

CIRCULAR NO. 35.

ESTELLA HOUSE,
47a, Main Road,
CLAREMONT. Cape.

TO ALL REGIONS.

11th February 1960.

To: Southern Transvaal Region,
232, Louis Botha Avenue,
Orange Grove, JOHANNESBURG.

We thank S.Tvl. Region for their letter, undated, written to Mrs. Stott by Mrs. Hill regarding cancellation of the proposed convoy.

We would be grateful if in future they could make it clear to us when they ask the C.E.'s opinion on any proposed action, whether this is merely the Regional Council's suggestion, or whether the suggestion has the backing of the majority of the members of the whole Region, as on this occasion the C.E., under the assumption that the suggestion came from the whole Region, telephoned round to all other Regions asking them to find out from their members what they felt about it. This meant that other Regions were put to the trouble of calling special meetings, only to discover afterwards that the S.Tvl. Region itself did not support the idea.

With regard to S.Tvl's suggestion that a Referendum should be taken of non-White opinion on a Republic, the C.E. wishes to state that a similar suggestion was received from Mrs. Stott, who has been on leave of absence for the last 3½ months, and who was not, therefore, present when the suggestion was discussed. The C.E. were completely unanimous in not favouring either suggestion for the following reasons.

A Referendum, even if undertaken in conjunction with other organisations, would be well beyond the capacity of the Sash to achieve, as it would mean approaching every adult citizen.

A petition, it was felt, would not carry any great weight either with the public, or with the Government, as it would be very easy to discredit the signatures obtained by simply saying that the people who were known to be against the Republic, were approached and that just as many people could have been shown to have been in favour of it, had they been approached. The only way of obviating such criticism would be to get so many hundreds of thousands of signatures that it could not be felt that an equal number could have been obtained for an opposing viewpoint.

The C.E. consider, therefore, that the time and energy which would be required to undertake a petition, either among non-Whites or among Whites, would not bring any results of sufficient value to justify the time and energy spent on organising the petition.

A third suggestion was made that the Sash should combine with the Progressive and Liberal parties in organising such a petition, as both parties have expressed the idea that they might like to undertake such a petition. The C.E. do not consider that this would be advisable. Firstly, because neither of these parties would be in a position to help very greatly with the organisation of such a petition and also it was felt that it would be tying the Sash to the activities of two political parties and thus tend to undermine their non-party political character.

For your information: Mrs. Stott's suggestion and S.Tvl's suggestion are quoted overleaf.

As I believe it would be valuable to show the Government that whatever number of people vote FOR the Republic, there are nevertheless FAR MORE who do not want a Nationalist Republic, I suggest that the Black Sash should get up a "Counter Referendum" to show the names and addresses of those people in South Africa who are opposed to the Republic.

This idea could be launched at the time that the Referendum is announced. The launching could be immediately followed by a public meeting in every city, town or suburb where the Sash have branches. People representing all sorts of local organisations should be invited to such meeting and/or should have forms sent to them asking that they get signatures of people who are opposed to having a Republic. The form should indicate the grounds on which the Republic is opposed and should have clearly stated on it, preferably in a different colour of ink, the following:- Each person who takes a counter-referendum form is requested to try to get at least 20 signatures on the form. The name and address is required and those who sign must be bona fide citizens of South Africa. In other words, this must be their only homeland (and would exclude, for example, Basutos, who are only working here temporarily) and that any person signing the form must not have signed another such form, and that all forms regardless of the number of signatures on them, MUST be returned to a certain office (here state the address of the local office) to which they must be returned by a certain date (here specify the date by which they have got to be in).

I suggest that the closing date for these forms should be approximately the same time as the actual date on which the Referendum takes place so that the forms can be forwarded to the Central Executive for counting and presentation to the Government, at approximately the same time as the results of the Referendum are known.

I consider that this kind of activity is particularly the work of a non-party political organisation and that the Black Sash is the best organisation to undertake this.

I feel, however, that on this issue the Sash should be able to get the active-co-operation of many organisations with whom it is on friendly terms especially amongst non-Whites.

I consider that one of the main purposes of such a counter-referendum is to enable non-Whites who may not take part in the Referendum to place on record their attitude to the Republic.

There will naturally be a large number of votes against the Republic in the official Referendum. When this number is added to those on the counter-referendum, clearly there will be more people against the Republic than for.

In order to keep this matter clear, it may be advisable to have the counter-referendum signed only by people who are not White registered voters.

N. B. If it is decided that the counter-referendum should have White signatures, then I consider that they should be on a different side of the form from those of non-Whites, in order to facilitate counting. It may well be that the Sash should undertake this activity primarily in order to give non-Whites a chance of showing their views.

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S. TVL'S SUGGESTION:

" A suggestion, which we felt to be valuable,
was made, that a referendum of non-White
opinion, held a week before, should be
undertaken. "

(Signed) M.C. PETERSEN.