

A M E R I C A N S F O R S O U T H A F R I C A N R E S I S T A N C E

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We have just received another bulletin from the National Action Committee of the African National Congress and the South African Indian Congress, PO Box 2948, Johannesburg, dated August 18, 1952. Most of it is included in the following statement. We will continue to keep in as close touch with the situation as possible, as we have done in the past, and will send you information as fast as we receive it.

George M. Houser, Secretary

STATEMENT

The Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws, launched on the 26th June 1952, is proceeding according to plan. To date, (ie 18th August) 2,662 volunteers have defied racially discriminatory laws in twelve different centres throughout the Union, including Port Elizabeth, East London, Grahamstown, Worcester, Cape Town and Uitenhage in the Cape, and Johannesburg, Reef towns and Pretoria in the Transvaal.

The laws so far defied are curfew and permit regulations under the Pass Laws and apartheid measures providing separate entrances and waiting rooms for Europeans only at railway stations and separate counters at post offices.

The sentences imposed on volunteers have ranged from 15 days hard labour or 2 pounds fine in admission of guilt, to 40 days hard labour or 10 pounds. All volunteers refused to pay fines and elected to serve hard labour sentences. Magistrates have threatened to impose maximum sentences in future cases, and youngsters under 21 years have been sentenced to caning. Seventy-three volunteers who defied post office apartheid were acquitted, as it was found that, although segregation had been introduced into post offices by the erection of partitions and notices and the setting aside of separate telephone booths for Europeans and Non-Europeans, there is nothing in the postal regulations enforcing apartheid. Many women have been among the volunteers who defied unjust laws, and one woman was arrested carrying a 10-month old baby in her arms.

The "Africa Salute" has become the national sign of greeting among Non-Europeans. The struggle has gripped the imagination of millions of non-white people, and news of defiance is reaching towns, villages and reserves. Demonstrations of enthusiastic supporters during court trials have become commonplace and a source of encouragement to the volunteers.

The peaceful and orderly nature of the campaign and the discipline of the volunteers, as well as of the Non-European people generally, have alarmed the Government to such an extent that the Minister of Justice is preaching police violence and lawlessness. Referring to the Campaign, he declared at a public meeting that "if policemen go slightly beyond the limits of their powers . . . they should not be condemned in view of their difficult tasks"; and that while "it is possible that innocent people had been struck by police batons", it was "just too bad if such people got hurt."

Supporters of the Campaign who have gathered outside courts to attend trials of volunteers have been baton-charged without cause or reason; convicted volunteers are being treated not only as ordinary criminal prisoners in jails but have also been more harshly dealt with; there is evidence to prove that in one prison volunteers have been beaten up by warders with hose-pipes lined with wire, and have been assaulted and ill-treated; and in one case the leader of a batch of volunteers was sentenced to three days solitary confinement and spare diet for giving the "Africa Salute".

Two weeks ago the police raided the offices of the Congresses and homes of the leaders of the Campaign and seized documents and other literature in an arbitrary manner. The search warrant indicated that the material so seized would be used as evidence for treason, sedition, communism and violence.

Following upon these raids twenty outstanding leaders of the Congresses have been arrested and charged under the so-called Suppression of Communism Act. They are out on bail of 100 pounds each and will appear at a Magistrates' Court in Johannesburg on the 26th of August. The maximum penalty under the Act is ten years imprisonment with compulsory labour.

Amongst those arrested are: Dr. J. S. Moroka, the President-General of the African National Congress; Dr. Y. M. Dadoo, the President of the South African Indian Congress; Mr. W. M. Sisulu, the Secretary-General of the ANC; Mr. Y. A. Cachalia, the Secretary of the SAIC; Presidents and Secretaries of the Congresses in the Transvaal; members of the national executive of the ANC, and leaders of the Youth Congresses.

The South African law against "Communism", which makes serious inroads into fundamental freedoms of the individual and of organisations and which gives despotic powers to the Minister of Justice, is aimed at suppressing any opposition to the Government's policy of apartheid. It is a pretext to curb the legitimate aspirations of the people and the word "communism" is deliberately used in an attempt to mislead world opinion.

The true nature of this Act was exposed in a court judgement when the presiding Magistrate ruled that "It is common knowledge that one of the aims of Communism is to break down race barriers and strive for equal rights for all." He said that this would endanger the survival of the Europeans (whites) and therefore the legislation must be pursued with the object of suppressing Communism!

The principles and programme of the Campaign for the Defiance of Unjust Laws is public and well-known. The aim of the movement is to obtain the repeal of unjust laws, which are racially discriminatory and repugnant to the natural rights of man, by a peaceful and non-violent struggle.