

**NOTES**

DEALING WITH THE MEDIA

Generally speaking, there are two kinds of relationship with the media: when they come to you; and when you're chasing them for coverage of some story or event.

Most of us spend so much time doing the latter we often fail to recognise when the former is happening. In our excitement - and feeling a little flattered at being rung up or pursued - we often fall into traps and become our own worst enemy.

There are a few ground rules therefore to be borne in mind. They also apply when you are trying to generate coverage.

WHEN THE MEDIA COMES TO YOU

1. Don't be rushed. If a reporter rings you up in 99% of cases it's a good idea to say you are a bit tied up and can you ring back in five minutes. Ask for the gist of her/his enquiry before you ring off. Then spend a few minutes composing your thoughts, deciding whether its appropriate for you to answer and assembling any information you may need. Of course you must ring back if you said you would - even if just to refer her/him to someone else.
2. It sounds obvious but is one of the easiest things to forget in the excitement: TALK ABOUT WHAT YOU KNOW. IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER - SAY SO. DON'T MUDDLE THROUGH. Don't speculate or get drawn on issues which your organisation would not wish to comment on. Remember, even if you give a 'personal opinion', the reporter is talking to you as a representative of your organisation so the opinions you give are bound to reflect on the organisation you represent.

It's always best to rely on first hand experience. You'll still be safe with 'second hand' experience if your sources are reliable. But if you're not confident about their reliability don't repeat hearsay or lapse into generalisations. Let the journalist do the generalising on his/her own responsibility.

3. Remember that you, the interviewee, are the most important element of the interview. Without you, the story doesn't happen. You don't need to be rude or temperamental about it but you can decline to be interviewed if the terms aren't right.
4. The terms? If it's a radio or TV interview, nine times out of ten you will have the opportunity (and you should always take it) to discuss the questions you will be asked before the interview starts whether it is live or recorded. Find out how long you've got - 1 minute or half an hour? Select the number of points you want to make accordingly. If it is recorded and you are unhappy about anything you can always ask to redo it.

Similarly, with a press interview discuss the questions and proposed length of piece before you start. Find out whether the story is all about you/ your organisation/your event or you are just a small part of another story. Remember, though, that when you start to answer everything you say will be being noted. Don't talk 'off the record' unless you know the reporter well and trust him/her. In other words, don't say things you shouldn't say and then try to take it back.

People often complain that they've been misrepresented by journalists. Often, however, they have been fairly represented but said too much (or too little) - or just disagree with the journalists' conclusions.

### DEALING WITH REPORTERS

Be honest, accurate and factual.

1. Remember that no matter how important your item may seem to you, it is only one of dozens of stories competing for space that day. Depending on what else is happening you may get a big story or a one-inch story at the back of the paper. But you can make your story more appealing.
2. Don't telephone the newspaper or radio if you can write a simple press release. The best thing is to visit with it to see your contact, but if you can't do that, send it in good time.

Rough guidelines: Weekly paper, a week before.  
Local Radio/Daily Paper: Two days before.

3. Don't lecture or make speeches at editors or reporters. They want the facts. Your opinion or position on a matter may be part of the facts, but don't talk as if you are trying to persuade a reporter that you are right.
4. Don't be provoked. Don't lose your cool and don't take things personally.

It's always useful to try and identify the reporter whose responsibility it is to cover your particular interest. If you can develop a friendly relationship in which your confidence grows and he/she understands that you're not wasting his/her time you'll derive the benefit in the future. You'll always have a name to send your press releases to.

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Get to know the format of your local papers/radio/TV so you know exactly what kinds of stories they normally carry, where and when. The letters pages of papers are often excellent places to publicise events, comment on behalf of your organisation, etc.

The basic aim of a letter to local press is to:

- a. state the problem
- b. say what your organisation is doing to help solve it
- c. emphasise that readers can do something - i.e. support your organisation by attending a special event.

Therefore the basic letter could be as short as three paragraphs.

The letter should be tailored to fit in with the length and style favoured by local newspapers. Analyse the correspondence column before you write the letter.

For newspapers that favour longer letters each point (especially a and b) can be expanded to two or a maximum of three paragraphs which help illustrate, amplify or identify it in the mind of the reader. But keep it simple, direct and accurate. Few letters should be much over 300 words.

