

ONE SHILLING

- by NELSON MANDELA

THE CAPITALIST CRISIS AND

SOUTH AFRICA

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One Shilling

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A NEW ROUND OF

OPPRESSION

^ GRIM new round of oppression and persecution is foreshadowed by the latest proceedings in Parliament. Having robbed the Coloured man of his vote, begun the issuing of passes to African women, and made a violent assault on the rights of workers to form free, recognised and united trade unions, the Government is attempting to

APOLOGY

We hereby unreservedly withdraw the defamatory statements regarding "The World" Newspaper published in the article entitled "The Special Conference of the Alan Doyle which was published in the February issue of "Liberation" and we express our sincere regret to "The World."

"LIBERATION."

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stifle the voice of the people from protesting against these and innumerable other outrages. Minister Swart has announced the intention of arresting about 200 of the victims of last September's raids, and has asked Parliament for yet more dictatorial powers to "deal with" all who are bold enough to stand up against his Party on its disreputable and doomed path to fascism. Africans are to be prevented, by reason of their race alone, from seeking interdicts to obtain the protection of the Courts. Special Courts are to be established for the purpose of trying people accused of Communism. Why Special Courts? Many people are going to draw the conclusion that Minister Swart is getting

tired of all the cases he keeps losing at the ordinary, independent Courts. He wants special ones to make sure that when he goes to law he will win.

A NATION OF OUTLAWS

Democrats will do well to ponder the meaning and deeper significance of these and similar measures. Already the Nationalists have endowed Swart with unheard-of powers. As policeman-prosecutor-judge-and-jury he has already condemned numerous citizens to political death and excommunication, involving them in loss of employment and in some cases banishment from their homes to areas where _ they are destitute of means of livelihood. In such cases the Minister is usually also the only Court of Appeal, and his unfortunate victims have no recourse to law at all. But in other cases they have sought and obtained access to the Courts, and a whole string of cases has proved him to be a Minister of Injustice. Naturally he does not like this. In the eyes of the Nationalists, a Minister is or should be above the law. What they, with their overweening racial arrogance, find particularly intolerable is that on a number of occasions Africans and other non-members of the master race have won cases against Cabinet Ministers. The reply of the Government is to deny Africans access to the Courts, to make the Africans a nation of outlaws. And this step itself will be but the prelude to placing all non-whites outside the law.

COMMUNISM, SEDITION AND TREASON

The same cowardly and servile spirit that has led the United Party and other non-Nationalist groups, especially the white trade unions, to refrain from opposition—and thus to become accomplices—to the Nationalists thus far, will lead many to close their eyes to these obvious

outrages of democracy. They will tell themselves that after all they are White men. and comfort themselves that they are at any rate safely within the law. But are they safe? Non-Europeans are not the only outlaws in the eyes of the Nationalists. There are the Communists too —and many of them are White. We must remember that in South Africa “Communist” does not only describe a person who believes in the principles of Marxism-Leninism. More and more it is coming to mean a person who challenges racial discrimination and white supremacy. Dr. Moroka is a capitalist, and rather conservative in his outlook.

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But that did not prevent him from being convicted of Communism together with the rest of the Congress leadership. Mr. E. S. Sachs describes himself as a believer in progressive capitalism, but that did not save him from being forced out of the secretaryship of his trade union. Father Huddleston is an earnest and sincere Christian. He was raided in last year’s anti-Communist raids all the same. Perhaps, but for his recall from South Africa, he would now be among Mr. Swart’s list of 200. Communism and sedition and treason are acquiring new meanings in South Africa. They mean being opposed to the Government.

The United Party and trade union leaders who have thrown in the towel in the struggle for the people’s rights may imagine that their acquiescence in the rape of freedom will save them in the future. They are wrong. The fanatical Nationalists, who inevitably are coming more and more to the top in the ruling Party, have long memories. In their eyes men like Strauss and Rutherford are little better than Communists. In vain they protest that the Government “misunderstands” their position, that they are really supporters of white supremacy, that they voted

for the Public Safety Act, that they are prepared to co-operate in applying the industrial colour bar. The Nationalists are not interested in these protestations; they are not interested in making a compromise or doing a deal. Nothing will satisfy them but total surrender. They look upon the would-be compromisers of the Bekker-Barlow "Conservative Party" with ill-concealed contempt. When Rutherford offers to meet them half way on the anti-Trade Union Law, they reject his offer but use the fact that he has made it to demoralise workers' resistance to the Bill. The lesson is plain to all who have eyes and ears and brains. There can be no compromise with the Nationalists. There can be no middle way of living together with them politically. Either you submit to their demand for utter surrender, you shout "Heil Strijdom!", you take the Jonker path, you apologise for your past sins in upholding democracy. Or else you stand up and fight.

A NEW SPIRIT ABROAD

There is a growing awareness of these striking realities among the ordinary people, of all races. The African workers, cutting through the mockery of the Native Labour (Settlement of Disputes) Act by taking direct action on the job; the Coloured people of Cape Town rallying against bus apartheid; the women organising against the pass laws; the democrats of Natal building a new unity against the Group Areas Act; the thousands of people of all races who have eagerly come forward to buy those forthright exposures of apartheid, Trevor Huddleston's "Naught For Your Comfort" and Harry Bloom's "Episode"—all these people, in different ways and on different levels, typify a new spirit that is abroad in South Africa. It is a spirit of uncompromising rejection of and resistance to the Government's policy, with its contempt for democracy and its degradation of the dignity of man. This

new spirit, which is bound to spread and become deeper as the Nationalists increasingly demonstrate their inability to solve the pressing

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social and economic problems facing the country, is a factor of incalculable

importance for the future. It can and will set at naught all the repressive measures planned by the Government to stifle opposition. It

can reverse the trend to dictatorship and compel the concession of civil liberties and free speech. Given organisational form and political

direction by a united movement of the anti-fascist forces of the country—the national liberation and trade union movements, the liberal, labour and democratic political forces—the same spirit can end Nationalist domination. It can open the road for the achievement of that vision of a free, united, equal and happy South African society—the Freedom Charter.

