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### SOME DISCUSSION POINTS ON ORGANISATION.

This is a discussion of ways in which COD membership may be increased. Other methods by which our work could be improved through the most efficient use of our present membership or by an improvement in our propaganda are not dealt with directly, but they will be found to be closely linked with the main problem facing us - the winning of new members.

The proposals made here we made with an eye to two main potential types of recruit.

- a) That group, considerably larger than the C.O.D. itself, which has at one time or another participated in C.O.D. activities, those on the fringe, the progressive university students, and intellectuals, the Congress-inclined liberals, and militant Christians.
- b) Trade Unionists, Labourites, that group which have generally moved sharply away from former colour-bar policies towards a recognition of the need for full democracy.

It will be seen that these recommendations are based on the premise that under present conditions it is more realistic to concentrate our main attention in recruiting on a selective group - albeit a very large one - than on a "mass" area recruiting, and that the indiscriminate "door to door" canvass, while it may be desirable on particular hot issues, can be demoralisingly uneconomic from the point of view of recruiting.

The problem will be found to fall conveniently under two headings :-

- I. Those matters in which COD must remain inflexible, and in which the problem is that of convincing the potential recruit of the correctness of our stand.
- II. Those matters in which we must not remain inflexible, and where the problem is not so much to convince the potential recruit who has criticisms, as to recognise the just foundation for the criticisms and to correct our own faults.

#### I. BASIC PREMISES.

- a) The C.O.D. stands unequivocally and without qualification for the total abolition of all forms of racial discrimination.
  - b) The C.O.D. is a member of the Congress alliance, and sees as the most powerful force for the attainment of the goal of racial equality the Non-European liberatory organisations, most important of which is the African National Congress.
  - c) C.O.D. plays its full part in the general work of the Congresses and it has the special task of taking the message of democracy to the white people.
  - d) Like the other Congresses the C.O.D. seeks the co-operation of the widest sections of the anti-Nationalist public, co-operation with other organisations on issues where there are points of agreement, irrespective of the fact that on other issues there may be serious disagreement. In particular - although there are differences in outlook - the C.O.D. has achieved co-operation on specific issues with the Liberal and Labour Parties and looks forward to increased co-operation.
  - e) The C.O.D. welcomes as members all who support the Freedom Charter and pay their subscriptions.
- "The C.O.D. stands unequivocally and without qualification for the total abolition of all forms of racial discrimination". (See (a) page (1).

This is the main reason why the C.O.D. has so small a following among the Europeans, why it is the subject of furious government and police attacks, why its position is distorted and falsified in the daily press.

It is also the main reason why the C.O.D. has an importance in South African affairs and in particular in the liberatory movement infinitely greater than its numerical strength, as a full and equal partner in the Congress alliance, why it is, in fact, the organisation of Europeans which has the trust and



affection of the Non-European people, why it is, in fact, the organisation which writers of the future will see as the most significant European political body of our time.

As far as the limited group of potential recruits with which this memorandum deals are concerned, this part of our basic policy is not generally found to be a stumbling-block. Even the Liberal Party (except at election-time) is rapidly coming round to this view, and it is not proposed to deal with it in detail. It is sufficient to note:

- (i) We are part of the Congress alliance. All the other Congresses stand for full and unconditional equality. We have no hesitation about taking our stand together with them.
- (ii) The democratic force in South Africa is the Non-European people. They are interested in nothing less than full equality. The "qualified" franchise policy is based on the belief that Europeans can be won to support it and thus confer freedom on the Non-Europeans. It is based on the erroneous idea that democracy will be won by talking the white electorate into granting democracy by easy instalments. The C.O.D. believes that history has amply demonstrated that South Africa will only have democracy when the disenfranchised people assert themselves so strongly that democracy can no longer be withheld from them, that the main task of white democrats is to assist the disenfranchised people to place themselves in a position to be able so to assert themselves, and that while it is necessary to persevere and persevere again in convincing the Europeans of the merits of democracy, they must be taught about real democracy and not pale imitations.

