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REBUILDING A LEGAL AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS WOMEN'S ORGANIZATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

The unbanning of the African National Congress and of other democratic organizations has placed before our entire movement the challenge to re-examine our strategies; our strength and weaknesses as well as our methods of work.

Throughout the years of illegality, the women, in their various democratic formations, but significantly in community action, have provided a powerful force in opposition to apartheid. Their local and regional formations have given immense strength to the Mass Democratic Movement. Their organizational strength within the unbanned ANC will ensure the sustained dynamism and organizational strength of our movement.

The new situation demands that the ANC Women's Section re-organise and transform itself into a popular and dynamic force in the form of the ANC Women's League. The League should draw into its ranks the most oppressed women who live in the rural areas and all the Bantustans. Working women, church women, students, academics and professionals; young and old women of , all races and creeds should find a comfortable home in the ANC Women's League. Their emancipatory aspirations will be met by the League's adherence to the basic principles, policies and programme of the African National Congress

The African National Congress has committed itself to a united, democratic future free of race, gender and other forms of discrimination. In general, it will be the task of the ANC Women's League to ensure that the ANC Programme addresses correctly the particular needs of women. The League will highlight all forms of discrimination against women; promote affirmative action; monitor implementation in all areas of human endeavour and initiate appropriate research among other activities.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

The NWEK working group which met on 11th February 1990 reviewed these fast moving developments and decided that the tasks ahead require a much broader consultation between the NWEK, and regional representatives from inside the country and those in exile. This consultation will take the form of a workshop whose main objectives will be as follows:-

1. To re-examine our tactics;
2. To assess our strengths and weaknesses inside and outside
3. To re-examine our organizational structures and modes of operation. inside and outside.

It is recommended that this workshop be preceded by local and/or regional discussions on implications for the ANC Women's Section of the unbanning of the ANC.

Immediate and practical goals to be achieved by the end of the workshop are as follows:

- A Programme of Action for Re-building the ANC Women's League upto December 16th 1990 (ANC National Conference)
- A Provisional Constitutional Framework Of The ANC Women's League (A proposal);
- Identification of a Working Group for Monitoring the implementation of the Programme Of Action.

DYNAMICS OF THE WORKSHOP

The workshop will encompass the diversity of subjects relating to the mobilisation of all South African women; Such as the history of the ANC women's organisation inside and in exile; Current situation (strengths and weaknesses); implications for legal mobilisation; relation of the ANC women's League to other democratic women's formations and the relation between the ANC and the Women's League.

There will be plenary sessions where formal presentation will be made. Each presentation should ideally take 15 minutes, followed by 30-45 minutes of discussion.

Plenary presentations will include:

- Do we need a Women's League In the African National Congress: Positions for and Against (ANC National Organiser plus 2)
- Women in the ANC: A Historical Note (Sisulu and Njobe)
- Mobilisation of Women in South Africa: Strengths and Weaknesses and new tactics; (Paper From Inside and Zuma)
- Provisional Constitutional Framework of the ANC Women's League (A draft document for discussion)
- The Way Forward: A Draft Programme Of Action
- Women and Economic Development: Women must participate in the debate on Nationalisation and women's place in a future economic order.

Participants from inside and outside must prepare for substantive participation in all these subjects. The steering Committee will decide on actual presenters.

PARTICIPANTS

Only ANC members

All NWECA members, representatives from ANC regions inside and from the RWC's in exile, resource persons and invitees identified by the NWECA Secretariat

All participants will be given tasks, as necessary, to facilitate the success of the workshop; paper preparation, rapporteur, chair-persons, steering committee participation etc

Details of location, duration, accommodation, travel etc will be communicated to participants by the relevant National Women's Secretariat committee

COMMUNICATIONS

All communications regarding programme should be addressed to:

ANC telex No. ZA 45390

Postal address Box 31791 Lusaka, Zambia

c/o Administrative Secretary (ANC/WL Workshop)

Dear Comrades.

Allow me also to welcome you to this very historic gathering. We have met in the past and shared views on how to galvanise the millions of our womenfolk into action as part of the forces engaged in struggle against our common enemy.