IN OUR LIFETIME

By NELSON MANDELA

The adoption of the Freedom Charter by the Congress of the People at Kliptown in June of last year was widely recognised both at home and abroad as an event of major political significance in the life of this country. In his message to the C.O.P. Chief A. J. Luthuli, the banned National President of the African National Congress, declared:

“Why will this assembly be significant and unique? Its size, I hope, will make it unique. But above all its multi-racial nature and its noble objectives will make it unique, because it will be the first time in the history of our multi-racial nation that its people from all walks of life will meet as equals, irrespective of race, colour

and creed, to formulate a Freedom Charter for all people in the country.”

The editorial of *New Age* of June 30, 1955, characterised the C.O.P. as the most spectacular and moving demonstration this country had ever seen; and that through it the people had given proof that they had the ability and the power to triumph over every obstacle and win the future of their dreams. *Fighting Talk* of July, 1955, saw several signs at the C.O.P. that the liberation movement in South Africa had come of age and in the same issue Alfred Hutchinson, reporting on the C.O.P., coined for his article the magnificent title “A New World Unfolds . . .” which accurately summarised the political significance of that historic gathering.

The same theme was taken up by *Liberation* of September last year when, in its editorial comment, it predicted that the text books of the future would treat the Kliptown meeting as one of the most important landmarks in our history. John Hatch, the Public Relations Officer of the British Labour Party, in an article published in the *New States-*

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man and Nation of January 28, 1956, under the title “The Rea) South African Opposition,” conceded that some degree of success was achieved by the Congress Movement when it approved the Charter.

Finally, in his May Day Message published in *New Age* of April 26 this year Moses -Kotane reviewed the political achievements of 1955 and came to the conclusion that the most outstanding one was the C.O.P. which produced the world-renowned document—the Freedom Charter, which serves as a beacon to the Congress Movement and an inspiration to the people of South Africa.

WORLD-WIDE ATTENTION

Few people will deny, therefore, that the adoption of the Charter is an event of major political significance in the life of this country.

The intensive and nation-wide political campaigning that preceded it, the 2,844 elected delegates of the people that attended, the attention it attracted far and wide and the favourable comment it continues to receive at home and abroad from people of diverse political opinions and beliefs long after its adoption, are evidence of this fact.

Never before has any document or conference been so widely acclaimed and discussed by the democratic movement in South Africa. Never before has any document or conference constituted such a serious and formidable challenge to the racial and anti-popular policies of the country. For the first time in the history of our country the democratic forces irrespective of race, ideological conviction, party affiliation or religious belief have renounced and discarded racialism in all its ramifications, clearly defined their aims and objects and united in a common programme of action.

The Charter is more than a mere list of demands for democratic reforms. It is a revolutionary document precisely because the changes it envisages cannot be won without breaking up the economic and political set-up of present South Africa. To win the demands calls for the organisation, launching and development of mass struggles on the widest scale. They will be won and consolidated only in the course and as the result of a nation-wide campaign of agitation; through stubborn and determined mass struggles to defeat the economic and political policies of the Nationalist Government; by repulsing their onslaughts on the living standards and liberties of the people.

The most vital task facing the democratic movement in this country is to unleash such struggles and to develop them on the basis of the concrete and immediate demands of the people from area to area. Only in this way can we build a powerful mass movement which is the only guarantee of ultimate victory in the struggle for democratic reforms.

Only in this way will the democratic movement become a vital instrument for the winning of the democratic changes set out in the Charter.

FOR ALL CLASSES

Whilst the Charter proclaims democratic changes of a far-reaching nature it is by no means a blue-print for a socialist state but a pro-

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gramme for the unification of various classes and groupings amongst the people on a democratic basis. Under socialism the workers hold state power. They and the peasants own the means of production, the land, the factories and the mills. All production is for use and not for profit. The Charter does not contemplate such profound economic and political changes. Its declaration "The People Shall Govern!" visualises the transfer of power not to any single social class but to all the people of this country be they workers, peasants, professional men or petty-bourgeoisie.

It is true that in demanding the nationalisation of the banks, the gold mines and the land the Charter strikes a fatal blow at the financial and gold-mining monopolies and farming interests that have for centuries plundered the country and condemned its people to servitude. But such a step is absolutely imperative and necessary because the realisation of the Charter is inconceivable, in fact impossible, unless and until these monopolies are first smashed up and the national wealth of the country turned over to the people. The breaking up and democratisation of these monopolies will open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous Non-European bourgeois class. For the first time in the history of this country the Non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own in their own name and right mills and factories and trade and private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before. To destroy these monopolies means the termination of the

exploitation of vast sections of the populace by mining kings and land barons and there will be a general rise in the living standards of the people. It is precisely because the Charter offers immense opportunities for an over-all improvement in the material conditions of all classes and groups that it attracts such wide support.

CAN IT COME ABOUT?

