

Cam/052/0019/6

WRAP-UP SESSION\REPORTS FROM DISCUSSION GROUPS

*(Saturday, March 16, 1991)*

Chairman: Chris Cavanagh

There are 2 ways to do this, two parts:

1. Each group will do a brief report back to sketch the contours of the discussion, and clarify any questions;
2. Discussion about the points will follow amongst everyone in attendance.

A. 2nd floor morning discussion:

Margi: We looked back at the objectives of the conference = to shape the discussion and what role we can play as solidarity activists; one objective is to go beyond anti-apartheid work, to a pro-active, post-apartheid pro-democracy stand.

There are two different positions:

1. It is not appropriate for Canadians to try and influence and debate the future of SA;
2. We must try and understand all the complexities of the relationship.

No-one is saying Canadians were going to dictate to SA re their future, but rather act as partners; perhaps we had a right to support these people whose values we share; we can only support the destruction of apartheid if also can support what is going to replace it.

Solidarity is a relationship between partners; it is important for Canadians to be involved in struggles inside Canada, specifically mentioned were native issues (Oka); their experiences as strugglers inside Canada would help them to make links with those struggling elsewhere. Also Canadians themselves are perhaps not used to using democratic power, so perhaps we are not able to teach those in SA.

Solidarity is a two-way street; South Africans need support from those who are also struggling, but not given in any sort of charity. Perhaps even more than financial support, it is a sense of relationship of people involved in struggle, and a need for South Africans to learn about those involved in struggle elsewhere.

(n.b. point later made by another member of this discussion group that it was an equal partnership that was being discussed.)

One of the dangers of giving aid is that it can be subverted to the agenda of those giving it.

There was discussion about the need for training.

The availability of models for SA to use in developing democracy was discussed, with the conclusion that SA would have to create its own indigenous models.

We discussed what we hoped would happen out of the conference:

South Africans must identify their own needs; and Canadians should identify links to help with those needs - together, it gives a sense of a 2-way relationship, partnership.

Concrete ideas which came out of the discussion:

Support the ANC newspaper

Need for connection, network, and information like that given to us here about the Nelson Mandela Fund CCEP project.

B. 7th Floor morning discussion:

Chris Sharpe:

We started off talking about the lack of focus in Canadian anti-apartheid movement, especially since Mandela's visit; we don't know what we are doing and need to focus on some specifics like letting people know that the struggle in SA is not over, to counteract the general feeling that things will soon be over if they are not already.

One of the things that we could focus on is establishing linkages, not the NGO linkages that already exist, but more grassroots, eg between steelworkers here and in SA, or between agricultural workers, instead of or as well as trade-union linkages that already exist = more honest, and equitable, ie, not a "we will teach you" sort of linkage, but a "we will learn from you and you will learn from us". This must be more direct, and not thru NGO's; we should make linkages that will stand on their own. [Nita added in a clarification that we also talked about the fact that linkages should not undermine structures and should be investigated so that they don't serve the purposes of one small group or one individual; and that they should be structured.]

We also discussed the fact that this conference seems to lack participation from other groups, eg AZAPO, PAC, BCM re speaking to the issues of anti-apartheid, and it seems to be mostly ANC [and I want to say that I am an ANC supporter]; because of that we have almost alienated a number of the West Indian community groups/members who largely follow BCM, PAC.

Questions:

Kathy: Were BCM groups invited?

CC: Not officially, but they may well have received the information from elsewhere.

C. 2nd floor afternoon discussion:

Margaret S:

We talked about the armed struggle and the need to keep the struggle away from the military, keep it on the political [to create legislation] and social and economic.

We identified the "motherhood issue" = keep mass action strong and keep pressure on de Klerk.

There was discussion about:

- (a) the labour movement and its role here and in SA; about the debate between unions and their workers, and between unions, and the distrust between unions in SA and their international counterparts.
- (b) how committed Canadian labour force is to SA unions, and the amount of financial assistance going to SA and where it should go.
- (c) civic groups, their alignment and how they can remain independent; if we want to, eg, fund schools we should fund them directly rather than through the ANC.
- (d) the need to think about 'nation-building'.
- (e) the difference between civil organizations, and the civics - this is an area that needs to be clarified for many of us.

