

**ANC Youth League**

**seminar on:**

**"Youth and Reconstruction"**

**11 - 13 March 1994**

**Johannesburger Hotel, Johannesburg**

**Paper:**

**"Youth and Social Welfare"**

**by**

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## **Youth and Social Welfare**

### **1 Introduction**

The disintegration of the social fabric of our society as a result of apartheid has been and continues to result in devastating consequences for all sectors, but especially the youth. The development of a youth based political culture in the struggle for liberation has brought about significant changes in the social relations within family and community life. The changes have created tensions and demands on both youth and society. It has given rise to generational and societal conflict.

The effects of the breakdown of family life and the educational system on the welfare of youth means that any reconstruction and development programme has to pay special attention not only to the obvious aspects such as material poverty but also to the psychological and emotional effects of apartheid.

The present racially based and fragmented social welfare system is totally inadequate to respond to the needs of youth. The approach, definition and services within the social welfare sector need to be transformed to address the root causes of the problems and needs facing youth. This transformation must be based on the principles and values of equity, non-racialism, anti-ageism and discrimination of all sorts and it must be non-sexist.

### **2 Social Welfare and Development with a Focus on Youth**

The ANC has committed itself to ensuring that opportunities are provided for all South Africans to meet their basic needs and attain a standard of living which secures their physical, emotional and social well-being. In addition, priority has been given to the need for affirmative action in redressing past imbalances especially with regard to youth, women, children and those who live in rural areas.

A programme to address the needs and problems of youth must however be developed with their active involvement in the process of setting priorities, identifying gaps in the present system and finding creative alternatives that will make a real difference. This means that youth must be empowered to challenge the existing and emerging social service system to be much more responsive to their general and special needs.

### **3 Areas to be Addressed within a Reconstruction and Development Programme**

#### **3.1 Legislation and Policies**

All existing social welfare policies and legislation must be reviewed and new ones established with an emphasis on the issues, needs and problems of



youth appropriately reflected. Special attention must be given to policies which secure the social and economic rights of youth. With regard to social rights, a review of the policies and laws related to the criminal justice system, to health care, to safety and protection, to the establishment of structures, programmes and services to care for those youth who have special needs must be put into place. Youth who are disabled, in chronic emotional distress, victims of violence, who have become dependent on drugs and who experience difficulties that restrict their full development should be given priority and protection through legislation and policies.

### **3.2 A Youth Unit in the Social Delivery System**

There must be an appropriate youth structure and programmes established at national, provincial and district levels to co-ordinate the planning, delivery, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of social welfare services for youth.

### **3.3 Special Programmes**

#### **3.3.1 Youth and family life**

Counselling and other support services must be made available to youth in places and methods that are accessible to them and relevant. Centres that are user friendly and that encourage youth to discuss problems and receive help for concerns related to domestic violence, psychological abuse, substance abuse sexual problems, poverty related problems and problems that destabilise family life must be established.

Support services such as after school centres for youth whose parents are working, community centres that offer a range of recreational, sports, cultural and educational activities and that promote social integration are essential in improving the abilities of youth.

#### **3.1.2 Peer group counselling**

Youth must be provided with resources and training so that they can be of assistance to those who have difficulties in coping with specific problems that they are unable to share with their elders.

#### **3.1.3 Services for youth in educational centres**

Schools, vocational training centres, technical colleges, universities and the like must have trained social service staff or counsellors who



are competent to understand and help youth to overcome emotional, psychological, inter-personal and learning difficulties.

#### **3.1.4 Community based rehabilitation centres**

Centres for the care and rehabilitation of juvenile and young offenders, those disabled who require occupational and physical therapy and other forms of assistance should be established in communities with the involvement of all concerned parties.

#### **3.1.5 Shelter for the homeless**

Those youth who are, for a number of reasons, without shelter must be provided with access to safe protected environments. The increasing numbers of youth who are on the streets and who are vulnerable to all types of abuse need to be helped urgently.

#### **3.1.6 Young females**

The social welfare needs of young women should be addressed with provision made for those who are victims of sexual abuse, rape and other trauma. Centres and safe houses for young women with the appropriate staff and resources must be established to respond to the high incidence of young women who are traumatised through violence, abortions and social problems.

#### **3.1.7 Youth in rural areas and on farms**

The present exploitation and neglect of youth on farms and in rural areas must be addressed. The unpaid labour of youth, their dismissal from the farms on which their parents are labourers once they have finished schooling creates untold grief and harm and leads to the breakdown of family life. It also contributes to the search for shelter and work in city centres. Such practices need to be addressed urgently.

### **4 Implementing Agencies**

A restructured social welfare department together with the other relevant sectors, organs of civil society and youth structures must come together at all levels to find ways of overcoming the present gaps in services, the priorities to be addressed in the next five years, and how the implementation of a youth programme will be evaluated.