But a mere appraisal of a document however dynamic its provisions or content might be is academic and valueless unless we consciously and conscientiously create the conditions necessary for its realisation. To be fruitful such appraisal must be closely linked up with the vital question of whether we have in South African society the requisite social forces that are capable of fighting for the realisation of the Charter and whether in fact these forces are being mobilised and conditioned for this principal task.

The democratic struggle in South Africa is conducted by an alliance of various classes and political groupings amongst the Non-European people supported by white democrats. African, Coloured and Indian workers and peasants, traders and merchants, students and teachers, doctors and lawyers, and various other classes and groupings: all participate in the struggle against racial inequality and for full democratic rights. It was this alliance which launched the National Day of Protest on June 26, 1950. It was this alliance which unleashed and waged the campaign for the defiance of unjust laws on June 26, 1952. It is this same alliance that produced the epoch-making document—the Freedom Charter. In this alliance the democratic movement has the rudiments

of a dynamic and militant mass movement and, provided the movement

exploits the initial advantages on its side at the present moment, immense opportunities exist for the winning of the demands in the Charter within our life-time.

THE FORCES WE NEED

The striking feature about the population of our country and its occupational distribution is the numerical preponderance of the Non-Europeans over Europeans and the economic importance of the former group in the key industries. According to the 1951 Population Census the population of the country consists of 2,643.000 Europeans as against 10,005,000 Non-Europeans, a numerical disparity which is bound to have a decisive bearing on the final outcome of the present struggle to smash the colour bar. According to the Official Year Book of the Union of South Africa (No. 27—1952-53) there were 46,700 Europeans employed by the gold mines and collieries at the end of 1952. The number of Africans and Coloureds employed on the mines for the same period was 452,702, a proportion of 1 European employee to nearly 8 Non-European employees. The racial composition of industrial employees in establishments with over 10 employees during the period 1948-49 was as follows: Europeans 33 per cent; Africans 51.5 per cent; Asiatics 3 per cent and Coloureds 12.5 per cent. According to the same Year Book, during 1952 there were 297,476 Europeans employed on farms occupied by Europeans and 2,188.712 Africans and 636,065 other Non-Europeans.

These figures reveal the preponderant importance of the Non-European people in the economic life of the country and the key task of the movement is to stimulate and draw these forces into the struggle for democratic reforms. A significant step was taken in Johannesburg on March 3, 1955, when a new trade union centre—The South African Congress of Trade Unions—was formed with delegates from 34 unions with a total membership of close on 42,000 and when for the first time

in the history of trade unionism in South Africa African, Coloured, European and Indian workers united for a fighting policy on the basis of absolute equality. Peter Beyleveld, who was elected the first president of the Congress, emphasised in his opening address that trade unions would be neglecting their members if they failed to struggle on all matters affecting them. The trade unions, he pointed out, should be active in the political field as in the economic sphere for these two hung together and could not be isolated from one another. With 42,000 organised workers on our side and fighting under the flag of a trade union centre that has completely renounced racialism and committed itself to a militant and uncompromising policy, it only remains for us to redouble our efforts and carry our message to every factory and mill throughout the country. The message of the new centre is bound to attract the support of the majority of the workers for they have no interest whatsoever in the country's policy of racial discrimination.

OUR ALLIES

Trade workers are the principal force upon which the democratic movement should rely, but to repel the savage onslaughts of the

Nationalist Government and to develop the fight for democratic rights it is necessary that the other classes and groupings be joined. Support and assistance must be sought and secured from the 452,702 African and Coloured mine workers, from the 2,834,777 Non-European labourers employed on European farms and from the millions of peasants that occupy the so-called Native Reserves of the Union. The cruel and inhuman manner with which they are treated, their dreadful poverty and economic misery, make them potential allies of the democratic

movement.

The Non-European traders and businessmen are also potential allies, for in hardly any other country in the world has the ruling class made conditions so extremely difficult for the rise of a Non-European middle class as in South Africa. The law of the country prohibits Non-Europeans from owning or possessing minerals. Their right to own and occupy land is very much restricted and circumscribed and it is virtually impossible for them to own factories and mills. Therefore, they are vitally interested in the liberation of the Non-European people for it is only by destroying white supremacy and through the emancipation of the Non-Europeans that they can prosper and develop as a class. To each of these classes and groups the struggle for democratic rights offers definite advantages. To every one of them the realisation of the demands embodied in the Charter would open a new career and vast opportunities for development and prosperity. These are the social forces whose alliance and unity will enable the democratic movement to vanquish the forces of reaction and win the democratic changes envisaged in the Charter.

UNITY BRINGS STRENGTH

In the present political situation in South Africa when the Nationalist Government has gone all out to smash the people's political organisations and the trade union movement through the Suppression of Communism Act and its anti-trade union legislation, it becomes important to call upon and to stimulate every class to wage its own battles. It becomes even more important that all democratic forces be united and the opportunities for such united front are growing every day. On March 3, 1955 a non-colour-bar trade union centre is formed. On June 26 the same year "in the most spectacular and moving demonstration this country has ever seen" 2,844 delegates of the people adopt the Charter and 4 months thereafter more than 1,000 women of all

forces stage a protest march to Pretoria to put their demands to the Government—all this in the course of one year.

In fact, the rise of the

Congress Movement and the powerful impact it exerts on the political scene in the country is due precisely to the fact that it has consistently followed and acted on the vital policy of democratic unity. It is precisely because of the same reason that the Congress Movement is rapidly becoming the real voice of South Africa. If this united front is strengthened and developed the Freedom Charter will be transformed into a dynamic and living instrument and we shall vanquish all opposition and win the South Africa of our dreams during our lifetime.

