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Cde Cyril Ramaphosa
Secretary General
A N C

29 July 1991

Dear Comrade Secretary General;

RE: RE-STRUCTURINB AND POTENTIAL OF THE ANC HEALTH DEPARTMENT
, I write to draw your attention to this matter which has been
. discussed by all existing regional health structures. This led to-
the unanimous adoption of the enclosed resolution by the Health
Commission at National Conference.

The-resolution first noted the political potential of health as
an issue and the needs for both democratic accountability and
national co-ordination. It then "(directed) the NEC and RECs to
establish an ANC Department of Health with a national committee
cnmprised of representatives of Regional Health Committees
democratically elected from grassreots branch membership".
we believe that the matter is urgent. South Africa spends 5,B% Of
GNP on health care and 80% of our people depend on public
facilities. The state is moving quite rapidly to reorganize and
- privatize this sector, without any real response from the ANC.
Individuals are asked on an ad hoc basis to present an AND view
on health but there is no cohordinatione and the views and
strengths of the regions are net being tapped.

. At an informal meeting in Cape Town on 20 July 1991 members of
Regional Health Structures of Border, N Cape, PNV, N Tvl and S
Natal unanimously requested the PHV Rgiohal Health Committee to.
take this matter forward and to keep all regions informed,
through their RECs, of what is happening in this regard.

I am writing therefore on their behalf and 160k forward to an
early reply.

I enclose a copy of the resolutions frem the Health Commission
and also a brief document on the background to the call for a
restructuring of the Health Department.

Yours in the struggle,

cc. Sec. PWV REC

Tim Nilsoh I Sec. Health Dept

Chair, PNV Regional Health Committ All RECs (attention

The People ShaiT Govern! health committees)

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African National Congress
National Congress - Durban July 1991

FROM

Draft Resolution on the Health Commission

This conference

NOTING

a) the potential of health care to mobilise and organise the masses;

b) the need to create a framework for membership which can be used to mobilise and organise the masses;

c) the need to address the health issues;

d) that the framework has been established so far;

RESOLVES

5' a) To direct the EC and REC to establish an ANC Department of Health with an advisory committee composed of

representatives of Regional Health Committee: democratically elected from members and staff.

b) To

submit a report to the EC and REC on the progress of the health commission

i) prepare a Health Policy document for submission to the NEC;

ii) to finalise the structure and functioning of the ANC Health Department.

iii) to develop a national programme of action around Health.

NOTE: The Health Commission has also endorsed the Resolution on
Policy Development put before Conference by ANC Departments.

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BACKGROUND TO CALL FOR RESTRUCTURING OF THE ANC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

The ANC Health Department was created in Lusaka primarily to provide medical services to our comrades in exile, particularly in Eambia, Tanzania and Angola. It was a very important service department but was not given either the resources or the brief to develop health policies for a liberated South Africa. ANC health workers in exile elected a 9 person department and Ede Ralph Mgijima was elected secretary.

As contact between people inside and outside the country became easier the views of the department in Lusaka were sought Qh/a number of issues, particularly on the vexed question at unity in the health sector, and a major conference was held in Maputo in April 1990. Progressive organizations within the MDM continued however to take the lead in commenting on health issues and in organizing campaigns such as the one to desegregate hospitals. Following the unbanning of the ANC four members of the Lusaka based health department have returned to South Africa but three are involved in other work. Towards the end of last year an ad hoc group was convened which drew up the document "Towards Developing a Health Policy" for discussion in ANC branches, but most regions received copies only very shortly before conference. The present situation is that Cde Ralph Mgijima is effectively a one person department and has an impossible task. He is still presumably responsible for health workers in Lusaka, Tanzania and elsewhere, he liaises with international donors and with the World Health Organization, and he is expected to address groups on "The Health Policy of the ANC". If he is away there is nobody to answer queries or to stand in for him at meetings, and when he left Conference early to go to London it meant that DO member at the Health Department attended the Health Commission. He himself is very aware of the problems and wants to see the department strengthened. K

By contrast at least 6 regions (PHV, Border, N Cape, S Natal, Midlands and N Tvl) have regional health structures. In the PHV for example an interim committee contacted all branches by letter, through the columns of New Nation and by making personal contact with at least one member of every Branch Executive Committee. Branches were asked

- a) to discuss the document "Towards Developing a Health Policy"
 - b) to nominate people to serve on a Regional Health Committee, &
 - c) to send mandated representatives to a regional health meeting.
- Representatives of 25 branches attended the meeting, resolutions amending the document were debated and carried, 32 people were nominated for the committee and 9 were duly elected. The RHC LEu:31; meets once a fortnight. Its main function is to establish and represent the health interests of ordinary members and to develop and promote appropriate health policies.