

**NOTES ON DISCUSSIONS WITH NECC AND OTHER
EDUCATIONAL RELATED BODIES REPRESENTATIVES
ATTENDING RESA CONFERENCE, LONDON 29-31ST MARCH, 1989**

1. The RESA conference was held under the theme "ECONOMIC CHANGE, SOCIAL CONFLICT AND EDUCATION IN APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA." Approximately thirty researchers, close to MDM were present.

Our delegation convened a meeting with limited group which can be characterised as "academic activists."

2.0 They briefed us as follows:

- 2.1 (a). The NECC, at national level, continues to operate but cannot keep its own high profile - almost the whole leadership is under heavy restrictions. The Education Projects Units (EPU's) exist at the Universities of Natal, Wits and UWC. Within the first two centres, their effectiveness depends on the strength of the MDM one comrade said their presence must be understood in the context a 'peoples initiative within a white liberal centre'
 - (b) The People's History Commission has issued a booklet on methodology in history and some institutions are experimenting on it. It has been reviewed with mixed feeling by both teacher and student. The Mathematics Commission is a bit sluggish - a conference is planned soon. People's Education protagonists still grappling with the question and balancing delivery of a democratic education, as well as preparing students for DET Exams.
 - (c) NECC is closely collaborating with the SACC Education Desk. The latter is not restricted and able to assume a high profile. An initiative is underway to set up an Education Trust to run various projects like bursaries, research, experiments with private and church schools, (For details refer to SACC Education Desk Report). The Human Resources Development Project is to be administered through an Education Aid Project - this will include processing of bursary applications. (internal and external). The MDM still fail to identify interest areas for research.
- 2.2. The Association of Independent schools like St. Barnabas, Sacred Heart etc. in an attempt to experiment on alternative education are planning the creation of an Alternative Exam Board to register in terms of the Section 22 of Companies Act (Non Profit Making Organisation) - hope to be functional within three years. The NECC want to target the almost empty white schools within the 'grey areas' It is

hoped that at a later stage corporate business can be drawn in for sponsorship.

- 2.3. The Foreign Funding Bill seems will pass through parliament. Foreign governments are failing to pressurise the regime, whose argument is that the law will be no different from the USA law in regulating, registering activities of agencies benefiting from foreign funds. The EOC is offering scholarships abroad and its board includes personalities like Archbishop Tutu, Dr. Motlana, but recipients are mostly non political applicants.
- 2.4. The NECC is currently faced with the problems of +- 15-20 000 students refused admission at DET schools, mostly at high school level. Contradiction exists between those at school and the victims. Issue complicated by by some NEUSA teachers encouraging continuous boycotts (eg current Soweto school boycott) Felt that the ANC input on this issue is crucial, perhaps once more publicising the 1985 call.
- 2.5. Regional NECC's functional in Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Orange Free State and Natal but with problems of PTS coordination in the majority of areas. Student/Teacher organisations in the Cape active. A major problem exist within SANSCO at UWC where hostile/tense situation exists between African and coloured students. Activists from Bush Colleges are failing to appreciate the special situation of a centre dominated by progressive thinking.
- 3.0. The NECC representative briefed us on a meeting with the Association of South African Student (UK) leadership. ASAS was launched on February 24 1989 at the initiative of MDM activist -students. 70-80 delegates were present. It is as yet not broadly based despite the fact that membership is restricted to "legal" South Africans.

3.1. PROBLEM AREAS

- (a) The EOC/British Council scholarship recipients reluctant to engage in student politics/organisations for fear of bursary withdrawal although constitution states clearly that the objective is addressing academic and other students interests.
- (b) NGO's are reluctant to offer funds for organisational work from MDM structures like NECC, SANSCO. Any direct connection with UDF related bodies will chase away the apolitical students they wish to organise.
- (c) The onstensible non political character of ASAS constitution is aimed at avoiding BCM/PAC inspired ideological debates which turn to be obstructionist. Concern also raised over the failure of ANC students/community to appreciate why the

founding congress decided to exclude exiles. (We still expect the text of the constitution and report from our students in UK).

- 4.0. The comrades observed that the ANC is not forcefully intervening on alternative education SOMAFCO experience is not seen in circulation. We indicated to them that DOE is planning a broadly based conference to mark the 10th Anniversary of SOMAFCO on People's Education in September.

Compiled by Reggie Mpongo.
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