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THE CAPITALIST CRISIS

AND SOUTH AFRICA

By "ECONOMIST"

This is the first part of a two-part article. The conclusion will appear in our July issue.

EVERYWHERE in South Africa today there are uneasy speculations about what the future holds for us and our economy. Cabinet Ministers speak cautiously to farmers about a likely drop in the prices of their products; banks and building societies issue statements about 'tightness of money'; and workers begin to talk about unemployment and depression. Everywhere there is understanding that all the signs point to hard times ahead. But as yet the only suggestion advanced for protecting the wage and living standards of the people comes from the Nationalist Government, faithfully echoing the voice of the Chamber of Mines, calling for an increase in the price of gold. Such "solutions," profitable though they might well be to the mining magnates and shareholders,

holders, grow not out of any concern for the future of the working people, but out of the overriding concern of capitalist governments for the profitability of the investments of their class. Can such solutions offer any real prospects to the working people of all races? Is this the only way out of the crisis that everyone senses in the days ahead? To answer these questions, it is necessary to understand the causes and the direction of the present recession in our economic life.

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FAST-GROWING INDUSTRY

South Africa's economy developed in a way characteristic of the colonial lands in the modern age. For a long time, development was held back, to maintain the country as a producer only of raw materials into consumers' goods—industrial development when it came, came rapidly. In the 35 years 1915 to 1950, industrial output increased fourteen times. By comparison, the U.S.A. took 66 years for the same fourteen-fold expansion (1871-1937), Japan 38 years (1900-1938) and the U.S.S.R. twenty-two (1928-1950). These comparisons must be taken more as a guide than as absolutes. For it is clear that South African industrial expansion, coming late in history, was able to apply ready-made techniques and processes which others had developed and perfected slowly and laboriously. But even this alone does not explain the remarkable rate of our industrial expansion. There are many other factors that enter into it, and amongst the most important are these:

South African capitalism did not have to battle its way through a mesh of stagnant feudal traditions and interests.

The tremendous aggregations of capital needed for the exten-

combined to greatly heighten the rivalry between the main capitalist powers. All of them now have more surplus capital to invest, more goods to sell, and yet less space in which to invest or sell. This critical contradiction is but one side of the picture. On the other side there is the major and crucial change which has come about in the nature and extent of economic activity by the Governments of the major capitalist powers themselves. In the U.S.A. for example—and it is characteristic of the whole capitalist world—Government expenditure which accounted for only 8 per cent of the national demand in 1929, has increased to 20 per cent by 1955.

This change cannot be underestimated, for it greatly reduces the instability of the old type 'laissez faire' economy. And on the same side of the picture, there is the less tangible factor, the fact that from past experience the capitalist class and their economic advisers have learnt something of the political and economic dangers which flow from depressions, and certainly attempt measures to minimise any threatening crisis.

IS CRISIS NECESSARY?

How do these conflicting features of today's world work out to affect the economy of the capitalist world? As always, capitalism is beset by its own internal characteristics. As always, it requires a constant expansion of its productive capacity; but at the same time it forces down the level of the ability of society to consume the output of this constantly growing capacity. Inevitably—unless there is some "outside" intervention, this contradiction must lead to surplus of goods which cannot be sold, to a surplus of capital which cannot be profitably invested, to a crisis, and to a depression in which the surplus will be gradually devoured as normality returns. Thus orthodox economists turn to solutions of 'outside intervention.' They believe—or act as though

they believe—that crisis can be averted “if only , .

Their “if onlys”

are of two kinds: ‘if only’ enough is spent on armaments and war, and
“if only’ enough is spent on social welfare.

Already in America armaments expenditure has reached a rate of
£15.000 million per year, and has proved to be of decisive importance
to the economy. But even on that fabulous scale, the relief it brings
can only be temporary. Such tremendous expenditure, in the very
moment of increasing the purchasing power of the nation, brings in its
train inflation, rising prices, increased taxation, thus reducing still
further the real incomes of the mass of the population. Colossal arma-
ments expenditure also distorts the balance of the whole economy; it
promotes rapid expansion of the basic industries which are concerned
with ‘war production,’ but only at the expense of other sectors such as
agriculture and light industry, which languish. To overcome these new,
more acute problems, the economists urge a larger dose of the same
remedy—still greater arms expenditure. It is the hopeless tale of the
drug addict, “in whom a dose of his drug at first produces a pleasant
sense of well-being. But this is soon followed by the painful after-
effects, which in turn can only be relieved by another, larger dose of the

drug. And with each successive dose the immediate sense of well-being
becomes less while the after-effects become more agonising until through
ever more frequent and massive doses of the drug, the addict ultimately
destroys himself.” (Hyman Lumer: War Economy and Crisis.)

But there are, in the modern world, social pressures against drug
addiction; and a tremendously powerful peace movement, whose
strength and whose overwhelming clamour for disarmament makes
the resort to ever-increasing arms expenditure difficult for any gov-
ernment anywhere in the world.

And so we are left with 'welfare' as the bourgeois expert's solution.

But this is even more illusory and self-deceptive. The present capacity of the U.S. economy, for example, would require state expenditure of the order of £30,000 million on social welfare if there is to be any substantial effect on the development of crisis. This means, in plain language, tremendous expansion of expenditure on schools, housing, irrigation, health services. It means large-scale tax reductions, large-scale wage-increases and social-security benefits; and it means, unquestionably, large-scale expansion of East-West trade. Large-scale welfare measures of this sort mean, inevitably, large-scale reductions in profits. Here the economic theorists, the dreamers of ideal 'possible' solutions come up against the cold reality of hard economic facts. For capitalism exists to extract the highest possible rate of profit for the capitalist class. And no such large-scale reduction of profits will ever be voluntarily

taken. Such "solutions" apply only to the world of dreams, to the never-never land of capitalism without class divisions, where the state is not

the spokesman of the ruling class but an impartial arbiter in the interests of the whole nation. In such a dream world, as Mauric Dobb puts it

"... all sorts of attractive miracles can be demonstrated."

