

African National Congress.

P.O. BOX 9207.  
JOHANNESBURG.

21st January 1952.

The Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa.  
Parliament.  
CAPE TOWN.

Sir,

In terms of the resolution adopted by the 39th Session of the African National Congress held at Bloemfontein we have been instructed to address you as follows:

The African National Congress was established in 1912 to protect and advance the interests of the African people in all matters affecting them, and, to attain their freedom from all discriminatory laws whatsoever. To this end the African National Congress has, since its establishment, endeavoured by every constitutional method to bring to the notice of the Government the legitimate demands of the African people and repeatedly pressed, in particular, their inherent right to be directly represented in Parliament, Provincial and Municipal Councils and in all councils of state.

This attitude was a demonstration not only of the willingness and readiness of the African people to co-operate with the Government but also evidence of their sincere desire for peace, harmony and friendship amongst all sections of our population. As is well-known the Government through its repressive policy of trusteeship, segregation and apartheid and through legislation that continues to insult and degrade the African people by depriving them of fundamental human rights enjoyed in all democratic communities, have categorically rejected our offer of co-operation. The consequence has been the gradual worsening of the social, economic and political position of the African people and a rising tide of racial bitterness and tension. The position has been aggravated in recent times by the Pass Laws, Stock Limitation, the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950, the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 and the Voters Act of 1951.

The cumulative effect this legislation is to crush the National Organisations of the oppressed people; to destroy the economic position of the people and to create a reservoir of cheap labour for the farms and the gold mines; to prevent the unity and development of the African people towards full nationhood and to humiliate them in a host of other manners.

The African National Congress as the National Organisation of the African people cannot remain quiet on an issue that is a matter of life and death to the people, to do so would be a betrayal of the trust and confidence placed upon it by the African people.

At the recent Annual Conference of the African National Congress held in Bloemfontein from the 15th to 17th December, 1951, the whole policy of the Government was reviewed and after serious and careful consideration of the matter, Conference unanimously to call upon your Government, as we hereby do, to repeal the aforementioned laws by NOT LATER THAN THE 29th DAY OF FEBRUARY, 1952, failing which the African National Congress will hold protest meetings and demonstrations on the 6th day of April, 1952 as a prelude to the implementation of the plan for the defiance of unjust laws.

In the light of the Conference resolution we also considered the

our  
Jan Van Riebeeck Celebrations. It is/considered opinion that the African people cannot participate in any shape or form in such celebrations, unless the aforementioned Acts which constitute an insult and humiliation to them are removed from the Statute Book.

We firmly believe that the freedom of the African people, the elimination of the exploitation of man by man and the restitution of democracy, liberty and harmony in South Africa are such vital and fundamental matters that the Government and the public must know that we are fully resolved to achieve them in our lifetime.

The struggle which our people are about to begin is not directed against any race or national group but against the unjust laws which keep in perpetual subjection and misery vast sections of the population. In this connection, it is a source of supreme satisfaction to us to know we have the full support and sympathy of all enlightened and honest men and women, black and white in our country and across the seas and that the present tension and crises have been brought about not by the African leaders but by the Government themselves.

We are instructed to point out that we have taken this decision in full appreciation of the consequences it entails and we must emphasise that whatever reaction is provoked from certain circles in this country, posterity will judge that this action we are about to begin was in the interest of all in our country, and will inspire our people for long ages to come.

We decide to place on record that for our part, we have endeavoured over the last forty years to bring about conditions for genuine progress and true democracy.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) Dr. J.S. MOROKA (President Gen.)  
W.M. SISULU (Secretary Gen.)