

Wmm/074/0044/3  
TO ALL ANC UNITS  
AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS  
12/2/79  
OF SOUTH AFRICA

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05/02/79

Dear Comrades,

Accompanying this brief note is a document entitled 'PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN OUR MOVEMENT', which has been issued by the Regional Political Committee of the African National Congress in East Africa.

As we read through this document we shall certainly all agree that the comrades in East Africa are not just summing up their experiences in the region but the problems referred to affect the movement generally. They need to be tackled politically as suggested in the document.

We must agree fully with this view. There is no need to repeat what is said in the document. The message is clear.

It is certainly true to say that the level of discipline in the movement has been falling catastrophically in recent years. Theft and other abuse of the property of the African National Congress has become widespread; anti social behaviour rooted in excessive drinking and other mind-befogging practices such as dagga-smoking has become alarmingly common; instances of actual physical clashes amongst comrades have become widespread; abuse of women comrades has also become common practice.

Who would deny that this state of affairs is opening the doors of our revolutionary movement wide to enemy penetration and subversion? This means that the existence of the sword and shield, the spear of our people, the African National Congress is seriously threatened and its destruction will doom our people to perpetual slavery.

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It is clear that committed revolutionaries in the ranks of the African National Congress can no longer allow this state of affairs to continue unchecked.

The National Executive Committee of our organisation invites all units to discuss this document with a view of finding an urgent solution. This has now become an urgent political problem.

We shall await your comments.

Amandla! Matla!!

Alfred Nzo,  
Secretary General,  
African National Congress,

LUSAKA

5/2/1979



### PROBLEMS OF SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN OUR MOVEMENT.

The questions of drink, dagga-smoking and loose, irresponsible sexual behaviour are raised from time to time as problems in our movement. These questions are not moral ones. We cannot just say: 'It is bad to drink too much!' 'It is wrong to sleep around!' These are political questions and must be looked at politically. They arise out of specific social conditions and have definite political implications, both for the immediate phase of struggle and for the future liberated South Africa that we are starting to create.

The question that we must ourselves is: 'Are these behaviours compatible with the immediate task of winning freedom for our people?'

#### Drinking and dagga-smoking.

Comrades who drink heavily or get stoned on dagga are not in a position to carry out the missions that are assigned them by the organisation. Alcohol and dagga loosen the tongue and blur the mind. This creates a potential threat to the security of our comrades and the organisation. Heavy drinking and public drunkenness amongst ANC cadres drags the name of the African National Congress in the mud. Arrest for the use and possession of marijuana does the same. Drunkenness at ANC meetings disrupts and sabotages the progress of our work.

#### Sexual relationships.

The question of sexual relationships within the movement is more complex. In times of rapid social change, old values find themselves out of alignment with contemporary conditions and new forms of relationships emerge between men and women. The definitions of the boundaries between individual and collective responsibility shift with the growing tide of revolution. While the new forms of relationship that fit our changing situation may not be very clear, there are nevertheless definite negative trends which are incompatible with the development of our struggle.

Lenin rejected, in very strong terms, the idea that "satisfying sexual desire and the craving for love is as simple and as trivial as 'drinking a glass of water'." Relations between the sexes are not simply relations of physical wants. "To be sure," Lenin said, "thirst has to be quenched. But would a normal person normally lie down in the gutter and drink from a puddle? Or even from a glass whose edge has been greased by many lips? "But the social aspect is more important than anything else.



The drinking of water is merely an individual matter. But it takes two people to make love, and a third person, new life, is likely to come into being. This deed has a social complexion and constitutes a duty to the community."

### Sexual promiscuity and casualness.

To regard sex purely in terms of individual gratification is dangerous liberalism and can develop into unrestrained decadence. Sleeping around with numerous partners, without commitment or respect between the people involved, produces a callous and shallow attitude towards human relationships in general. Comrades who relentlessly pursue their own sexual pleasure cannot be relied upon to carry out their duties with the single-mindedness and discipline that is necessary. There is also the image of the organisation to consider. How does it appear to enemies and friends alike are known for their sexual promiscuity?

### Exploitative sexual relationships.

Comrades who use their position of power to manipulate other comrades for sexual ends are engaging in one of the very worst forms of exploitation and hypocrisy. Equally the use of threat or force to achieve one's sexual desires must be ruthlessly combatted in our movement. This kind of behaviour destroys comradely respect and trust and undermines the organisation.

### Irresponsible Sexual Relationships.

The production of new human life always remains, to greater or lesser extent, a possible consequence of any sexual relationships. As things are presently organised within the movement, it is the female, and not the male parent, of the child that has to assume responsibility for that child. It is the woman comrade who is forced temporarily to leave her post in the army, or forfeit her opportunity for further study. This inequality in the sharing of responsibility for children is not the ideal situation but alternative arrangements that would ensure that male comrades share in the task of child-rearing, do not seem practical or feasible at this stage of the struggle. To make it easier for women comrades to continue their duties and studies while rearing children, the ANC is planning to build a creche and kindergaten.