We have met on several occasions and pondered ever ways that could ensure the strengthening of our democratic organizations.

But today's meeting is unique. We are here assembled to chart a way that will ensure the building of our Movement's Women's League as a guiding force at the head of all efforts to white in purposeful action our South African Women.

This task is an important component part of our current efforts to build a strong and vibrant ANC within the borders of our country.

History has placed a heavy responsibility on our shoulders. The task we have to tackle is ominous. We should at all times be aware of the fact that the decisions we shall take over the next few days are to determine the fate of our struggle - a struggle in which to many have suffered and even paid the ultimate price.

We should recall that for many years after its formation, women did not enjoy full and equal status with men in our movement. Their role was purely seen as supportive. This tendency changed to some extent in the latter days of our movement's legal existence in no small measure due to the efforts of the ANC women's league

We believe that National Liberation will only have true meaning if it is accompanied by far reaching changes in gender relations. We believe that the extent to which women participate as equal partners in our movement is a reliable index of its political development and maturity.

Our movement situates the issue of emancipation of the South African women within the broader struggle for National Liberation. This attainment of this noble ideal should nevertheless not be seen as a natural by-product of National Liberation. It needs our conscious effort. It needs the effort all of us in African National Congress. In as much as strong and dynamic ANC Women's League will ensure a strong ANC, it will also ensure that the visions of full and equal participation by all in our movement, is translated into reality.

CHARACTERISATION OF PRESENT PERIOD

We are living through exciting yet very dangerous times. As a result of consistent efforts by the masses of our people supported by the international community, de Klerk has finally conceded that he has to give some Power to the voteless majority.

But he wants to do so within the context of the preservation of white Minority Privilege.

Yes, he has gone beyond what any of his predecessors had done. But we should not deceive ourselves into believing that he is ready to accept the type of transformation that are essential to improve the lot of our people. Such transformations can only come about as a result of our purposeful actions. Key to this is a strong ANC pulling together with other democratic formations of our people.

In an attempt to extricate the regime from the present Economic, Political and moral crisis, de Klerk has been forced to open some space for our movement. His historic unbarring of our movement and other organizations as well as the release of our leaders ; must be viewed in this context. They are grudging responses of an enemy under pressure. These of course are important victories for our people. Our task now is to ensure effective use of ; the legal space created to ensure the rooting of our movement and this perspectives among the masses of our people. This is a task of fundamental importance. It is the only way of ensuring that the gains that have been chalked up are not reversed. We have a historical duty to turn this forced retreat of the regime into a rout. Our meeting here should be seen as part of our attempts to attain this noble objective.

Since his inauguration as State President apologists of the regime have been trying to portray de Klerk as a very reasonable man with the interest of the black majority at heart. On the other hand a campaign of slander against the ANC AND M.D.M. has been launched.

The aim of all this is to portray the regime as the good boys and us the bad boys in the South Africa political equation.

Whilst we undoubtedly still occupy the political and moral high ground both at home and abroad we should nevertheless not underestimate the impact of these attempts. We should at all times be vigilant ; and close ranks.

We should expect an escalation of the campaigns against us. We should refuse to concede even an inch of the ground we have covered to the enemy. Desperate attempts are being made to pit sections of the leadership against each other as well as driving a wedge between the leadership and our people.

In the coming days our leadership will be freed to take some bold decisions. The times we are going through need innovative thinking and tactical flexibility. In order to ensure that at all times we pull together, that we constantly be aware of the actions of our democratic practice within our movement, strong structures of our movement should be built across the length and

breadth of our country.
We have to do so in shortest possible time.

NEGOTIATIONS

Our movement views negotiations as a terrain of struggle. It is not a substitute for struggle and the two should not be counterposed. We have always stated our preference for a less bloody political settlement in South Africa. Some armchair revolutionaries with mythical armies have attacked us for meeting the regime suffice it to say that all they are doing is a miserable display of their ignorance of revolutionary practice.

We have clearly stated our negotiation concept in the Hearer declaration. We need to have the contents of this document understood by our people in their millions. That document outlines our view of a possible mechanism for democratic transfer of power to the people.

