

## **SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE NATIONAL CONGRESS**

Permit me to say just a few words on a subject of greatest moment in all native history and over which unfortunately there still prevails considerable misunderstanding –especially in Basutholand, I have of late been heartily grieved indeed to see how some of the greatest men of Basutholand have allowed themselves to doubt or even to hesitate when all experience and reason have so clearly shown that UNION is the greatest rock of our salvation. It is on this rock that all nations have built all their progress and well-being-UNION –this is the secret of Samson’s great strength. Gentlemen let him beware who seeks today to keep us divided.

The 8<sup>th</sup> January 1912 shall ever remain memorable in African history because it was on that day that the transcending influence of Letsie II brought us together at Bloemfontein. It was a conference of races and of nations –many of ranks had been devastated by the demon of inter-tribal strife and jealousy.

The writer is generally regarded as the convenor of this Congress however I wish to put on record that the founder of this great SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE NATIONAL CONGRESS is none other than Letsie II and in doing this he fulfilled the work which his predecessor the Great Moshoeshe had begun. For it was that great who lowered Chaka’s mighty shield.

“Inyati ejame ngo mukonto

Pakati ko Mzimvubu nama Mpondo”

It was the Moshoeshe who first saw that peace and Union alone could save his country and that the victories of peace were far greater and more lasting than those of war. The mantle of Moshoeshe has in this day fallen upon his noble son.

The SOUTH AFRICAN NATIVE NATIONAL CONGRESS is in fact a Native Parliament composed of two houses. The Executive Commons and the ruling nobles. In this respect it differs from anything that Dr. Rubusana and others have attempted before. The main power of this Congress is vested in the Nobles or Chiefs who compose the upper house. The Commons met jointly with their chiefs but the latter sit as judges of appeal in case the suppressed volcanoes of ancient jealousies and hatred should threaten disruption. In short the Chiefs are there by virtue of their undoubted influence and position to guide, control and temper the spirit of the less responsible and more radical commons. The delegates who attended at Bloemfontein all must still have a vivid recollection of the dignified precedent set by the noble Chiefs at the Congress. Namely that the adopted constitution define the rulers which guide the officers of the Executive Commons and that the noble Chiefs are above the written constitution. They controlled us by virtue of their inherent right to command and this precedent the congress unanimously accepted.

The highest officer among the Executive commoners is the Reverend John L Dube who is styled President. Even he however is not the supreme head of the Congress as has been supposed. He is, under the constitution, the chief Executive of the Executive Commons and chairman of the same. We have seen however that the nobles are there to guide and control him as well as the commons. The highest position in the Congress therefore is that of the leaders of the nobles. This great person in LETSIE II the Paramount Chief of Basutholand. This position was clearly understood and accepted by the delegates and the whole Congress at Bloemfontein. It was the unanimity of this sentiment and devotion which made election not necessary. This was the position which Chief Maama as the Representative of Letsie II occupied throughout the Congress without any question. Chief Maama finally controlled not only the Acting President but the whole Congress. This is sufficient proof of the fact that Letsie II whom he represented is the real head of the South African Native National Congress by the unanimous consent of the whole Congress and of the noble Chiefs who rendered notable assistance. Thus, it is quite true that Letsie II, is now not the Paramount Chief of Basutholand only but is through this Congress a National prince over all the natives of South Africa who came under this Congress. I have written this in order to dissipate all doubt.

I regret that the reporters did not grasp the full legal and constitutional significance of this most important precedent which I have just described. This exposition must however suffice as they too will agree that I have told the truth more plainly and more fully than they were able to describe. The whole Congress unanimously applauded me on the last when I charged Chief Maama to carry aback to Lestie II the homage of the whole Congress. It is not in our power to elect him – he was there in our hearts the emblem of our greatest and highest traditions. All that we could do was to indicate our love and devotion, our gratitude to him as the founder of the Congress and our willingness to follow him. Chief Maama took this message to the Paramount Chief and it is true. All that remains for us to do is that we constantly pray for our noble leader that God may help us and through him teach us to love God and to love one another for thus we shall fulfill the law and Prophets.

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