

The Natal Indian Congress, 1971-94

Goolam Vahed

The NIC itself was not banned in the period following the Sharpeville massacre. However, the banning, imprisonment, and harassment of its leaders and the generally repressive conditions in the 1960s, led to a virtual cessation in its activities. The NIC's was revived in 1971. Its revival was marked by controversy and intense debates around such key issues as: its name ("Indian") in a context where the Black Consciousness philosophy was rapidly gaining ground, the focus of its political work, and its political strategy viz. whether to participate in government created structures or not. Against the backdrop of the 1973 strikes and the rise of the independent trade union movement in the then Natal, the student mobilization at the University of Durban-Westville and the attractions of the BC movement for the younger activists this paper takes in-depth look at the revived NIC, seeking to highlight its ideological orientations, the impact of the Group Areas Act on its work and its ability to both organise ethnically and spread the philosophy of non-racialism.