

PWV women's region: half a league?



On 24 May the PWV Women's League Regional Executive was suspended by an interbranch meeting – the same constituency that had only very recently elected it. This has resulted in an ANC NEC-instituted commission of inquiry.

MAYIBUYE pieced the facts together.

Things came to a head with a demonstration on 21 May organised by some members of the Women's League PWV REC. A march from the League's regional office to ANC headquarters was planned to demand the reinstatement of Winnie Mandela and Dali Mpofu in the ANC Department of Social Welfare.

Mandela had earlier resigned of her own free will "in the interests of the ANC". Mpofu had been dismissed. Other demands included the removal of certain ANC leaders and ending criticism of Winnie Mandela.

ANC leaders managed to persuade the would-be demonstrators to send a three-person delegation to present their memorandum to the Secretary General.

The Deputy Chairperson of the PWV Women's League convened an emergency meeting of the REC that evening. Some of the branches had phoned her to find out what was happening. An interbranch meeting was already scheduled for the following Sunday.

Many REC members were shocked that the facilities of the Women's League had been used to organise the abortive demonstration and yet they had not been consulted. It also emerged that many of the women from squatter camp branches of the League (Carltonville, Phola Park, Sebokeng and Atteridgeville) had no idea they were being asked to take part in an anti-ANC demo.

Some REC members involved in the demonstration attended the interbranch meeting and gave contradictory explanations.

Some said it had not been organised in the name of the League, but rather under the banner of the so-called Social Welfare Support Committee. Others claimed the recent PWV AGM had mandated the League to take this action.

Many present at the meeting expressed disgust at what they regarded as an abuse of the PWV Women's League. Several of the REC members not involved in the demonstration wanted to resign to dissociate themselves from this activity.

After fierce debate, the meeting decided to suspend the whole League's PWV executive, pending an investigation by the PWV ANC executive and the League's NEC. It was felt that the problem went deeper than the demonstration and an inquiry should look into the serious problems dogging the League in the region.

The PWV ANC executive was asked to ensure that the League's branches in the region remained active. The PWV ANC executive felt that because the League is autonomous, this task belonged to the League's NEC.

The Women's League NEC endorsed the decisions of the interbranch meeting and suspended Winnie Mandela from the League

NEC because there was to be an investigation concerning her. Nomvula Mokanyane was suspended from the League NEC because she is the representative of the suspended REC.

The ANC National Working Committee instituted a commission of inquiry. It ruled that the suspension of the League REC was unconstitutional. The NEC however decided to leave the suspension in place because the commission found that there was sufficient evidence to warrant a disciplinary hearing of those involved in the demonstration. The status of the suspended members will be reviewed after the hearing.

DISUNITY

There have been serious problems of disunity in the democratic women's movement in the PWV for many years, long before the unbanning of the ANC and the rebuilding of the Women's League. This has resulted in women's political priorities taking second place to personalised conflicts. In a certain sense the cur-

Facts and figures

At the time of the recent AGM on 3 May:

Number of branches: 63

Number of branches at the AGM: 36

Number of branches at the 24 May interbranch meeting: 33

rent crisis may help to clear the decks and, once it is resolved, allow for real progress.

But the demonstration reflects a problem that concerns the ANC as a whole. To avoid weakening the movement, it needs to be resolved in accordance with basic principles:

- a fair hearing for all involved;
- equal application of rules and regulations to all members irrespective of their status; and
- a clear political perspective.

Vultures of all kinds are waiting in the wings to pick up the rot. ♦

ANC policy: the gender dimension

Women's League delegates put gender on the agenda at the ANC policy conference. They made sure that the organisation moves beyond ritualistic lip-service to a real commitment to gender equality.

ECONOMIC POLICY

The contribution of women's unpaid labour in the home to the creation of wealth is to be recognised. The ANC will progressively introduce an additional set of national accounts, reflecting unpaid labour.

LAND

Conference agreed that the land claims court should have the power to consider the claims of women who have been excluded from land

ownership and entitlement not only by law, but also by custom and practice.