But the point is this: male comrades, aware that their training or education is not going to be affected by the birth of their children, tend to have very irresponsible attitudes towards

sexual relationships and possible impregnation. They are thus objectively exploiting the situation at the expense of their female comrades. On the other hand, some women comrades are irresponsible and negligent toward their children and thus jeopardise the physical and mental health of our future generation of freedom fighters.

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The next question we must pose is what are the social conditions that give rise to these negative behaviours within our ranks?

### Conditions back home.

Apartheid is designed not only to exploit and oppress our people to the maximum, but also to undermine our strength and unity. One of the most effective tactics which the enemy uses is the sowing of the seeds of social decay, the rotting of the foundations of our community and the spreading of self-destructive behaviour.

The severe oppression and the difficulties we face in fighting against it creates feelings of frustration and helplessness which are so often drowned in drink or floated away in cloud of dagga smoke. But the next morning apartheid is still there. Joining the liberation movement is clear recognition that freedom will only be won through the barrel of the gun and not through the bottom of beer bottle. We all know how the beer hall were destroyed by the militant Soweto youth.

So many aspects of life at home under the apartheid regime produce the rootlessness and constant insecurity that makes it difficult to form committed and responsible love relationships. The way in which the state shunts our people around to where they can best be exploited; the kicking out of the township of all those who are not directly producing wealth for the capitalists; the imbalance of males and females in the cities and in the Bantustans; the bitter loneliness and desolation of those abandoned in poverty stricken rural areas - all these things create the conditions in which careless and exploitative sexual relationships can thrive.

### Conditions in exile.

The conditions of exile can reinforce some of the negative social trends from home. The tensions and frustrations of living away from home are known to all of us. It is in this situation that many seek comfort in drink or dagga. But such false comforts must



not swerve us from our task. We cannot go home fighting if we have to crawl out of the bars. We cannot fight side by side with comrades if there is no real respect and trust between us.

If we recognise that some of our social behaviour can be counter-revolutionary, the next question must be: How do we combat these things?

(Dealing with specific cases of disruptive and negative behaviour is of course the task of the unit collectives. Here we attempt to provide a general guidelines for the resolutions of these problems.)

#### Combatting negative social behaviour in our movement.

The way we combat these tendencies is not through moral condemnation or hypocritical puritanism. We must collectively develop a revolutionary morality which means at all times being conscious of our responsibility to the furtherance of the struggle, to our movement, to our comrades, and to the oppressed masses at home. At all times we must strive to act in terms of that awareness. What Lenin said about the morality of the proletariat in its struggle against all remnants of bourgeois society has significance for us in our national liberation struggle which increasingly calls for the fullest utilisation of all forces and energies. Lenin said:

"The revolution calls for concentration and rallying of every nerve by the masses, and by the individual. Promiscuity in sexual matters is bourgeois. It is a sign of degeneration. The proletariat is a rising class. It does not need an intoxicant of sexual laxity or of alcohol. It should and will not forget the vileness, the filth and barbarity of capitalism. It derives its strongest inspiration to fight from class position, from the communist ideal. What it needs is clarity, clarity and more clarity. Therefore, I repeat, there must be no weakening, no waste and no dissipation of energy. Self-control and self-discipline are not slavery; not in matters of love either."

We must be firm and uncompromising in the discipline we enforce with respect to those comrades whose personal indulgences jeopardise and sabotage our struggle. We have been far too complacent about the level of drinking and the extent of dagga-smoking in our movement. Those who smoke dagga, and those who drink while working, must be severely disciplined.

We must recognise that our personal lives have consequences for our political lives-the two are inseparable - and that we have responsibilities that reach far beyond those of our own individual existence. Comrades must be answerable to each other for their behaviour and discipline must be collectively applied.

We must work at developing the democratic structure in which those issues can be raised in a comradely way, without fear of personal attack or victimisation. Through criticism and self-criticism we must work towards improving the standards of discipline, seriousness and responsibility throughout the movement.

We should wherever possible, be supporting and encouraging towards those comrades who are struggling with the weakness brought about by the conditions at home and in exile. It is through the building of a strong community, a sense of mutual care and responsibility, and through intense political involvement, that the frustrations of exile will be overcome and the foundations of our new society correctly laid.

Finally, we must strive constantly to raise our level of political understanding. In this way we are all constantly reminded of revolutionary priorities and can clearly see how undisciplined and irresponsible behaviour can distract and divert us from our historic task of liberating the oppressed people of South Africa.

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