But not in ours. Unless capitalists are ready to destroy capitalism, or so radically transform it as to lead to its rapid disappearance, the "solutions" and schemes of bourgeois economists can do no more than temporarily delay crisis. And as they stave it off one year, so it reappears the next, intensified. This is the reality. Eisenhower, Macmillan and Eric Louw may, temporarily, drive the crisis down. They cannot drive it out.

THE PACK OF CARDS

Clearly then crisis is on its way in the capitalist world. This statement is not inspired prophecy. It is the conclusion that is revealed, inescapably, by study and analysis of the facts. It is not possible to say when it will break, or at what point. But certainly the crisis is maturing

despite every manoeuvre which is taken in the hope of postponing or
'conquering' it.

Something of America's economic position is revealed by the following figures:*

* Survey of Current Business: Feb. 1956. U.S. Department of Commerce.
declined by 5%. Thus the disparity between the two crucial items of
any economy—productive capacity and consumption—is now intensified.

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	1947	1955	% Increase
	In \$billion at 1947 prices		
Gross domestic investment	29.7	45.3	
Personal consumption	165.0	214.0	
Government purchases	28.6	58.5	

Gross investment is a rough indication of the productive capacity; but
the other two items show the source and the distribution of purchasing
power. From these figures it is clear that investment (i.e. productive
capacity) has expanded much faster than personal consumption; and
accordingly a tremendous increase in Government purchases (two-thirds
of which goes on war preparations) has been necessary to keep the
balance. If, however, we take the same headings for the years 1954 and
1955, we find that productive capacity rose by 23%, purchasing power
(non-government) rose by only 7%, but Government purchases actually
rose by 100%. The instability of this position is revealed yet more clearly when the
7% increase in personal consumption is examined. For of this increase,
small as it is in relation to the increased productive capacity, one third
came not out of greater personal incomes, but out of purchases financed
by credit. When this has to be repaid, the critical gap looms even wider,
and the crisis comes closer and more certain. By the end of 1955, the
total debt outstanding for goods purchased on credit amounted to

£13,000 million.

Here is the weak, unstable reality concealed behind the glittering boosters pictures of the American economy. There is a precarious credit structure; there is excessive productive capacity in all industries making consumers' goods—television, refrigerators, furniture, etc; there is chronic over-production in agriculture, with farmers subsidised to produce less wheat and cotton, and 1 million dollars spent a day by the government to store agricultural surpluses; there is a "bullish" stock-exchange, with share prices at the highest levels ever recorded; there is a significant decline already apparent in two-key sections of industry, housing and automobiles; and there is chronic unemployment which even in the boom periods has not fallen below two million.

Newspapers and politicians continue to assure themselves and us that, in the U.S.A., 1956 will be another year of greater-than-ever boom. Maybe it will be so. But it is the boom that goes before the crash. For the economy of this centre of the capitalist world is shaky, as unstable as a house built of cards. The higher it goes up, the more surely must it collapse.

(Next month "Economist" will analyse the effects of this on

South African economy)

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PROBLEMS OF THE YOUTH

MOVEMENT

By DUMA NOKWE

QNE of the criticisms frequently levelled against the Youth Move

ments of the Congresses is that they have failed to make any impact upon, and to organise the masses of working, peasant and intellectual youth. In fact, the very 'existence of these youth movements, the A.N.C.Y.L., S.A.I.Y.C. is known only to a small percentage of youth. In the case of the A.N.C.Y.L., its failure to win the confidence of the masses of African youth can only be clearly understood, against the background of its historical development, its tasks and functions as determined by its foundation members and its relationship with the A.N.C.

YOUTH LEAGUE IS FORMED

As a result of the growing militancy of the students which was demonstrated by student strikes at Fort Hare and Lovedale, the A.N.C. resolved at its Annual Conference in 1943 to establish a Congress Youth League, whose tasks would be to organise the youth and prepare them for Congress membership. Thus in 1944 the A.N.C.Y.L. was formed.

From its inception, however, the members of the Youth League focussed their attention upon the weaknesses of the A.N.C., particularly its lack of a militant political theory and programme of action based on actions by the people. Thus "From the outset the A.N.C.Y.L. set itself the task amongst others of imparting a dynamic substance matter to the organisational form of the A.N.C. This took the form of a forthright exposition of the National Liberatory outlook—African Nationalism which A.N.C.Y.L. seeks to impose on the mother body." ("Basic Policy of A.N.C.Y.L.'*)

From 1944 to 1949, the Youth League concentrated on working out African Nationalism, criticising the old methods of struggle of

deputations and resolutions to the Government, and tried to «mpftw a militant outlook. This culminated in the adoption of the

'Programme

of Action' at the Annual Conference of the A.N.C. in 1949. For the first time in the history of the A.N.C. the National Executive was elected which pledged itself to implement a specific programme of action. The A-N.C.Y.L. played an important part in the adoption of that programme of action. TTie salient features of the programme were mass political actions, in the form of boycott, national days of protest, and civil disobedience.