CONSTITUTION

The Bill of Rights should have specific clauses on human rights for women. It should include mechanisms to ensure that women can exercise their constitutional rights. It will be supplemented by a national charter for women's rights.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

This principle is to be embodied in the constitution to achieve equal rights and opportunities for those who have been discriminated against. This should not be regarded as a violation of the principles of equality, non-racialism and non-sexism, but rather as their fulfilment.

HEALTH

Conference adopted the principle

that women need to have control over their bodies and their sexuality. The League proposed a process of education and discussion in all branches and regions before policy is adopted on the controversial issues of abortion and commercial sex workers.

EDUCATION

The state must develop infrastructure to provide early childhood education because this affects women's participation in the economy. Educational resources should be redistributed to benefit the most disadvantaged, including rural women in particular. There should be a national core curriculum promoting non-sexist values. Gender stereotyping must be removed.

MEDIA

Steps must be taken to ensure that the media do not perpetuate sexism. ♦

THE WAY TO PEACE

The following actions should be taken. Immediately:

- A team of international monitors be invited to South Africa to continuously monitor the security forces.
- An international election monitoring team (to assist and observe in both the run-up to and the elections themselves) be invited to South Africa work with an electoral commission appointed by Codesa.
- Civilian non-partisan administrators be introduced into the South African Police force at all levels.
- All policing in both independent and self-governing homelands should be brought under a unified command. Urgent and effective steps should be taken to educate and explain to all members of the police force the necessity of unbiased policing.
- All armies including the South African Defence Force, Umkhonto we Sizwe and any others should be brought under a single command to form the new army to serve a democratic state.
- A new detective agency should be established to investigate politically-motivated crime and to take over from the riot squads. It should have a civilian structure.

THE FIRST STEPS TO PEACE

- There must be a comprehensive ban on carrying of all weapons, of whatever kind, to political meetings, rallies and in all public places.
- Security forces should:
 - ensure effective searching at all stations before passengers board commuter trains
 - search all hostels, confiscate weapons, and prevent anyone with arms from leaving the hostels
 - prevent anyone being kept or taken by force into any hostel
- Hostels should be protected from any external attack.
- The government must withdraw any secret support for any political organisation.
- Known and notorious killers still at

THE WAY TO PEACE JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY



Violence is the most serious problem facing South Africa. To end violence strong measures are required. The Goldstone Commission, Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists have made recommendations that warrant serious attention.

large must be prosecuted. Bail conditions for those arrested in connection with violence should be reassessed.

- Political organisations, religious bodies and organs of civil society must put maximum effort into promoting local peace accords and explaining the peace process at grassroots level.
- Every assistance (food, blankets, shelter) should be given to internal refugees, and non partisan socio-economic reconstruction must receive urgent attention.

MASS ACTION AND PEACE

Codesa II broke down over the National Party government's stubborn refusal to accept democracy. The army has been called up to deal with the people's peaceful expression. Instead of genuine negotiations, De Klerk threatens that they have well-laid contingency plans to

deal with mass action aimed at facilitating the transition to democracy.

Yet we see no such plans or mobilisation when thousands of men march down the streets fully armed, leaving death and destruction in their wake.

We will hold De Klerk and the National Party government responsible for any loss of life resulting from failure to protect peaceful civil protest.

RESPONSIBILITY OF ORGANISATIONS

The Goldstone Commission, International Commission of Jurists and Amnesty International have made observations about the misdeeds of members from various political parties. The ANC is determined to end all violence, including that which our members and supporters, in efforts to defend their communities, may have become involved in.

ANC MESSAGE TO MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

- Our aim is to promote peace at all times.
- Political tolerance must be shown to all groups.
- All efforts must be made to strengthen the provisions of the National Peace Accord and its structures.

AGENDA FOR PEACE: REPORT BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION OF JURISTS

"The Trust Feed Case proves conclusively that violence is being provoked by some elements in the security forces... The evidence of senior police officers could not be accepted and official records were shown to be completely inaccurate... It is difficult to believe that the cover up was not known to senior politicians..."

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