

FREE SOUTHERN AFRICA COMMITTEE

P.O. Box 422
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta
December 9, 1977

C.C.S.A.
P.O. Box 545
Adelaide Postal Station
Toronto, Ontario

Dear Friends,

Please excuse the delay in FSAC's response to your request for a report on the November conference and position on a national organization. Our December meeting was not held until December 7, and internal democracy prevented us from submitting this report until such time as the entire membership had discussed the issue.

We will divide our comments into sections on the conference itself and then move on to a discussion of our thoughts on a national organization.

November Conference

There were many strengths of the conference:

- (a) discussion of a national organization, which is important as a means of facilitating our anti-apartheid activities across the country;
- (b) discussion of national co-ordination of tours;
- (c) discussion of national co-ordination of research and publication of materials dealing with all forms of Canadian complicity in the apartheid regimes of Southern Africa;
- (d) concrete plans for the national co-ordination of material support to the ANC(SA), Patriotic Front and SWAPO;
- (e) discussion of national co-ordination of the distribution of news re: events in Southern Africa and liberation movements in the form of a national newsletter; and
- (f) very effective workshops and solid resolutions passed at the plenary session.

The weaknesses of the conference were, in our opinion:

- (a) little or no recognition of the political work of liberation support movements other than C.C.S.A.

--e.g., SAAC(Vancouver), RCFSA(Regina) and FSAC(Edmonton);

- (b) The determination of delegate status was not clearly spelled out either before or during the conference, with the result being over-representation of organizations whose major priority is not work around Southern Africa liberation support;
- (c) The general public was not allowed to benefit from the very educational workshops during the conference.

These perceived weaknesses are mentioned in that they would seem to relate to difficulties that may emerge with the creation of a national organization. Such difficulties might be:

- (a) A national organization that is overly narrow--not in its political commitment and objectives but rather in its affiliate structure;
- (b) A national organization which has geographical concentration in firstly Toronto and secondarily Winnipeg, thus preventing affiliation of groups on the basis of regional equality. That is, all tendencies to reproduce Central Canadian geopolitical bias should be avoided; and
- (c) A national organization that potentially incorporates a contradiction between the structures of C.C.S.A. (Toronto and Winnipeg) and the structures of equally active political groups elsewhere in the country.

Finally, with regard to the Conference, FSAC has one specific criticism that pertains to our organization alone.

This was the first time FSAC has been prevented from setting up its own literature table. Our literature not only includes materials that fully support the ANC(SA), the Patriotic Front and SWAPO; it also includes research publications that we have put together and document Canadian complicity(which was an area of expressed interest at the Conference). Our materials have been well received throughout Canada since their publication, and we fail to see any principled political reason why they should not be presented at an FSAC table during the Conference--especially as this would allow delegates the chance to better acquaint themselves with our work in Edmonton.

At the conclusion of the Conference, FSAC was further disturbed by the fact that a 10% charge was levied against FSAC on the sales of our materials displayed on the CCSA book table. The stated reason had to do with the operating costs(losses) of the Co-Op Bookstore in Winnipeg. We find this policy totally unacceptable as we too experience operational costs in our work and we cannot accept the suggestion that we should cover not only our own expenses but those of a Winnipeg bookstore as well. This clearly smacks of organizational and regional inequality

and raises in our minds many questions regarding our concern for equality in working relationships in the future.

FSAC's position re: National Organization

Notwithstanding the points raised above, FSAC maintains the position it brought to Winnipeg--i.e., we fully support in principle the creation of a national organization to facilitate and better co-ordinate our collective anti-apartheid work across the country. Such an organization can hopefully fulfill all the points raised in the first section of this report--e.g., "strengths of the conference."

FSAC strongly believes that the issue of creating a national organization at this time should be approached from a principled political position. Our membership at the December 7 meeting adopted the following principles as those we feel necessary for building such a national organization.

These principles are:

- (a) Each affiliate group must be allowed to maintain its local autonomy with respect to name, organizational structure and work that directly responds to the local/regional situation;
- (b) Each affiliate group must have equal representation in the national organization. Local/regional groups which have internal umbrella structures will have no greater representation than groups without such umbrella or other structures;
- (c) Each affiliate group must carry out its anti-apartheid work on Southern Africa in support of the African National Congress (South Africa), the Patriotic Front (Zimbabwe) and SWAPO (Namibia);
- (d) Each affiliate group must maintain a policy of non-interference in the affairs of other groups that exist in other cities or regions;
- (e) The name of the national organization should be a new name that does not bear the name of organizations already in existence and, by definition, already representing local/regional structures. The purpose of this principle is to avoid confusion as to which groups such a national organization represents.
- (e) All anti-apartheid groups willing to abide by these principles (a-e) must be allowed to affiliate to such a national organization. Exclusion of any progressive groups (that accept these principles) on the basis of non-political reasons cannot be in the interests of an effective national anti-apartheid organization in Canada.

WE ADVANCE THESE PRINCIPLES ON THE BASIS OF OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE POSITION ENDORSED BY THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (SOUTH AFRICA)--I.E., THE CALL FOR A BROADLY-BASED MOVEMENT TO WORK IN SUPPORT OF AND RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF THE LEGITIMATE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA.

In conclusion, FSAC trusts that its comments and proposals will be interpreted as constructive suggestions that will lead to an intensification of the struggle for liberation from imperialism in Southern Africa.

In solidarity,

Laura M. Lee

Laura Lee (delegate)

Ken Luckhardt

Ken Luckhardt (delegate)

on behalf of the
Free Southern Africa Committee (FSAC)
Edmonton

CC: CCSA (Winnipeg)
SARC (Vancouver)
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