Some demands in it like

- The call for Constituent Assembly
- Form N of an interim government
- The question of Power itself

should be at the center of our campaigns so as to ensure that the people are fully involved in the negotiation process.

We believe that there can be no lasting solution without the democratic participation of the people themselves. But participation is inconceivable without strong organization. That is part of the task of this workshop is charged with.

URGENT TASK OF OUR REVOLUTION

A number of conditions put down in the Hearer declaration as essential for the creation of a climate conducive to negotiations have not as yet been met.

Thousands of political prisoners still remain behind bars. Some of our most outstanding sons and daughters still await the hangman's noose. we demand the unconditional return of all exile.

The set has shown that it is incapable of stopping the violence in our areas and ;should be lifted. Through mass action we must force de Klerk to meet these demands.

As we build our structures we must ensure that they are built on the solid foundation of discipline and accountability, Our people must feel that the movement is theirs and that they shape its direction and programmes.

We have for a long time ignored the rural areas. Recent events have clearly shown the deep-seated rejection of these structures by our people. Our people in these areas are crying for leadership. We dare not fail them. We must ensure the speedy

collapse of those regimes who have committed atrocities against our people as part of our countrywide drive to render the apartheid structures unworkable.

Comrades, as you ;all are aware, some of the ;Bantustan leaders have had contacts with our movement in the past. Some of them, sensing ;the imminent collapse of the apartheid monster are doing so now. This is an area which needs to be treated with both vision and sensitivity. There is a definite tug of war situation.

De Klerk is trying to win these elements to .sis side so as to neutralise the demands of our revolutionary alliance and the MDM. We have an objective interest in foiling these desperate attempts. This time more than ever before needs a sober blending of tactical flexibility and firmness to principle.

But comrades is all we do = we should never lose sight of the fact that our future lies with our people galvanised into discipline and purposeful mass militant action.

Dear comrades, one of the most striking achievements of the '84-86 phenomenon was the establishment of rudimentary organs of peoples power. We should carefully study the correct lessons. The establishment of street committees, peoples courts and self defence units were surely a bold attempt by our people to shape the destiny of their lives.

But we should a;sp accept that at times these lacked a clear political perspectives and isolated instances degenerated into anarchy.

We need to revive these structures as part of our campaign to establish a situation of dual power. These structures must fall directly under the leadership of our movement and be guided by us.

We are going through a period of transition. We cannot as yet claim that this situation is irreversible. We cannot afford to put all our eggs in one basket. We should ensure that we are organised in such a manner that we shall be able to withstand a backlash. Hence the need for us leave intact and consolidate our underground structures, Let us not be euphoric and yet we should be bold and effectively use the avenues that have hitherto been closed to us.

ARMED STRUGGLE

I wish to report to this gathering that our army ;recently held a seminar to study the current situation. We took stock of our previous achievements and failures. We sought to find ways of ensuring that our army grows and plays its part as the spear and shield of our people more effectively.

We reaffirmed our total confidence on our leadership and stand solidly behind its political initiatives.

We took note of the recent atrocities against our people in Sebokeng and Natal. We noted with concern that our people in such instances lack the capacity to effectively defend themselves.

We therefore resolved to urgently improve the capacity of our people to defend themselves their organizations and their leaders.

In the past we faced numerous problems in rooting our army amongst our masses... We lacked a viable underground and well established reception points. We noted also that there were instances when our combatants behaved in a manner unbecoming for members of our peoples army. We felt that the present situation offers vast opportunities for improving these weaknesses. We also reaffirmed that suspension of combat actions is conditional upon the enemy restraining its security forces and that we cannot be expected to disarm our people in the face of an intransigent enemy.

CONCLUSION;

The tasks you, face are enormous indeed you are called upon to assist in formulating strategic perspective for our movement as well create a viable instrument to carry that perspective through

We are in no doubt that you will accomplish this task. May you ;also deliberate on an issue of strategic importance for our army. We need to neutralise significant sections of the enemy armed forces. They have wives and children. Is it not high time that we work out a clear strategy of deliberately working on these families so as to make it impossible for them to shoot our people. Personally, I think we should treat this as ;an important task of our Women's League.

Lastly, specifically on behalf of our ;army I wish your deliberations every success.