoctrination. The danger of course is that the Govt. has labelled all varieties of men as communists - devout Christians, staunch Muslims and fervent Gandhians. Mewa Ramgobin - whose devotion to a non-violent and non communist cause is well known - has been banned under the suppression of communism act. Where will we draw the line? The dangers of falling into the Govt's snares are too obvious. We feel, in the light of the above, that though there are fundamental differences between our viewpoint and that of the R.C. "Group", we can bury these, where grounds of common interests exist, in recognition of our common ideal. We wish to quarrel with them no longer.

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