

BULLETIN 13

AMERICANS FOR SOUTH AFRICAN RESISTANCE

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Staff time for organizational work of AFSAR contributed by Fellowship of Reconciliation. AFSAR has a group of prominent individual sponsors.

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South African Elections: On April 15th the first elections for Parliament in South Africa in five years will take place. It would be pure speculation to guess as to whether the Nationalist Party under Dr. D. F. Malan or the United Party will win a majority of seats in Parliament. All the indications are, however, that the Nationalists will return to power with an increased majority. In the 1948 elections, although the Nationalists did not have a majority of the popular vote, they did have a majority of seven votes in Parliament due to the electoral system, which favors the rural areas of the country. Most political observers tend to the opinion that the popular vote will favor the Nationalists this time.

Although it is clear from what such groups as the African National Congress have said that it will not make too much difference which Party wins as far as the basic policy toward the Non-Europeans is concerned, nevertheless the Campaign of defiance against unjust laws has been suspended for the last few weeks prior to the elections. The reasoning probably has been that there is a thin line of difference between the Nationalist and the United Party approach to the Non-whites, and that the Nationalists should not be permitted to make any more political capital than they already have out of the Defiance Campaign.

Enclosed with this issue of the Bulletin is a leaflet which AFSAR has been distributing primarily in the New York area, where a number of groups are trying to call special attention to events in South Africa during the latter half of April. It is hoped that perhaps individuals and groups in other sections of the country will wish to set aside some such period themselves to draw attention to South Africa.

Hopeful Signs: Recently three significant developments in South Africa have been reported in the American press. The first of these was the announcement that a new liberal political party with which Alan Paton is prominently associated has been formed. This party definitely dissociates itself from the policies of both the Nationalist and United Parties. This party is not attempting to be active during the present political campaign, but will look to the future. Unquestionably the organization of this party comes to a great extent as a result of the Campaign against the Unjust Laws.

The second development was the announcement on March 23rd that the Supreme Court of Appeals in South Africa had handed down a decision invalidating segregation unless equal facilities were offered both whites and non-whites. The case in point had to do with an African who sat in a waiting room in a railway station that was reserved for whites. He refused to leave on the grounds that the waiting room for non-whites was inferior to that for whites. His position was upheld not only by the Supreme Court, but also by the Magistrate's Court and the Cape Province Court of

Appeals. The government contended that the railways had the right to provide unequal facilities for non-whites. The Nationalist Party immediately seized upon this as a campaign issue. Dr. Malan said: "If the Nationalist Party wins the election, we shall rectify the matter without delay, and in a way that will leave no court in doubt about the wish and intention of Parliament and the people." Even the United Party seemed to oppose the decision of the Court. One of its chief papers, the JOHANNESBURG STAR, had this to say: "There is no doubt that Parliament will have to take some action. It is a matter of economics as much as of segregation. If a rigid test of the equality of amenities is to be applied in all cases, an intolerable burden will be imposed on the railways. Not only waiting rooms but dining rooms and dining cars would have to be duplicated."

The third development was the announcement on March 29th that the chief labor groups had declared that labor should be organized on a non-racial basis. The labor organizations involved are the South African Federation of Trade Unions and the South African Trades and Labor Council. The NEW YORK TIMES in its story commenting on this said: "After a long stand by labor in this country [South Africa] for a privileged position on the basis of color, the decision to abandon the color line was close to revolutionary in South African terms." Although it is not illegal for Africans to be members of labor unions, the governmental policy has been that "there should be no intermingling of Europeans and Non-Europeans in trade unions." Under the law Africans are not recognized as qualified participants in collective bargaining. The labor declaration said: "Experience has shown conclusively in many industries that there can be no adequate safeguards against lowering of workers' standards other than total organization of the workers concerned, irrespective of race or color . . ."

Additional Funds from AFSAR Received in South Africa: On April 6th we received a letter from South Africa acknowledging receipt of the last sum of \$800 which we had sent to South Africa. This letter said:

"I wish again to assure you of our very sincere gratitude for all the help you are giving us at a time when we so greatly need it. You will no doubt be aware by now of the fact that this Government has by recent legislation given itself such wide and unlimited powers over the acts of individuals and organisations that practically any act could be deemed an offense if the Police so wish it. To give you an example two local men have just been arrested for convening a prayer meeting during the course of which prayers were said for our national organisation. This case is due for hearing this coming Thursday. We have good reason to believe that mail is subjected to scrutiny. One is thus unable to write you as freely as one should have liked to. But please be re-assured of our great indebtedness for all you have done."

AFSAR has not sent any funds to South Africa for a few weeks because we are awaiting a clarification of the so-called Whipping Post Law, which was reported upon in our February 27th Bulletin. A part of that law prohibits the receipt of funds that could be interpreted as supporting the resistance. The Johannesburg RAND DAILY MAIL of February 3rd, in describing the provisions of the law (which had not been passed at that time), says:

". . . the Bill prohibits the offer or acceptance of financial or other assistance for any organized resistance against the Union's laws. . . . Postal articles containing or suspected of containing money for a resistance movement may be seized. . . . The Bill makes it an offence for any person to solicit, accept or receive from any person or body of persons, whether within or outside the Union, or who offers to give to any person or body of persons, any money or other article in support of a resistance campaign. . . ."

Offenses under the law are punishable by 500 pounds' fine, imprisonment up to five years, and whipping up to fifteen strokes.

We believe that there will be no difficulty in continuing to send funds into South Africa, according to recent information we have received from there, but we want to be perfectly sure that those who are receiving the funds have thought through all the potentialities. The existence of this law makes our support more essential, not less so. If our friends in South Africa wish to continue receiving funds, we should be more active in sending them.

A Comment on Contributions: Since AFSAR was organized approximately \$3000 has come to us for the relief of those connected with the Defiance Campaign in South Africa. Very little time has been given by the office in organizing this fund-raising. It has been most heartening to see the way concerned individuals and groups have spontaneously contributed. A word should be said about a group that has been at work in Boston since last fall, calling itself Bostonians Allied for South African Resistance (BAFSAR). This group, with just a few volunteers giving of their time, has raised over \$700 through special collections at meetings, and through small contributions from a number of contributors.

Other contributions have come to us from all parts of the United States, and from Canada, Hawaii, and India. A woman in Arizona recently sent a diamond ring, saying that she could not conscientiously wear a ring that represented slave labor, and asking us to sell it for what we could get so that the money might support the South African movement. A family in Ohio contributed more than a hundred dollars at Christmas time, saying that this represented what they would have spent for Christmas this year, plus an amount which had been set aside for a typewriter. A young couple near Boston sent a sum to us which represented their Christmas gifts to each other. A cell group at a theological seminary has been contributing money that they have saved from eating sacrificial meals. A person who feels that he can not conscientiously pay his income tax going mostly for military purposes sent more than a hundred dollars representing the tax which would have gone to the government. A retired minister living on a pension sent a check with the comment that he could enjoy his own Christmas more if he made this contribution. Many more examples could be given of sums both large and small that have come in. This information is being passed on to our friends in South Africa. Perhaps this may sustain many of them as they continue in their all-important action.

Correction: In our issue of February 13th we listed a number of South African organizations as not bona fide, including the South African Indian Organization. It has been pointed out to us by one who has spent some time in South Africa that it was a mistake to include the South African Indian Organization with the other groups. Therefore we wish to make clear to our readers who are trying to differentiate between the legitimate and the bogus organizations in South Africa that the South African Indian Organization has for many years been carrying on significant work and is not just a rubber stamp for the government.