There is no room for a spirit of defeatism in the face of intimidation and comparative isolation from the European population. Recent years have seen an unmistakable increase in the number of Europeans who are actively dissatisfied and alarmed at the evils of apartheid and who are willing, to a previously unprecedented degree, to campaign together with the Congresses. This has not been limited to Liberals and Labour, important as has been the new co-operation achieved with these parties, but it has extended to prominent church leaders, student bodies and women's organisations, most remarkable being the recent Cape Town anti-pass meeting under the auspices of the N.C.W., Black Sash and A.N.C. Women and the Federation of S.A. Women.

"The C.O.D. is a member of the Congress Alliance, and sees as the most powerful force for the attainment of the goal of racial equality the Non-European liberatory organisations, most important of which is the African National Congress." (See page 1, b)

This is our greatest strength. When we are asked 'What is the difference between you and the Liberals? That is the main difference. We are full and equal members of the National Consultative Committee of the Congresses and have played our part in the carrying out of every major Congress campaign. We, and no other body of Europeans, were partners in the planning and holding of the Congress of the People - the most significant Congress in South African history.

We, and no other body of Europeans, were partners in the framing of the Freedom Charter, the most significant constitutional blueprint in South African history. We, and no other body of Europeans are on trial for 'treason' as the result of our partnership with the other Congresses - the most significant trial in South African history. We, and no other body of Europeans were partners in the planning of the economic boycott which has given pause to those who would climb on the Nationalist bandwagon. We, and no other body of Europeans stand firmly and unequivocally for full democracy, and at once.

"C.O.D. plays its full part in the general work of the Congresses, and it has the special task of taking the message of democracy to the white people." (See c) page 1. )

- i) Our emphasis on work among Europeans, and our uni-racial character, are not always fully understood by potential recruits and are sometimes the subject of criticism. This criticism has deep historic roots. For many years, before the Congresses



became the force they are today, there was controversy among Europeans whether democracy would be won through convincing the white people of the need for it, or whether it was the Non-European people who were the main force for liberation. Within that context the correct approach was to lay emphasis on the organisation of the Non-Europeans.

Today the Non-European organisations are mighty forces, and although Liberals and Labour still remain attached to the idea that the whites will bring the blacks freedom, a fair number of white people outside the C.O.D. have become aware that the Non-European Congresses and the masses they represent are the people who count.

But when this fact has become as clear as daylight, what do they see? Those very Europeans who always urged the prime importance of organisations of the Non-Europeans, are today holding their meetings in Hillbrow and not Sophiatown. No wonder there is room for confusion.

Here again clear argument is necessary. The A.N.C. is today a powerful organisation capable of carrying the message of liberation to the African people. Because of a long history of oppression there is a natural distrust of the white man among many Africans, a strong feeling that the liberatory movement must be African led - and not only that it must be African led, but that the ordinary people should be firmly convinced that this is so. For **this** reason it is understandable that the Congresses in the African townships would not feel very friendly towards COD members who went to hold independent meetings in these areas, and therefore irrespective of the question whether in other circumstances it would be desirable or undesirable for COD to undertake such activity - it is in the present circumstances unthinkable for the COD to do so. Our unity with the other congresses is our first consideration, far above any other.

And at the same time the other congresses - and we ourselves - say this: The A.N.C. can work among the Africans, but they cannot hold meetings for the Europeans. Only the COD can do that. It must be done. Therefore the COD must do it. The A.N.C. is well able to carry the message of freedom to the Africans.

On the other hand, of course, when any of the other Congresses invites the COD to participate together with it in any meeting or activity, our organisation is ready and willing to do so.

Equally important we must make a point of obtaining African participation at as many of our functions as possible.

(ii) Why are we uni-racial?

