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AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS (SA)

Mission to Canada

Minutes of Toronto Unit meeting September 19 1988

Present: Raymond L, Sifiso N, Ahmed M, Peter M, Don M, Jabu D, Esme, Aleem J, Jacob M, Yusuf Sl Sam K, Nompoti M, Mervyn L, Zaheer B, Lindsey M, Peter B, Baboo M, Ebrahim M.

Grievances: Cmde Jabu, as Political Commissar, had been invited by Cmde Chair to make a brief introduction to the meeting. He emphasised: 1) every member has the right to raise criticism, in a constructive way, and within the appropriate structures (the Unit in this case). 2) It is not appropriate to raise problems outside such structures. 3) Criticism may arise owing to lack of information: this might be provided at the Unit meeting. After this introduction, Cmde Chair opened the meeting for discussion.

Jabu: Cmde Peter M was appointed Deputy Representative for the ANC. Why, then, is no housing being made available for him?

Yusuf: Cmde Yusuf explained that the original decision to move Chief Reps around was made by HQ at the time of the Arusha conference. In March this year he heard that SACTU would replace Cmde Peter M, who would then become either Deputy or Chief Rep in Canada. All this has been verbal until now, with nothing in writing. The decision to purchase the houses was also an HQ decision, and HQ decided to let Cmde Peter M remain in the house for a while so that he could look for alternative accommodation. Cmde Yusuf has been told by HQ that SACTU had to approach ANC TGO for funding if it was SACTU's intention that he remain in that house. Again, to date no approach had been made, and HQ agreed that, because of the drain on our office's finances, the house should be sold.

Peter M: Cmde Peter began by indicating that he wasn't sure how he, from SACTU, fitted in to the Unit and the RPC (on which he sits). He was unsure how to raise problems that he had. He said he found that Cmde Yusuf said different things on different days, so that he was never sure where he was, and this created problems. He referred to the fact that Jay Naidoo, during his visit to Canada, was unable to meet Cmde Peter, yet met Cmde Yusuf for discussions on trade union matters. He also mentioned the matter of Kitty and Simon, saying that he was faced with decisions on the RPC without being aware of all the facts. He wondered why the ANC was buying and selling houses, and wondered whether the Unit members knew about the Shuter street property and what its uses were to be. He expressed concern about multinational corporations such as Molson's supporting the Mandela picnic. He referred briefly to problems that he had heard were raised by the Winnipeg Unit in connection with the

organization of the ANC in Canada. He also referred to Cmde Ludidi in Halifax, who apparently thought he was the Chief Representative in that area. Because Cmde Yusuf changes his mind so often, he wondered whether to think that Ludidi had in fact been told he was Chief Rep at some point. Finally, while Cmde Yusuf was in Lusaka, Cmde Peter phoned Nkadimeng in Lusaka, who said Cmde Yusuf had told him he would buy a large house to accommodate all ANC people, and they should not worry about housing. Cmde Nompoti phoned the TG, who said he didn't know about the houses, and told Nompoti not to leave the house, because it was ANC property.

Yusuf: Explained the structures which exist within our mission to handle grievances (the Unit for local matters, the RPC for matters beyond the area of our Unit). He also reminded members that the matter of Cmde Naidoo had been discussed before, and he had admitted to an error on his part at that time. On the matter of housing, he insisted that the TGO had been kept informed, and a copy of the report sent was available in our office. Finance Committee minutes would also reflect past discussions on this matter, which was not decided by an individual but by the Committee. He pointed out that other regions (New York and London) also own property for ANC personnel, since renting is expensive. On the matter of the Mandela picnic, Cmde Yusuf reminded members that the involvement of Molson was discussed at Unit meetings; Pepsi Cola and Coke were not sponsors, but provided refreshments on a business basis. No sponsors other than Molson could be obtained, and without sponsors it could not have gone ahead. The matter of Cmde Ludidi in Halifax is for the RPC, which is considering it at the moment. He suggested that Cmde Peter could have raised it with the RPC at any time. Since there is only one Chief Representative per Region, Ludidi could not have been named as a CR.

Nompoti: Cmde Nompoti indicated she did not know who are our ANC members, as she does not have a list yet. She also requested details of how our structures work. Specific to the Women's Section, she wondered what it was doing (Cmde Lindsey is the acting coordinator at present). She suggested that the WS should be involved in a workshop that she knows about. She wondered why one of our women members had been suspended (Cmde Ayesha), and whether Cmde Yusuf's daughter, Zinat, was a member of the ANC or not. On membership, she wondered whether Cmde Aleem was a member, and if not he should be because of all the hard work that he does for the office. She confirmed that she had phoned the TG and that he had said he did not know about the houses.

Mervyn: reminded members that the decisions taken on the houses were taken by the Finance Committee, of which he is a member. Minutes of the FC are not available for the membership to see, but the report to the TG outlining the housing matter is available. He felt that it was for SACTU to decide if Peter M should remain in the house or not (and provide the money to accommodate him).