During this period (1944 to 1949) the A.N.C.Y.L. had the follow^{ing} features:—

1. It was a small organisation, with very few organised branches, whose members were predominantly intellectual youth, almost all who were above 25 years of age.

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2. Its main activities were smalt meetings in which discussion centred around the Philosophy of African Nationalism and the defects in A.N.C. policy.

3. Its National Conferences or rather caucuses were invariably held at the same time as, and between sessions of the A.N.C. Annual Conferences and the main item which was discussed was the 'line' to be adopted by the Youth League delegates in A.N.C. Conferences.

It can thus be seen that during this period the Youth League was really of a 'party' within the A.N.C. whose members were adherents of African Nationalism. This preoccupation with the Philosophy of African Nationalism and the reform of A.N.C. policy, naturally attracted only intellectual youth. To the Youth Leaguers then, the mobilisation of the vast masses of youth was of secondary importance. There was quite a strong feeling that the League should maintain its purity by not becoming a mass movement.

YOUNG THEORETICIANS

The sharp criticisms of A.N.C. policies from Youth Leaguers resulted in a lack of harmony, suspicion and sometimes open hostility between Congress leaders and Youth Leaguers. A.N.C. leaders like Champion regarded the Youth Leaguers as 'upstarts' who wanted to usurp their positions. On the other hand, Youth Leaguers in many cases despised the old established leadership of the A.N.C. Because of these attitudes, not a single A.N.C.Y.L. branch was established at the instance of the A.N.C.

It is important to realise that the keen interest shown by members of the Youth League at its inception, in matters of political theory and questions of policy is not a peculiar feature of the development of the A.N.C.Y.L. It would be an error to contend that the A.N.C.Y.L. should from its inception have confined itself to youth problems. Such a view ignores the concrete conditions which existed, the serious defects within the A.N.C. in the form of the lack of some form of militant programme of action, and the characteristics of intellectual youth, who invariably have a keen desire for political theory. The contribution of the A.N.C.Y.L. towards introducing reforms within the A.N.C. to establish it as a mass organisation should not be underestimated. It is, however, unfortunate, that whilst the Youth Leaguers were keen to see organisational changes in the A.N.C. they paid little attention to the Youth League as an organisation; whilst they wanted the A.N.C. to become a mass organisation which would unite the people and rely on the strength and confidence of the masses of the people, nothing was done by the Youth Leaguers to make the A.N.C.Y.L. a mass Youth movement, which would unite the masses of youth and rely on their strength and confidence.

From 1949 to 1952 the A.N.C.Y.L. devoted its energies to supervising the implementation of the 'Programme of Action', the boycott

of the N.R.C., the National Day of Protest and the Civil Disobedience, aspects of the programme. There was during this period an appreciable

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increase in members from the working youth. But there were still, no fundamental changes in the organisational methods and activities of the Youth League.

DISORGANISATION

During the Defiance Campaign, although hundreds of youth volunteered and defied, the Youth League was disorganised at all levels. There were various reasons for the disorganisation of the Youth League, namely:—

- (a) Many Youth Leaguers became leading members of the A.N.C. and were actively engaged in Congress work, with little or no time for Youth League work. Those Leaguers who were not engaged in Congress work at the time just disappeared.
- (b) The A.N.C. had embarked on a bold and militant Campaign, and the primary function of the A.N.C.Y.L. had disappeared. A small clandestine group, however, under the name of "Bureau of African Nationalism" issued a newsletter criticising the Defiance Campaign; and
- (c) New conditions had occurred and there was no definition of the tasks of the Youth League in the new conditions.

The National Conference of the Youth League which was held in the Transvaal in April, 1953 attempted to redefine the tasks of the Youth League by resolving to form a mass Youth movement.

Although the weakness of the Youth League could be attributed to its exclusive political activities, this is not the sole cause. After the A.N.C. resolved that a Youth League should be formed it took absolutely no interest in the formation and development of the movement.

ment. Instead, when the leadership was faced with the criticism of their 'baby' some condemned and renounced it, others wanted it controlled and disciplined, but they did nothing positive either way. These prejudices and indifferences towards the Youth League still manifest themselves today.

PROGRESSIVE NATIONALISM

Another source of prejudice against the Youth League arises from the fact that some people believe that it is a reactionary organisation. This charge arises from ignorance of the official policy of the A.N.C.Y.L. The basic policy of the A.N.C.Y.L. clearly rejects chauvinistic Nationalism, and warns against fascist Nationalism and advocates a progressive Nationalism which will take into consideration the inalienable rights of all minority groups. It is true that the full implications of such a progressive Nationalism had not yet been worked out, but concrete activities clearly indicate the trend of development of the policy of the Youth League. In 1947 the Youth League sent a delegate to the 2nd World Festival at Prague. In 1950 the Youth League unequivocally condemned the reactionary National-minded bloc who were opposed to a progressive alliance. An article entitled the "Nationalist Bloc" in the September 1951 issue of the 'Lodestar' states:—

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"The A.N.C.Y.L. writes to expose to its members in particular and the African people in general, the character of these (National-minded bloc) backward looking and reactionary elements that hide the real nature of their activities by voicing Nationalistic fulminations and slogans . . .

"The Congress is a National Liberatory Movement, within whose fold will be found many shades of political opinion ranging from extreme right to extreme left, which reflect the development of the African people as an entity striving to overthrow foreign domination.