The present structure of the national liberatory movement is, as a result of historical developments, one in which the Africans, Indians and Coloured people have created their own national organisations, where membership is confined to Africans, Indians and Coloureds respectively. Whether or not such a division is a completely happy one is not relevant - what is important is that in a movement with this structure the only way open to Europeans who wish to play their part in the work of the Congresses is through their own 'sectional' organisation the COD. In actual practice this form of organisation, with each of the Congresses united together as full and equal members in alliance, has proved extremely satisfactory, and the COD has played an inspiring role in it.

At the same time, in explaining that our 'sectional' character is a necessity dictated by historical circumstances, we should not make a virtue of this necessity. No-one can doubt that a multi-racial organisation is something desirable (whether or not it is practicable at present) and COD is naturally in no way opposed to such an organisation. Support for, or membership of, a multi-racial party, be it Liberal, Labour or Socialist, is in no way incompatible with membership of Congress.

"The COD welcomes as members all who support the Freedom Charter" (Page 1 (e))

This has a two-fold aspect. It includes the winning of recruits who are not yet completely ready to support Congress policy, and this aspect is considered later in this memorandum.



And it also means that, just as the COD refuses to bow the knee to the government's racialist hysteria, so also does it refuse to bow the knee to the government's anti-communist hysteria. South Africa's communists have always fought against racial inequality. Today just as listed communists continue to play an active part in the Non-European Congresses, and are welcomed in them, so too listed communists play their part in, and are welcomed in, the COD.

No person joining COD must have hidden from him the fact that he will be working together with listed communists. We should make no bones about this, for apart from other considerations, to do so would be patently dishonest.

Nor need we be defensive about it. Our opponents strenuously peddle the falsehood that COD is "the communist wing" of the Congress movement, and this has not been without its effect on the minds of some potential recruits. What we must hammer home is this.

The policy of welcoming all who fight for equality - including the communists - is not something unique to ourselves. It is a policy followed by every one of the Congresses. Listed Communists play their part in the leadership of the ANC, SAIC, SACPO, and SACTU.

Kotane, Dadoo, La Guma, work harmoniously and in mutual friendship with non-communists and anti-communists like Lithuli, Matthews, Naicker, van der Ross.

Liberals, Labour Party supporters, Christians, and Communists can and must work in harmony in the COD just as they do in the other Congresses, for the achievement of the limited aims set out in the Freedom Charter.

In some cases the Communist bogey is raised in relation to our stand on international issues. Here again we must emphasise that our international policy is not peculiar to the COD but in close conformity with that of the other congresses.

II.

## II. Things We Can Change.

The basic principles of the Congresses, listed above, are basic and cannot be changed or watered down for the purposes of recruiting. If a potential recruit finds difficulty with them, the only solution is that of patient, well-informed, reasoned argument.

But there are a number of things about COD which may alienate recruits which are not essential COD principles, but are on the contrary, ugly outgrowths having an effect opposite to the needs of C.O.D.

a) Sectarianism is a difficulty which is not one of the inevitable consequences of our basic principles, one which cannot be met merely by argument, one which requires action on our part to improve ourselves.

This word covers a multitude of sins. In COD it can be summed up by the attitude that anyone who has a view different from that of the N.E.C. is a) confused or b) frightened, or c) disruptive, or d) stupid, or any combination of a, b, c, or d or maybe the whole lot. In the words of a Chinese philosopher (was it Confucius?) it is vital in the COD to "let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend."

It is easy to say that we must do this. But what is required is that steps be taken to bring home this need to our members.

b) Insufficient Democracy : In an organisation under the pressure to which our own is subjected it is necessary for the N.E.C. to make herculean efforts to ensure that the rank and file have every opportunity to participate in policy-making. Criticisms that the organisation is run by mysterious people up above and that the rank and file are powerless to do anything are, it is true false and unfounded. But at the same time the conditions which make the spread of such ideas possible exist, and it is necessary for the N.E.C. to counter these ideas.