Jabu/Yusuf: Both commented that a big problem with the whole matter of the houses (and even for other matters) is that decisions were communicated verbally, with nothing being received from HQ in writing. It was felt that this must be remedied.

Raymond: asked where the emotional content of the problem was? He was concerned about the welfare of our two comrades. He felt that our structures were too cumbersome to make decisions fast enough, and that we should review them, rather than sticking to structures dictated by HQ. (Cmde Yusuf reminded members that the structures were in fact debated by us in detail, and accepted with some modifications).

Peter M: Peter M felt that we were not discussing the problems that he wanted to have discussed. It was not the details of the housing matter, nor the structures, that bothered him. He felt that there was not enough democracy - not enough participation in decisions by the membership. As an example, he mentioned that the AGM had requested a brief summary of our finances, yet many months later, no such summary was forthcoming. He felt that information does not flow properly from level to level, and members are often left in the dark. Finally, he reinforced the need for written confirmation of statements such as: "HQ said that we must do this or that...".

Peter B: outlined the communication channels that do exist at present: Units give copies of minutes to RPC; RPC gives copies of minutes to Units; Chief Rep updates our Unit regularly on the work he does, and on HQ matters. He suggested that the Finance Committee provide Units with quarterly reports giving an overview of the financial situation. He felt strongly that the housing of the Mahlangus should be resolved at this meeting, otherwise much of the discussion would have been wasted.

Yusuf: He has been trying out a number of options, mostly seeking rental accommodation for the Mahlangus. If worst came to worst, he would accommodate them in the ANC house. Rent would be paid locally by us in the interim, until a satisfactory response is obtained from HQ.

Sam: Communication clearly is a problem unless decisions or instructions are written down and filed appropriately. He felt that openness was important (e.g. in relation to finances) to allay suspicion. He also indicated that Cmde Aleem's membership application was in process, and the RPC was responsible for the delay.

Zaheer: mentioned that these problems are not new - Cmde Yusuf has faults, like all of us. We must work together to overcome these faults, so as not to leave ourselves open to incorrect perceptions or criticism, especially outside our membership.

Baboo: said he had been a member for many years, and never had any difficulty with communication. If he doesn't know something, he asks someone about it. And eventually, even if he has to ask several people, he gets an answer.

Ebrahim: reminded members that he had worked full time in the office for a year in 1985/6, and he had many problems with the Chief Rep, all due to lack of communication between the office and others, leading to many misunderstandings. He suggests that we so need changes, especially a full-time administrator to free the Chief Representative to do his job.

Sifiso: He feels frustration at attending so many meetings, listening to so much discussion, yet who implements any any decisions?

Peter B: said that certain decisions had been taken at this meeting already; he would send out the minutes of the discussion to all concerned; he has tried to update the phonenumber; he will do a brief outline of the Structures within our Region; the matter of reviewing these structures will be on the agenda of a future meeting.

Peter M: said he had heard that Cmde Sifiso talks to BCM and PAC members about ANC matters. He wondered if this was true, and if so it must stop. Subsequently, Cmde Yusuf reiterated this concern.

Sifiso: was upset that this should be raised yet again. He had never said that there was "trouble" between blacks and Indians within our mission. On the contrary, he always defended the ANC as best as he could. He says he cannot avoid mingling with BCM people, as they come to his house for a place to stay, they work with him on his plays, etc. He had not realised that Neo Rathebe had been suspended from the ANC. He said that we should try to discuss why BCM people view the ANC as "Indian", and more recently as "bourgeois" - we might learn something from this.

Yusuf: stated that all who have problems must bring them out themselves to meetings. Communication is a two-way street - if anyone is not satisfied with an issue, they can write to HQ (via the RPC or Chief Rep). He felt that criticism should reflect the level of involvement - i.e. if you don't attend membership meetings, perhaps you shouldn't be too critical.

Nompi: felt that it might be Neo, but also might be Joyce, who spread rumours about ANC among BCM people. Simon and Kitty also mix with BCM people.

Peter M: felt we should discuss further the relationship between ANC and Siyakha

Don: was concerned about the item deferred from last meeting, on attacks on ANC. Cmde Yusuf said he really needed more time than was available to deal with this adequately. In brief, he said that because of the increase in profile of the ANC, threats to some members had increased in recent months. Experts on Canadian security matters had indicated that both the office and the ANC house were somewhat vulnerable from a security point of view. The Government had been consulted, and Joe Clark had told the SA Embassy he would hold them responsible for any attacks on ANC personnel or property. He would give us a more detailed briefing later on.

Items to be considered for future meeting agendas

1. Structures in the Canadian Region.
2. HQ document on "Guideline for a new Constitution" (to be discussed at next meeting: all members must read it).
3. Relationship between ANC and Siyakha.
4. Decision (?RPC) on Cmde Zaheer's proposal on organizing South Africans.
5. Cmde Mac Carrim's proposal for organizing tours of South Africans (RPC examine?).
6. Other material relating to our new Constitution.