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# AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

## DEPARTMENT OF ARTS & CULTURE

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**MEMO TO: NEC**

**FROM: DEPARTMENT OF ARTS & CULTURE (DAC)**

**ON: RESTRUCTURING: INTEGRATION OF DAC**

The present state of cultural organisation within the organisation, inside and outside South Africa demands immediate proactive responses.

Primarily, there is a call for urgent integration of what used to be internal and external structures in keeping with the legal functioning of the organisation. We must also work out the relationship of the department to the ILC and the DAC HQ in Lusaka.

At best, before the unbanning, coordination was negligible; there were crossed lines of communication and lack of clarity as to the status and reach of the DAC HQ department. Dealings with the IPC were mostly at our initiative and insistence and at all times there was never any clear sense of liaising mechanisms between that structure and the SGO vis a vis cultural matters.

A definite dichotomy emerged between the London region and ourselves as they increasingly acted with an IPC mandate which superseded DAC because it dealt with internal issues. It was not clear which information should be made accessible to DAC and by whom. Increasingly we were mortified by encounters with cultural workers from inside the country who because of their dynamic contact with London, assumed that we were party to certain information of which we knew nothing.

The launch of Artists Against Apartheid, a major event planned in consultation with the British AAM, we read about in the newspapers. Indeed to date we have never had any direct contact with the AAM, nor have we ever received a formal cultural report about their contact with our London office.

The controversy surrounding the Cultural Boycott issue, in particular the Graceland Tour, was the most divisive, especially since the ANC had no coherent policy on this issue at the time. Lack of policy was in part due to the surge in the movement's acceptance and popularity. The demands of that period caused an uneven development of policy formulation and culture suffered. The department, in particular the head, became a scape goat for this lack of policy.



The ground breaking Canon Collins Memorial lecture in which President Tambo addressed the issue of the Boycott provided the first respite for the department in the form of an authoritative guideline to deal with the Boycott.

The proceedings of the President's Committee and the aftermath when some of the decisions e.g BUWA were not followed up made even further inroads into the credibility of the DAC, whose head was accused of 'working alone'.

On numerous occasions DAC brought these problems to the attention of the leadership but they were never attended to.

Ultimately, when the DAC organised the first ANC In-House seminar on Culture, not one member of the NEC attended, save for the opening and closing. This served as a patent demonstration that Culture was not really deemed an important aspect of the struggle.

To all intents and purposes DAC has been excluded from the two major Wembley Stadium cultural events and in both cases our absence in those proceedings has not been a matter of comment or concern on the part of ANC HQ.

There is a definite 'dual' line of cultural authority and alas it is now perceived even inside the country where certain cultural activists from the MDM openly question the mandate of the DAC, Lusaka in favour of the 'London Desk'. Our attempts to organise 'an orderly return of exiled cultural workers and artists' have been aborted and we are reduced to seeking individual clearances for those who request them on a one to one basis with the DAC. In addition no representation of DAC inside the country has exacerbated the problems. This is due to lack of clearances, applications for which were made on the 6th June. All of this makes a mockery of ANC unity of purpose and the role of culture in future processes.

The customary marginalisation of culture in the political priorities has reinforced the lack of direction and we fear will lead to factionalism. By raising its own funds and having an efficient administration DAC is seen to be effective - yet the truth of the matter is that culture is not integrated into any policy formulation process, largely because the department is not headed by an NEC member, like Education and Health. Yet the most dramatic evidence of the destructive force of apartheid is seen in the social conditions that are evidenced primarily in education, health and culture. It is our view that the restructuring of the ANC must take these departments into account. They should be integrated into the body politique of the ANC. In this context, we have already submitted two memos to the NEC regarding our immediate role in restructuring.

Inside the country there is a vital role to be played by the ANC in the cultural sphere. Already factionalism is rearing its ugly head, which is only exacerbated by the dual communication from the ANC. All over the country there are pockets of dynamic and active cultural groups which have done much to further the struggle and the ANC, but national co-ordination and organisation is extremely weak and vulnerable. To a large extent progressive cultural workers and bodies have been neglected by the ANC/MDM. This poses a potentially dangerous situation, especially in view of the fact that the cultural sphere is the strongest domain of the PAC, AZAPO, BC and Inkatha. United and decisive leadership by the ANC is of paramount importance and urgency.



Now that the movement is operating aboveboard, it is imperative that relevant aspects of ANC cultural organisation, which formerly had to be clandestine, should conform to the demands of the day.

- \* What is the status of the IPC?
- \* How can we use their records on cultural organisation before the unbanning to enhance present organisation?
- \* Who can retrieve these records?

In order to tackle some of the issues raised we request that you call an urgent meeting of senior cultural workers to be held inside South Africa as soon as possible, to consider the restructuring of the ANC Department of Arts & Culture and its function within the country, in particular how it must relate to existing organisations. (DAC can make a modest contribution towards the expenses for this). Should these organisations be partisan or should they be used as vehicles for greater unity and development of national cultural institutions?

Urgent attention must be paid to the nature of ANC cultural structures since Barbara Masekela is leaving the department for the National Fundraising Committee. She has expressed concern about handing over and helping to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Some of the immediate issues to be considered are:

- \* The urgent need to consider the Sports Desk, which must be given specific attention.
- \* The need for a liaison person immediately, which has already been raised by the ILC.
- \* The urgency of relocation and preliminary steps to be taken.
- \* The future of Amandla.
- \* The future of Projects - Rixaka; Dakawa Cultural Centre (Textile Printing, Weaving & Dyeing and Graphics already started); Cultural Curriculum Development; Desk Top Publishing; Video Training Project (Video Unit); Scholarship & Training Programme.
- \* The availability of funds and existing budgets.

It is crucial that some representatives of the ILC and external leadership be in attendance at this meeting so as to brief each other about the provenances of issues such as the Cultural Boycott, NSC, relations with democratic cultural structures in particular the National Interim Cultural Committee.

We also think it would be in order to arrange a meeting of some of the exiled South African musicians (who are polarised badly) to discuss with them pertinent issues of unity and development and their role in that process.