

AFRICA YEAR

1960

Dear Colleague,

1960 is a year of destiny in the African continent. During the course of the next twelve months the largest African country, Nigeria, with a population of forty million people, will become independent (1 October); the future constitutions of Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Tanganyika will be decided (January, March and May); the Monckton Commission on Central Africa will report (probably June-July); and a conference on the Federation will be held in London (October-November). Meanwhile in the French and Belgian territories the march towards representative government and independence will continue at an urgent rate. All over the continent constitutions are being discussed, people getting the vote for the first time, and new elections being held. The whole continent is in a ferment, out of which are rising new states in rapid succession. Their influence will be vital to the international scene, which is rapidly changing before our eyes.

Many of the African peoples have a particular relation with this country. Many British people dwell amongst them. The significance of the African revolution to the Western democratic world cannot be exaggerated.

We in the Labour Movement have a special interest and a particular responsibility in these events. We have a close friendship with most of the leaders, with their political, trade union and co-operative movements. We hope to see arising in Africa new socialist movements, adding to the strength of international socialist comradeship, giving it a new purpose and fitting it for new tasks.

Prepare for Action!

To meet this challenge our movement in this country needs to be knowledgeable on the facts of African life in order to make and support wise judgments. For this reason the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party has decided that 1960 shall be Labour's Africa Year. Area conferences will be arranged, together with public meetings. Literature will be provided. Campaigns will be organised. I therefore urge our party and affiliated organisations to prepare themselves for this task and to arrange now that, following these activities, day schools and study groups be organised in your locality so that we ensure that by the end of the year the whole movement is aware of its African responsibility and is fitted to meet it.

LABOUR APPEALS TO CONSUMERS TO BOYCOTT SOUTH AFRICAN GOODS

The decision to support the boycott of South African goods throughout the month of March is in direct response to an appeal from the South African National Congress, the South African Indian Congress and the Liberal Party of South Africa. Had they not asked for it we would certainly not have been prepared to use an instrument which cannot help but bring hardship to some of the Non-European people.

A protest against oppression

In a published statement the leaders of these three groups who have called for the boycott say 'the alternative to the use of this weapon is the continuation of the status quo and a bleak prospect of unending discrimination. Economic boycott is one way in which the world at large can bring home to the South African authorities that they must either mend their ways or suffer for them'.

The boycott is a protest against apartheid, the removal of political rights, the treason trials, the colour bar in industry, the extension of passes to women and the appallingly low wages paid to African workers.

The shame of Apartheid

Opponents of the boycott have said that this is interference in South Africa's internal affairs. This could as well be said of Hungary or Tibet or wherever there is a denial of human rights. The difference is that the British Government has by her actions shown that this

country is opposed to the repression in Hungary and Tibet.

But to their eternal shame the Tories have lined up Britain with the South African Government on apartheid in the United Nations Assembly. The Union Government was able to secure the support of only France, Portugal and the Tory Government of Britain.

Is the world to be allowed to think that we in the Labour movement go along with this pathetic appeasement of apartheid? No: the boycott is the one means we have of demonstrating our utter rejection of the racial policies of Dr. Verwoerd and his Government and our sympathy for the non-Europeans in their dignified, non-violent struggle against cruel oppression.

What will the boycott achieve?

We have no illusions. We shall not bring the Union Government to its knees. It is, after all, only a token boycott which is being organised. It is a symbolic act which, because it will hurt, cannot be ignored by the ruling classes in the Union—and will bring comfort and encouragement to their victims. But remember it is now supported by the I.C.F.T.U. and we are in touch with other members of the Socialist International concerning their support for the boycott.

What sort of goods will be affected? As consumers we cannot prevent South African goods coming to Britain, but we need not buy them—in most cases there are alternatives

The goods to keep your eye on are:
all kinds of fresh fruit (oranges,
apples, grapes, pears, grapefruit,
pineapples, peaches and plums)
jam and marmalade
tinned vegetables
tinned fruit
some pork and dairy products, and
wines (especially sherry)

Later we will be distributing lists, as detailed as the law will permit, of branded goods to boycott in March.

Organising the boycott locally

It is hoped that constituency and local parties will both take the lead in their own localities in organising the boycott and will co-operate with other organisations already committed to this campaign. There is a great deal to be done to organise the boycott locally, and there is much to be said for the establishment of local committees for the purpose.

Whether the job is done by a representative committee or by the party on its own, there are the following jobs to be done:

- * Get maximum publicity for the boycott locally—by organising meetings, parades or pickets. Suitable slogans for banners are 'Boycott South African Goods'; 'We Oppose Apartheid'; 'Down with Racial Persecution'; 'Boycott Slave Labour Goods'.
- * Organise groups throughout the constituency which will ensure a mass audience for the Labour Party's TV Broadcast on Africa on **Wednesday 9 March** at 9.30 p.m. (all services).
- * Approach other organisations, including churches, for their support. It is especially important to work closely with the Trades Councils who have been asked by the T.U.C. to support this campaign.
- * Ask the local Council to refrain from purchasing South African goods during March and to announce their

decision as an encouragement to others.

- * Every grocer and greengrocer must be approached, asking them not to stock or sell South African goods during March. A poster will be available for them to display in their windows announcing that they are co-operating. The pressure of several customers can often persuade a shopkeeper to change his mind.
- * Multiple stores and markets which do not co-operate should be picketed—both as a reminder to shoppers and for publicity.

Those within easy reach of London will be asked to support the mass demonstration in Trafalgar Square at 2.30 p.m. on Sunday, 28th February—on the eve of the boycott month. This is being organised by the boycott movement but the Party supports it wholeheartedly. London parties should start now to get the date known.

The Boycott Movement have just published the broadsheet 'Boycott News' (price £4 per 1,000) and the leaflet 'Boycott South African Goods' (price £1 per 1,000). An order form for these and other publications is enclosed.

There are only seven weeks to go before the boycott starts. There is a great deal of work to do—so there is no time to waste. Here is a theme, and a programme of practical action, which should appeal to the enthusiasm of our Party members.

Yours sincerely,

Norman Phillips

Secretary.