At the present historical stage this organisational form of Congress is politically correct.*'

The policy of the Youth League is further clearly expressed in the Editorial of the same issue, in which the decision of the Joint Executives of the A.N.C., S.A.I.C. and Franchise Action Council to establish a Planning Council for the purpose of coordinating activities is welcomed and further states that:

"We do not advocate the doing of anything which may place at a disadvantage the national and international position of our struggle. Consequently we also welcome the decision of the National Executive to co-operate with the other National Organisations in the country as long as they support our struggle for independence. On this basis we should also welcome alliances with those world powers which are in full accord with our aspirations,**

It is on the basis of this policy that the Youth League has jointly with the T.I.Y.C. and Students' Liberal Association, annually organised the Colonial Youth Day Celebrations since 1950.

It is also on the basis of this policy that the A.N.C.Y.L. at its annual conference in 1953, resolved that it supported world peace and was opposed to war against the Soviet Union and also resolved to affiliate to the World Federation of Democratic Youth.

It is unfortunate that these developments within the Youth League which are an expression of its policy have not been carefully observed and given their true significance, and some people have dogmatically adhered to their own prejudices. They refuse to accept, appreciate and encourage the development of the Youth League.

Since 1952, when the old "Party" Youth League was disorganised the Youth League attempted to redefine its tasks in the light of the new conditions. A small dissident group which regarded itself as a repository of African Nationalism continued to attack the policy of the A.N.C. • the disruptive saboteurs now call themselves the Africanists Their activity represents a dying feature of the old A.N.C.Y.L. The growing

feature is one where Youth Leaguers unequivocally accept the leader²

ship of the A.N.C. and they are attempting to use new methods of organisation in order to build a mass Youth Movement.

At the present stage of the development of the youth movement, it is of fundamental importance that people in the liberatory movement and Youth Leaguers themselves should eradicate incorrect traditional suspicions, prejudices and beliefs. It is only when we have got rid of these attitudes that we can really get down to the historic task of building a mass youth movement.

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The importance of mobilising the Youth for the liberator's movement, cannot be disputed. To neglect the Youth would be to neglect a vital and virile force of the liberatory movement. The Congresses must therefore adopt a more positive interest in the development of the Youth Movements.

ONE WAY FOR BOTH

The fundamental objects of the Youth movements must necessarily be the same as the fundamental purpose of the Congresses. This

cannot be otherwise since the Youth suffer the same oppression as the people of South Africa. However, because of the peculiar characteristics,

needs and interests of the Youth, Youth movements cannot merely be Junior Congresses. The keen interests of Youth in sporting and

cultural activities, require that the methods of organisation of a Youth movement should conform to these interests, and the activities of the

movement should not merely be confined to political agitation but should extend to cultural and sporting activities. Culture and politics are

inextricably bound together and cultural activities properly organised can serve not merely as recreation but can also raise the political under²

standing of the Youth. The expansion of the activities of the Youth movements will naturally attract younger Youth, and will also unite the

peasants, working and student Youth. Youth leaders should study the problems, needs and interests of the various sections of the Youth, in

order to unite them. The programme which was adopted at the annual conference of the Youth held on the 30th March, 1956, is an important step in this direction.

Whilst in the past, the growth of the Youth League was partly due

to preoccupation with political theory and activities, it would be incorrect to contend that a Youth movement should not concern itself with

political theory at all. Political education and activities are essential to raise the political understanding of the Youth. The political education

must be provided by the African National Congress. Political education will give life and purpose to the cultural and sporting activities.

The inclusion of the African National Congress Youth League in the African National Congress draft constitution, as an auxiliary body

is correct. In the past, leading members of the African National Congress were free to disown the Youth League when it was convenient,

and mischievous Youth Leaguers have claimed autonomy and even the right to flout African National Congress decisions.

Although the Youth League was the African National Congress Youth League there was no clarity as regards the exact relationship

between the African National Congress and the Youth League. It was this very situation which stimulated the 'party' activities of the Youth

League in the past. One cannot agree with Alan Doyle in his article in the February issue of 'Liberation' when he says that the proposal to

include the Youth League (ANC) in the constitution would 'perpetuate the unhealthy position of the African National Congress Youth League

as a separate political grouping with a platform of its own.' This is exactly what the draft was to avoid. The old constitution did not include

the Youth League and it is difficult to understand Alan Doyle's reason

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ing. It would restrict the activities of the Youth League if they were included as "integral parts" of the African National Congress, it would deprive it of an opportunity of broadening its activities. However, to exclude it altogether and to ask the Congress to rely for the exercise of its leadership merely on its political correctness, would be to ask for the liquidation of the African National Congress Youth League, and in fact all the other Congress Youth Movements.

A TRUE YOUTH MOVEMENT

What excuse would there be in establishing Congress Youth movements when there already exist hundreds of Youth Movements, if the Congresses have to rely on their political correctness only?

The solution seems to be that Youth movements should accept as a minimum the aims and objects of the African National Congress, and that they should be independent in regard to their activities, in order to be broad and to organise the masses of the Youth. The Youth movements should report their activities to the African National Congress and the A.N.C. should take an active part in establishing Youth League branches.

There is the other problem of the age limit within the Youth movement. In determining this limit I suggest that we should look for guidance in Youth movements in other countries and also the World Federation of Democratic Youth.

The organisation of the Youth movements on the pattern of the Congresses is correct. The unity of the three sections is growing step by step on the basis of concrete joint activities. It is, however, unfortunate that there are not sufficient cultural and social joint activities on regional, Provincial and National level, on the lines of the Youth Festivals. Such activities would serve to remove the artificial barriers

imposed to separate the Youth. The Youth Action Council which was established to co-ordinate Youth activities it is hoped, will consider increasing such joint intercourse and social activities.