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**Paper:**

**"The Need for a Ministry of Youth  
in a  
Democratic South Africa"**

**by**

**Kadir Asmal**



## The Need for a Ministry of Youth in a Democratic South Africa

- 1 A democratic South Africa will inherit governmental structures which are partly based on liberal capitalist structures found elsewhere and most instituted to meet the needs of apartheid and welfare state for Afrikaners and firm repression of blacks. The needs expectations and demands of our people were never reflected in the social institutions established since 1948. They were not meant to be.
- 2 It goes without saying that there is no objective or alleged scientific basis for the organisation of government on the establishment of government departments. Neither in there anything sacrosanct about existing structures elsewhere. Political and policy factors play a paramount role.
- 3 Government departments and ministries are established to carry out policies adopted by a party and which it seriously intend to carry out. There is nothing sacrosanct about the names given to such ministries or to the functions allocated to them.
- 4 In recent times, even in liberal democracies, as a result of public pressure, new ministries have been created often headed by senior ministers, to perform executive and political functions in such "new" areas as the environmental women's affairs, culture and economic development. Some has been set up simply for purposes of mystification, in order to ensure that the pressure for real change is diverted, in other cases, there have been real gains for popular opinion, as with the Ministry of Culture in France, established by De Gaulle and strengthened by Mitterand.
- 5 The political and social context is therefore vital and experiences from other countries as to whether the issue of meeting the needs of youth through setting up "desks" in different departments in order to push for youth demands is largely irrelevant. Our history is unique. The role and needs of young people in South Africa have a unique South African dimension.
- 6 The experience of post-colonial Africa and Asia have largely been determined by the fact that the one-party states set up after independent did not allow for competing interests to be resolved by inter-departmental negotiations and a rational allocation of resources. The party usually decided priorities and the interests of such discrete groups as the youth did not enjoy any priority. Whether a Ministry of Youth was or was not appointed was not a matter of any importance. The leader and the party made the decisions. There has been a long history of repression of youth activity in these countries.
- 7 In no other country on the other hand, have the youth played such a central role in struggle and have made such astonishing sacrifices. In no country is there such an alarming disparity in education, health, welfare, sport, living conditions, training and job opportunities as in our country. Such inequality has simply been generated by racial considerations.
- 8 The ANC must therefore respond to our objective considerations after April with a creative strategy which will ensure a window of opportunity for young people, which will harness their energy, reward them for past efforts and ensure for them a proper role for the future.



- 9 Innovation and creativity may be revolutionary concepts in South Africa because the conventional wisdom of those who occupy power at present is to ensure that no ostensible, leave alone real, change occurs in structure and policy. But in all systems, an attempt has been made for a break with past assumptions. These have taken place, even when the transition was not from an illegitimate and undemocratic system. Reforming administrations have identified certain areas which are to be given priority in the new scheme of things. Social democratic governments have instituted reforms to reward their constituencies by shifting power relations or, at least, be seen to be doing so.
- 10 The principle reason, in my view, for a Ministry of Youth is the way Cabinet government operates. Ministers are obliged - for various reasons, personal, political, ideological - to fight for the allocation of funds and the distribution of resources. These matters are not decided on any neutral set of principles but by intense bargaining around the Cabinet table. The convention is that the Ministry of Finance is often the ultimate decision-maker unless there is strong countervailing pressure from other sources. We have, therefore, to break the stranglehold of these mandarins.
- 11 In a government whose primary assumption will be reconstruction and development, the needs, demands and aspirations of young people cannot be systematically coherently and with political vigour articulated by a number of "youth desks" allocated to a number of departments. Youth desks may provide irritants to other ministries and some jobs, but not real power. Neither will the establishment of a National Youth Council and Provincial Youth Councils and a National Youth Forum, as proposed by our Comrade President provide the answer. These are very important proposals but it must be recognised that these structures are essentially advisory.
- 12 Our democratic government will, of course, be sensitive to the advice of pressure groups and institutions which we will take the initiative to set up. But at Cabinet level there will be enormous competition for the allocation of resources and the establishment of priorities. It is true that youth needs relating to the discrete areas of health, education, culture, job creation etc; will appear in the departmental allocations of the different ministries. However, the experience of other countries, from which we can learn in our transformation process, is that youth matters addressed through various departments fail to meet the actual needs of young people.
- 13 In other words, there has to be a spokesperson generating support cross departments for such needs, articulating demands and lobbying privately and publicly. A lobbyist's role cannot effectively be carried out by "desks" or advisory bodies because they are not intimately involved in the day-to-day processes of government. In any event, they do not carry the clout a cabinet minister has.
- 14 A Minister of Youth would have the opportunity for co-ordinating the work of other departments relating to youths, sponsoring research in areas concerning young people, allocating resources to statutory and non-statutory organisations involved in youth work and fighting, from the particular perspective, for resources to undo the legacy of apartheid and exploitation which we have inherited.
- 15 With the amendment to the 1991 Constitution in February 1994, conferring greater power to the provinces through regional laws enjoying priority over national legislation, the issue of who decides becomes of greater importance now. Apart from higher education, items



such as welfare, health, sport and, crucially, education will be regional functions. It is therefore imperative that there is a national focus on power and authority which would articulate national needs and demands, badger provincial governments and co-ordinate at a national level initiatives concerned with youth activities. Otherwise, such needs will be lost in a welter of conflicting jurisdictions and authorities.

- 16 We should not, also, be bemused by the alleged issue of expense that a Ministry for Youth may entail. Under the new constitution, there is a maximum fixed number, 27, of ministries. However, there is no reason as to why such a Ministry of Youth may not have more than one department for which she or his is responsible. Other countries have successfully merged culture, physical recreation and sport with youth.
- 17 Finally, there is the issue of bringing new thinking into such a new establishment, appointing a Director General and senior civil servants whom we shall be inheriting from the *ancien regime*. This will be a visible change whose significance should not be underestimated.
- 18 President Mandela, when he spoke at the inauguration of the new Vice-Chancellor at Turfloop in September 1993, strongly supported the creation of a Minister of Youth in the context of a development plan for our young people. The establishment of new structures which the ANC Youth League is at present contemplating will strengthen the hands of such a Ministry. But these and other proposals cannot be substitutes for a Minister of Youth.

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7 March 1994