On the one hand it must be carefully explained that it is the function of the N.E.C. to give a lead, to take decisions when necessary even if there has been no opportunity to consult the members.

On the other hand, wherever possible, the N.E.C. should go out of its way to ensure rank and file discussions before decisions are made.

It is true that branches should themselves, be aware of issues and make their recommendations of their own accord, but in our present circumstances a certain amount of spoon feeding, is justified. Branch secretaries should be requested to raise as a regular weekly item, their recommendations to regional and N.E.C. committees and topics raised in the N.E.C. - e.g. from the N.C.C. report - should be passed on to the branches for comment.

c) Particularly is this important on international issues. In view of the complexity of the attitude of COD supporters on issues which are straightforward to the other congresses, the N.E.C. must be careful to do more than to adopt bare resolutions on controversial topics - e.g. on the Israeli invasion condemnation might have been balanced, perhaps in a separate statement, by at least an assessment of the problems faced by Israel too. This is not easy. It is not always possible. But it is urgent that we strain every mental tendon not to disrupt our organisation over issues which are politically remote from our struggle.

d) Insistence that people be 'activists'.

The most common complaint of people who have put a tentative nose into a COD meeting and then run a mile never to return, is that they found themselves surrounded by earnest people urging them to go from door to door selling pamphlets or handing out leaflets. While making no recommendation on this point a view expressed by one member is offered for discussion. The nationalists do not call on their members to give out leaflets. The U.P. don't, nor do the Liberals, the Labour Party or for that matter any other organisations of Europeans. Personal leaflet distribution is of great value where the idea is for the distributor to make personal contact with the person to whom he is distributing and get into discussion with him. But our leaflet distributions are often pale travesties of usefulness. Leaflets are got rid of as soon as possible without a word being exchanged, or are even surreptitiously slipped under doors. Instead of having our leaflets spread in a normal - and far more efficient - fashion by a distributing agency, as do all other European organisations, we stamp ourselves as queer types by standing on street corners. (As far as expense of efficient distribution, there are many COD members who would willingly pay five shillings rather than stand on a corner !) Essential are occasional effective poster displays, or specialised distributions intended largely as a show of solidarity, such as the leafletting of motorists during the boycott - but as a routine activity the frequent leaflet distribution may well lose us more support than they gain.

e) Separation of business and pleasure.

We urgently need meetings of a type which will be attractive to potential recruits. After all, the COD is something quite unique in white South Africa, something to which people may require a gradual introduction. A newcomer at our meetings where so many things are taken for granted which are treason elsewhere, may well feel strange - may well be dazed by unintelligible political jargon, terrified by leaflet distribution, panicked by someone selling literature - may well never come again.

Regular (perhaps fortnightly) 'social' type functions at which tea is served and at which there is a large turnout of people, and



where potential new recruits can get to know the way we think and meet some of our leading characters - must be seriously considered.

Complementary and possibly integrated, is the question of the revival of discussion groups - a major necessity.

Business meetings could be held on the alternate weeks, and it should be possible to be a COD member and attend only the social functions. The task of the business meetings will be in a thoroughly diplomatic manner, to enthuse some of those who attend the social functions with a spirit of active participation in the movement.

#### f) Individual Problems.

In a small organisation like ours, "eccentric" individuals can play an important part in creating a bad atmosphere at meetings. At Cape Town one or two members who, with the best intentions insisted on talking earnestly excitedly, sectarianly and at length on every topic were found to be having a disastrous effect on visitors. I understand that talkers exist in branches everywhere. What is required is very strong chairmanship, coupled with strong private discussions with the people concerned.

#### g) Clarity of Purpose.

It is not uncommon for members of COD of long standing - and even on the N.E.C. - to be unable to explain effectively fundamental questions of COD policy. There has long been talk of classes. These must be given top priority.