The co-ordination of the activities of the Youth movements through the Youth Action Council is no longer sufficient. If the Youth movements have to keep the close contact with the masses of Youth, it is essential that they should keep in close contact with organisations of Youth.

From the organisational point of view the following are the tasks of the Youth movement, if it wants to become a mass Youth movement:—

1. The immediate establishment of a students* organisation which will organise the secondary and university students.
2. The establishment of cultural, social and sporting clubs for the Youth.
3. The formation of a Federal Youth Movement, to co-ordinate the activities of all the Youth organisations in the country. Such a Federation would enable the Congress Youth Organisations to keep in contact with the Youth and it would enrich the experience of our Youth movements in regard to the problems, needs and interests of the Youth.

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ORGANISATION:

THE ONLY WEAPON

By J.M.

THEIR struggle to free themselves and build a new life the oppressed peoples have only one weapon—ORGANISATION! It is for this reason that the current interest being shown towards organisational problems within the African National Congress is of such significance.

Nor is it surprising that the debates on organisation should be taking place at this time when the ruling class is doing all in its power to destroy the People's Organisations. The period of "hardening and sharpening"—of discarding outworn practices and methods and developing others is precisely now when we are under the most fierce attack.

THE VALUE OF DISCUSSION

But if the self-criticism over organisational weaknesses in the A.N.C. is to be of lasting effect and value, two conditions must be fulfilled:

- (i) The scope of the discussions must be extended beyond the present emphasis on constitutional changes.
- (ii) The leadership must ensure that the rank and file participate fully in the discussions.

It is not the first time in the history of political organisations that an examination of one aspect of a movement's work should be the beginning of a thorough discussion and critical examination of all branches of its activity.

Thus the problems of the A.N.C. have up to now centred, by and large, on suggested changes in its constitutional structure and practice.

It is true that the Reports of the National Executive to the National Conferences in 1954 and 1955 both contained searching analyses of our main organisational problems. But even these did not, and perhaps could not, go far enough. As the debate continues it becomes clear that changes of constitutional structure alone will not plumb the depths of the problems we are faced with. Not that the present constitution and the practices connected with it are not in need of fundamental change.

Indeed it is necessary to state emphatically that within the present framework very little advance in political consciousness and understanding of the rank and file and of the leadership is possible.

We feel it necessary to criticise the attitude that ALL that is re-

quired is to raise the political understanding of the membership and the present constitutional structure will work well.

This attitude

unjustifiably creates a hiatus between political understanding and constitutional structure and practice, whereas in truth the two are merely

the two sides of the same coin. As the level of political consciousness grows certain constitutional forms are seen to be a hindrance and brake

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on further development. So that the present demand for changes in the A.N.C. constitution and structure are a reflection of the development of political understanding in the movement which finds the present structure unsatisfactory. Furthermore it is the duty of those with clearer understanding and deeper perspective to lead the whole movement forward and not to trail behind the stream of history, as it were.

WEAKNESSES

Specifically stated, the basic weakness of the present constitutional structure of the African National Congress lies in the fact that after it is

elected at National Conference by delegates drawn from local branches throughout the country, the National Executive is practically isolated from them except for the short periods during which branches assemble at National Conference. Once Conference is over the policy and programme decided upon is virtually delegated to organs not elected by our supreme body (the national conference), namely, the provincial executives which are the agents of their provincial conferences. In other words in between conferences THERE IS NO CONTACT BETWEEN THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE AND THE BRANCHES EXCEPT THROUGH its tenuous links with the provincial executives.

The disastrous effects of this on all organs of the movement—national, provincial and local are only too well known to anyone who has participated actively in any recent campaigns undertaken by the

A.N.C. Imagine a situation in which our supreme directing body receives no reports at all from local branches nor sends material directly to

them! That may have been suitable in days when events occurred at a much slower rate and Congress was a Resolutions Movement, but today something more effective is required.

PREMIER PARTNER

But our problems cover a much wider range than that. The growing political power and influence of the African National Congress as premier partner in the democratic alliance known as the Congress Movement; the growing range and diversity of activities that the liberation movement as a whole has to engage in, require an examination of our entire outlook to POLITICAL WORK.

If the African National Congress is to achieve the degree of organisational efficiency expected of it in the current emergency the level of understanding of both the leaders and rank and file will have to be raised considerably. Such political understanding will have to be based on a more profound study of our society and its development not only in South Africa but in the world as a whole. We will have to make proper and frequent use of self-criticism as a dynamic means of

correcting mistakes and improving the quality of our work. We will, above all, have to engage in and lead every active struggle of the masses

against tyranny whether local or national. Last but not least we have to realise that the days when political leadership could be left to part-time workers are over.

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The correct relationship between political theory and practice is always a difficult one to maintain. And no doubt one can find good reasons for the present paucity of organised political education within the A.N.C. particularly at branch level. Nevertheless this defect cannot be tolerated any longer. In this connection an idea being started in the

Eastern Cape is of interest. The attempt is being made to conduct political classes by way of elaborating in detail the different sections of the FREEDOM CHARTER. In doing so lecturers are, of course, compelled to cover the entire field of economic, political and social life in our country and the world. On a national scale the method of conducting classes on the basis of the Charter, besides being interesting to the members (who know all about the Charter), would have profound effects and incidentally is one sure way of making the Charter part of the very soul of our people—a necessary condition of victory.

For the rest our great need is for a cadre organisation in the true sense. We must produce sufficient trained political workers for all fields of activity and for all parts of the country. In the final analysis our victory will depend on the amount of effort we direct towards that end.

If

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