

# PARTICIPATION, NEGOTIATION AND THE FUTURE: THE CONGRESS VIEW:

The continued participation of MPs in the House of Delegates in the face of strong opposition from within the Indian community, and the majority of all South Africans, must raise serious questions about their motives. They continue to make promises which they know they cannot fulfil. Bullying tactics, divisive methods and dishonest means are being used in a short-term effort to win support, regardless of the consequences. It is important now, more than ever, for the Indian people to unite in opposition to participation in the Apartheid system of government.

## **Why Congress rejected the Tri-cameral Constitution**

Let us look afresh at the reasons why we rejected the Tri-cameral constitution in 1983. Our people will remember that at the time we pointed out that the government introduced the new constitution to **divide** our people and thereby **weaken the opposition to Apartheid**. The Government's attempts to try and enlist Indian support for an anti-African, anti-ANC alliance was dangerous. The Indian people needed to show clearly that we are **against Apartheid and wanted change that would benefit all South Africans, regardless of race**.

After carefully studying the new constitution we concluded that it would not be possible for Indian and "Coloured" MP's to change racially discriminatory laws which the National Party insisted on maintaining; nor would it be possible to oppose laws which the Nats were determined to pass. Those who claimed that they were going to "fight Apartheid from within" were either deliberately misleading our people or else had not themselves understood the government's constitutional plan.

## **Congress was right**

Who can deny, after the experience of the last few years, and the recent by-election in Lenasia, that our stand was the right one. The Tri-cameral farce which brought Indians and "Coloureds" in **only as junior partners** and totally **excluded the African majority**, is now widely recognised to have been a costly failure. The government now **does little to disguise its reliance on brute force**. Armed government troops **rule the townships through violence and intimidation**. There is widespread fear and insecurity. More than 30,000 people

are in detention without trial. The press is told what to print and what they may not print. Unemployment is rising and living standards are declining. Whites continue to have privileged access to jobs, housing, education and health facilities. Have things changed for the better or become worse?

## **House of Delegates - A dismal failure**

At a time when the Indian people are in need of unity and reliable, honest leadership, MP's in the House of Delegates have been involved in an unseemly public display of wheeling and dealing, and backstabbing. Their conduct has been a source of humiliation to all our people. They have failed utterly and completely to respond with any courage and vision to the needs of our people and the urgent question of political change. Who can now distinguish the NPP, Solidarity and the Labour Party from the Nationalist Government?

## **The Nationalist cannot meet our aspirations**

There are some - fortunately a small minority - who have argued that we should participate in the Tri-cameral constitution because P.W.Botha is a "Reformer" and the NP is now genuine about change. They say, we should co-operate with the White government and encourage it to make more changes in the law. But who can now, after our experience of what "reform" really means, seriously believe in the sincerity of the present government? Is it not clear as day-light that they only make changes when the people take united mass action, and that they are only prepared to make "changes" which do not interfere with the National Party's control of the government. In short, they are still committed to white domination but they want Indian and Coloured support for **their** government.

## **The NP is not serious about negotiation**

Government spokesmen never tire of telling us on SABC TV that they want to negotiate and that the violence is being used by the anti-Apartheid movement and the peoples organisations. The truth is that it is the government that uses violence - the

army, police, security police, "kitskonstabels" and vigilantes - to maintain minority rule. The government talks about negotiation, but in reality it is only prepared to talk to who sings its tune. There are many within the White community who now recognised that they must talk to genuine leaders like Mandela, Kathrada and Sisulu and Tambo. But the government stubbornly refuses to do so. The reason why they do not want to talk is simple. They will then have to talk about real change - the equality of all South Africans and free elections. And they know, that, the democratic majority of South Africa will use their **Freedom to elect** their own government. White minority rule, Nationalist domination, and Apartheid will be a thing of the past.

## **Who is responsible for violence?**

Congress lays the blame for violence fairly and squarely on the shoulders of the present government. They implemented Apartheid laws. They have forced millions to live in poverty, misery, fear and ignorance. When the ANC made peaceful representations to them to change, they detained leaders, banned the ANC and shot people demonstrating against the pass laws in Sharpsville. We say clearly - the Nationalists forced the ANC to adopt armed struggle as a last resort. It is with the same arrogance and stupidity that they are dealing with the UDF today. Who can deny that RAM Saloojee and Prema Naidoo are peaceful men but how many times have they been detained? Essop Jassat, Terror Lekota, Cassim Saloojee and Popo Molefe have all fought for change by peaceful means. Yet all have faced charges of treason. What choice are they leaving to the UDF? What choice did they leave the ANC?

## **The Road to Peace**

**The Indian people must realize that there will never be peace without justice. And we must struggle for justice, not only for ourselves but for all South Africans. Our interests in the future can only be secured through firm and courageous participation in the struggle today!** And in travelling this road we must rely on the moral strength and clear vision of men like Nehru, Nasser, Dadoo and Thambi Naidoo.