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ANC NATIONAL CONFERENCE JULY 1991
INPUT FROM BUILDING ORGANISATION TO
STRATEGY AND TACTICS COMMISSION
ORGANISING COMMITTEE, ANC, JOHANNESBURG

OUR APPROACH TO ORGANISING

1. It is our policies, our strategic conception, that determines how we organise.

Organising is the practical implementation of our strategic conception.

2. The first thing we need to do therefore is to characterise this phase of the struggle.

We are in a transition period.

- * The organisation has moved back home from exile after 30 years.
- * We have changed from an underground organisation to a mass organisation.
- * We have added negotiations as one of pillars of our struggle.
- * We have suspended the armed struggle.

These changes have implications for the 4 pillars of struggle

- * armed struggle has receded as a major factor.
- * underground activity has receded as a major factor

This means that mass mobilisation and international solidarity assume a higher profile.

3. So we need to ask - what kind of an organisation do we want to build?

When we say we want a democratic organisation what do we mean?

- * we mean we want an organisation where the people participate in the formulation of decisions.

AND

- * an organisation where the people participate in the carrying out of decisions.

ALSO

The most important feature of our organisation must be its ability to organise people into mass action.

4. What kind of an organisation are we?

- * we are a national liberation movement. We are composed of all classes and all races. We seek to rally all the oppressed people and the democratic whites, all who support the Freedom Charter in the fight for national democracy. Our aims are to liberate the oppressed and to establish a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic society. We are not a political party. We are a very broad kind of organisation with organic connections to all the grassroots organisations of the people. We are continually in the process of broadening in order to isolate the enemy further.

- * We are different from the UDF. The UDF was a front of different organisations each having their own programme. The UDF therefore was not centralised, rather it was de-centralised to accommodate this front. We may be broad but we have one programme and are therefore unified with a focussed view.

- * We are different from a trade union. The trade unions are class based and they represent only the interests of their members. We represent the interests of all the oppressed people.

- * Our organisation is composed of cadres and commissars from military camps, of cdes who have been in exile, of comrades who have spent many years in prison, and comrades from the mass democratic movement.

We need to look at how to USE these three streams with their different traditions.

For example comrades coming from the MDM tradition have a great deal of organisational experience. Experience in mobilisation and democratic functioning.

Comrades from prison come with a deep level of political understanding, discipline and accountability.

Comrades from exile come with understanding and experience of congress traditions and congress politics. They come from an experience of underground work and skills that have been acquired overseas.

5. Having looked at what we are, we need to look at what we are doing - where are we going?

- * Firstly, we are overseeing the transition and all that that involves.
- * Secondly we are trying to prepare for the future and this covers two aspects.
 - we are formulating policies for our future
 - we are organising and building the ANC

6. What kind of ANC do we want?

We must be able to project our people's aspirations. HOW do we do this?

The first step in this process in raising understanding is through struggle - by involving our people in struggle, in political activity.

Issues such as new schools, houses, jobs, an improved quality of life become crucial factors in mobilisation.

But what needs to be understood is that all this will only come about through struggle.

- we must be able to build an organisation capable of waging mass struggle
- we must develop expertise on negotiations so that our people have confidence in us when we negotiate. This experience covers a number of aspects, centering around organisational discipline. Our negotiating teams need to find the balance between carrying out a mandate and using their creativity to achieve our ends.

- we must develop expertise in developing policies. This involves consulting all sorts of people involved in the different sectors so that our policies are realistic and meet the aspirations of our people.

- we must learn to project ourselves positively. This relates not only to the press, but also to our people generally

- we must be able to care for our people and to try and meet their needs
- we must be able to influence our people. In other words we must be able to lead the nation

7. **What is the role of the Organising Committee in all this?**
There are three major areas that are covered here.

a) the Organising Committee must oversee the work of the regions in the building of the organisation, and ensure co-ordination.

b) we need to extend our influence CONSCIOUSLY to all sectors of our communities not just to activists and sympathisers. This influence must be reflected in the way we build our branches and regions and how they operate. We must be able to lead whole communities and therefore we must reach out to all the sectors of those communities.

c) Thirdly, we must see that the needs of our own members must be addressed.

8. **What are the goals of the Organising Committee?**

- we need to have a strategy for organising and building. A strategy means we need to be able to PRIORITISE

- we also need to understand the aims (as well as the form) of the relationship between the different structures. For example - what do we want to achieve in the relationship between the branch and the region? Then we can see how that relationship should be conducted. What is the purpose of the relationship between the region and Head Office? The ANC Constitution becomes very important here for it protects that relationship and therefore the organisation.

9. **Lastly we are putting out for discussion whether we have achieved our goals?**

Here we need to assess our strength. How can we do this? Our strength does not

only depend on our size, on our membership figures. Our strength also lies in our ability to give leadership to our communities at branch, regional and national level.

- As has been said in the OC report - we haven't yet reached our communities. Our branches are more a collection of activists.

- We still don't have a strategic approach to organising where we analyze a specific sector, target it with specific strategies for mobilisation and involvement.

- Subjectively we are very weak:

- * the way we are structured at Head Office must also be part of a strategic approach to organising. We have transferred the departments from Lusaka very mechanically and it is quite obvious that we are not meeting our present organisational needs.

- * There is a structural problem of communication and reporting and accountability. This applies from the bottom up and from the top down.

- * We do not have strategic priorities which govern what choices are made.

- * There is no central organisational thrust.

I have tried to give some pointers, to create some framework that will stimulate discussion in the sub-commissions.