#### h) Answering Police Intimidation.

There is no argument to convince the fearful except the argument of strength. But a criticism that must be faced is that we expose our members to undue risk. In its extreme form, the view is put that new members who are unknown to the police should be protected and saved for some future crisis. This is incorrect. What it needs at present is a growing, and not a decreasing number of people who are prepared to stand up - as the Non-European congressmen are doing in the face of immeasurably more vicious intimidation - and to declare for all the world to know that they are opposed to Nationalist madness and tyranny. In a period when white churchmen, professors, nurses, shout their defiance it is hardly possible to argue that white Congressmen should shut up in fear of exposing themselves.

On the other hand, while this is the policy of COD it must be equally clear that this is a matter of personal choice for the Congressmen concerned. If he asks us for advice we say speak out. But if he does not wish to speak out, whether or not we think his reasons are good, he must understand clearly that we will not condemn him for his choice.

Even more important, no person should be placed in jeopardy through negligence on our part. Our organisation can benefit from the contribution of ultra-cautious people too. The factor of intimidation is best counteracted by constant education to show that it is the Nats who are doomed and we who are strong.

#### Recommendations.

1. Because many of the criticisms levelled against COD can only be overcome by clear, simple and unconflicting argument, it is of the utmost importance that all of our members - the people who do the recruiting - have the arguments at their fingertips, and be trained to express them. For that reason the first part of the memorandum touches on some of the main points of argument, and all COD members should make themselves fully conversant with these points.



Classes for members at which they learn to express themselves on all aspects of C.O.D. policy should be begun immediately.

2. Because what happens at meetings depends very much on the chairmen, one or two meetings of chairmen and of potential chairmen should be held to hammer out common problems and the ways to tackle them.
3. A point must be made of ensuring Non-European participation in functions, as well as of members of such organisations as the Liberal Party.
4. Three or four persons of standing should be appointed to discourage in a tactful manner the sale of "sectarian" literature (or even its being passed around). "Sectarian" discussions should be sidetracked, and people who monopolise discussions should be spoken to individually.
6. Business should not be conducted at socials but at regular business meetings (which, of course, are open to anyone who wishes to attend them.) New and potential recruits should be regularly and never slightly discussed, their main interests discovered, so that ways may be found for winning them more firmly by getting them to use their particular talents for the benefit of all
7. Discussion groups should be recommenced, and the Regions should take the responsibility of ensuring that this is done.
8. Realistic recruiting targets for new members and revitalising old ones should be adopted at meetings and conveyed to the Region and N.E.C. Campaign should be a three-month one. Attention should be paid to the question of recruiting people of the second type mentioned in the introduction of this report.
9. Realistic fund raising targets - ditto.
10. Members should be advised that in view of the growing oppression and the persecution of people for perfectly legal activities, although C.O.D.'s policy is to encourage people to speak out, the office will ensure that no identity leak will be possible from there.
11. Members should be clearly advised that we do not wish to be a tight group of activists, but that we wish to have our ranks open also to the inactive.
12. Branch secretaries should be requested to make a point of raising current political issues and conveying the views of members to Regions and thence to the N.E.C. so that the utmost possible democracy is ensured.
13. Speakers from other organisations should be invited to speak to C.O.D. meetings, particularly from the other Congresses, the Liberal and Labour Parties.
14. Attendance at C.O.D. meetings is not an end in itself but a means of planning ways of carrying democratic argument to those not in C.O.D. C.O.D. members should not rest on their laurels because they attend C.O.D. meetings regularly. It is necessary for them to get out to win friends and influence people. They should be members of their trade unions, local ratepayers associations and other organisations in which they have an interest and in which they can play a part and should be quick to make up local issues and link them with general ones. A tendency to "inwardness" must be vigorously combatted.
15. Branches should discuss regularly the possibilities which any local campaign may offer for increased co-operation with other bodies, and discussion should commence at once - and continue all the time - on any possibilities the coming General Election campaign may offer.