- (f) the Matla trust, in terms of community linkage, with a mandate to develop broad community activities.

There was a statement made that everyone in SA is a South African.

Clarifications:

From another group member: we talked not only about the distinction between civil society and civics, but also their relation to politics.

Roller:

Another clarification - as much as we understand Huey's point about non-violence, but we feel that the means to fight in SA must be decided by us, depending upon conditions that prevail at any particular time.

Kathy: Clarification about linkages not being made through the ANC - that sounds like you think the ANC would not support that? It seems like a negative way to say that.

Margi: My understanding of the discussion was that it could work either way. It is not contradictory, but it doesn't have to be restricted to going through the ANC.

CC: This could be a discussion point for later?

Mac: This is a procedural point - if these notes are to be put into some kind of discussion paper, then we need to make sure that all points made in the discussions are recorded somewhere.

CC: Okay, that's a good point. If people feel the need to record their sense of the discussion or viewpoints because they have been missed or perhaps not stated as meant, then having seen the flip charts, we can set up that process.

Margi: We will put the flip charts up somewhere tomorrow and people can make sure their remarks are correctly stated.

D. 7th floor discussion group:

Janet Bojti:

Our discussion on grass roots organizations were devoted to a large extent to asking our SA guests about grassroots organizations, what daily life is like, because we are so hungry for information about how people are trying to take control of their lives.

The facilitator identified grassroots as growing up in the church environment, women's groups, civics, and labour. He asked 4 questions [which never really got answered]:

1. How women are mobilizing for post-apartheid SA.
2. What role the civics presently have in planning for a new SA.
3. What are the most pressing problems that unions are facing now.
4. How can Canadian churches relate to what is happening and will happen.

Bafo then said he had been cut short by the 'stalinist' moderator of the panel, and finished what he had been saying earlier on the state of the trade unions in SA.

There are really 4 labour federations in SA, one is an all-white federation which exists to oppose the aims of COSATU which leads to much difficulty in the union movement; the white union lost their sense of class in '24 and '48, and are only now trying to get it back; it is difficult to reconcile the aims of white and black unionists in a new SA when one is negotiating for settlement in a much more luxurious level than the other.

The question was posed: What is meant by "social transformation" in SA. The answer was formulated that it was difficult to be precise, since a plan for a new SA will have to emerge in a freer environment than exists today, including freedom of speech.

Discussion ensued on "democratic socialism" being the future of a new SA; this is frightening to a lot of people but it does have its supporters.

We asked our guests what organizational imperatives are required for grassroots developments. The answer was prefaced by saying that if we want a bad example, we can look for instance to Mozambique. But we must start at the bottom and build to the national level, hoping that local negotiations can affect the national politics.

Discussion ensued re COSATU involvement in the movement to abolish single-sex hostels, along with the work of the civics on this issue; we debated about whether civics are really autonomous from the ANC, with remarks that membership in each seems to cross lines and sometimes the lines were indistinguishable; but there was recognition that the end goals, anti-apartheid goals of the ANC and the civics were similar.

A question arose about land reform and redistribution - what it means at a grassroots level. One of our guests answered that land redistribution would have to be something to be struggled for - an on-going struggle.

A question arose about how the campaign to get people back into school is going. One of our guests answered that it has had mixed results. People want to go back but the violence is acting as a deterrent - the threat of violence keeps people away from school, and the social disruption caused by violence also keeps people away.

Discussion from floor:

Puke: I don't doubt the sincerity of anyone here about commitment to democracy, but I have a concern about reports from these discussion groups; there seems to be almost a clinical approach as to what can be done to help people involved in the anti-apartheid struggle. I would have thought you would have had Canadians who are involved in struggle in their own community here, and they would translate that into what to do here in Canada re SA.

But, there is no struggle here in Canada, and we are talking about a process, what do we do: send money; bring people in for training, etc. That is too clinical for me. Nobody here seems to be talking about what to change in Canadian society which is not right at this point; it is almost like: here we are in beautiful Canada, and what do we do to help dirty SA get cleaned up. This must be addressed if we are not to feel that we are simply the receivers of the goodwill of people in Canada.

Margi: I must apologize then because I did feel that that kind of spirit or approach was evident in the group that I was part of.

Roller:

We did raise that question of partnership quite strongly; I think this conference must go back and think about these things and implement them; Chris [Sharpe] mentioned that we have to broaden the anti-apartheid network to include other sectors, and this should not be something that is open to discussion but rather a given. This conference should say, ok, now we have agreed, how do we go about doing it. We need not discuss all the things that we have consensus about, we should now raise the things that need more emphasis or some plan of action.

Kathy: At a practical level, how do we go about building these linkages; do we have addresses or material I can take to my union to interest them in the issues in SA.

Bafo: Yes, we have addresses for all affiliates of COSATU; there are many unions which have already twinned up with those in SA, eg: CUPE and NUPGE; CAW is thinking about twinning with NUMSA.

Kathy: What does it lead to?

Bafo: Well, there have been some exchanges of delegations so far.

Puke: I feel I must specify in the case of a union, once you set up a linkage, at first through correspondence, then can work out how the Canadian union can demonstrate its solidarity; develop in concrete terms what is to be done; but the appropriate concrete action is not something that can be said generally for all unions/linkages.

Bafo: Ottawa-Carleton District of CUPE is already having this kind of linkage with Mozambique workers - they have signed a memorandum of understanding so each knows what to expect from this relationship. This is a better way to do it than just going off to Africa to find a link.

Mac: As a network, will we take on contacting other SA's who do not necessarily answer back to the ANC, but take our lead from the ANC in SA which is trying to work with the PAC etc. If this is so, at what level (grassroots, network), and when do we talk about it.

Bafo: This question can maybe be referred to KOPANO, etc.; maybe there is a need to review that kind of structure; but it isn't appropriate to charge anti-apartheid organizations with that task, it should be a task of South Africans.

Margi: OAAN is a very loose organization and it just has the ability to discuss; it has no strict mandate; the presence here of the ANC vs a range of interests comes from the fact that we have already sort of defined ourselves as supporting the ANC, so at each conference we don't go back and re-define ourselves; so in view of the changes in SA, we may at a later date be instructed by the ANC that this is a change to make here in Canada.

Jeeva: Re Janet's summary of our discussion group - I think that what has happened is that the flavour of our discussion has been lost in the summarization, eg, how the civics are taking the place of town councils in negotiations, and what Stix referred to earlier on the Panel re a centralized approach: for union negotiations, and for township negotiations.

Nita: Chris [Sharpe]: I think you did a good job of summing up our morning discussion, but I want to be sure that we don't present that issue [support for ANC vs getting other groups invited here] as a consensus/conclusion of our group discussion - it was a point that was raised.

Kathy: Re broadening the anti-apartheid network, the ANC has already said in SA that they would work with PAC, etc.; was it a conscious decision then not to contact them for this conference?

CC: It was a problem that arose out of our original definition, and resources. Hope I don't sound too defensive.

Atyeno:

I still don't understand civic organizations vs civil society - the process of separating what is being done in local townships, from what is happening all around SA, and make these groups look like they are existing in a vacuum, apolitical, not linked to any political group.

Jeeva: Maybe the ANC statement of meeting with PAC is being misunderstood - the ANC approach is one of: where can we find a common ground where we can work with other organizations; this is still an on-going process to define that common ground; but we are not yet at a point where we are actually working with the PAC, IFP, etc.

Mac: Development of relationship between SA, political organizations should be the work of SA political organizations, and when it is settled then we may ask our separate groups to do the same thing at their levels; but at this point no formal relationships exist so we should leave it for now.

Roller:

Re ad-hoc organizations - there should be some clarifications. Right now this meeting is looking at support for ANC, and right now we should look at BCM etc. as having a common objective; neither the PAC nor ANC is interested in having a joint program; but they want to work towards a common ground as we move to a new SA; we could invite them to, for example, our demonstrations. We have to be very broad in our objectives; these tactical objectives can be properly tackled by those who are dealing with them on a day-to-day basis. We can take these issues back to our constituencies, and say that this is what we have discussed. Perhaps we need some direction from the Chair?



CC: The direction from the Chair is that we can maybe now break for dinner and carry on afterwards?

Zola: I was going to say exactly the same thing as Roller.

CC: The question re civics and civil society - can we continue that after dinner? We can also check on it tomorrow as well.

Discussion ended at 6:00 p.m.