You

**Reporters:**  
Writes story on basis of what you've said.

**Other news Source**  
Press agencies.  
Correspondents.

**NEWS EDITOR**  
Checks stories, sometimes changes them.

**CHIEF SUB-EDITOR**  
Designs pages, decides where stories go.

**SUB-EDITOR.**  
Checks grammar, sometimes changes structure of stories. Writes headlines  
Checks law.

**EDITOR**  
Oversees all stages, can change and over-rule at all stages.

PRINTER

Story can be changed at any of these three points, without the reporter knowing.

NEWS can mean two things.

It can mean the lifeblood of a newspaper/magazine/radio station/TV station. But it can also mean an excuse for denying the people information. "It's not news ---" is a common excuse from those who do the information gathering. By this they could mean:

- + Your information is old, and thus no longer of interest.
- + Your information is commonplace. It has happened often before, and therefore, is again no longer of interest.
- + Your information is too "dangerous", too controversial or too "radical" for whichever publication the news-gatherer works.

As a prospective "Supplier" of information, you will have to guard against these "excuses". You will have to make your information "Newsworthy"---in other words, present it in such a way that the journalist you are speaking to feels he or she has no obligation but to pass your message on.

There are several ways of doing this:

- + Put your "news" in perspective. If it's the first time your organisation is tackling an issue, say so. If it's the first time an issue is being challenged -- such as bus fares, workers' maternity rights etc. say so. If it's the biggest action of its kind, say so. All this helps the journalist see things in perspective.

- + Putting things in perspective also means outlining what sort of strength you have. If your action involves ten community organisations, say so. A bus boycott called by one tiny body means nothing to the cynical journalist. But if it involves all ten civic organisations in one area, it's "news".

- + Make whatever you have to say seem new - even if it isn't.

If you're stating your organisation's viewpoint on an issue, come up with a fresh approach. If the State suddenly bans an organisation, don't come with the predictable "condemnation". Look for new ideas, ideas that will take your response further than other organisations --- such as calling for a day of protest or a poster campaign. Always be on the lookout for something different --- not only will your action be more appealing to apathetic members of your community, it will tickle the imagination of tired journalists, people who are possibly --- understandably --- sick to death of the predictable statement which starts:

"The People's Action League notes with concern ....."

Finally, remember what "news" means ---it means "new".

That means new ideas, new approaches --- an indication that you have something new to offer the cynical civil servant-types who often have the power to decide whether an issue is "newsworthy" or not.

EXAMPLE 1

N O T I C E

The sun shall rise for the Youth of Alphaville who are uniting in a historical launch to expose the white racist regime. The youth will launch our organisation in Alphaville on Thursday.

Unite and fight!

EXAMPLE 2

THE ALPHAVILLE YOUTH ASSOCIATION

P O Box 3645  
ALPHAVILLE  
2040

MEETING TO LAUNCH A NEW CAMPAIGN FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Over a hundred youth in Alphaville are holding their first ever meeting in St Francis Church Hall, Seventh St at 7.00 p.m. on Thursday 7th May. The meeting will launch a campaign to unite unemployed youth. It is being launched by the newly formed Alphaville Youth Association of Johannesburg.

Speakers at the meeting will include Dan Montsitsi, national co-ordinator of the International Youth Year Committee and Edward Ndlovu, chairperson of the Alphaville Youth Association.

Edward Ndlovu said today: "The sun shall rise with the launch of this new organisation. The youth of Alphaville must unite in struggle: Amandla!"

ENDS

# HAP PRESS KIT

## PRESS RELEASES.

These are probably the most effective-- and reliable-- way of getting across your message.

From a journalist's point of view, press releases present all the facts in a clear, simple form. That means less work -- something which will make most journalists happy. From your organisation's point of view, a press release means that your statement is down in black and white -- so it won't be misunderstood or misquoted. And you can think carefully before committing yourselves to words.

You can use Press releases for different functions:

- to give advance notice of an event.

- to provide a report of a meeting.

- to announce new campaigns -- such as boycotts -- and provide progress reports.

- to give background information on an event/dispute.

- to give details of a report.

As stated earlier, there are numerous benefits in putting out a press release. But to obtain maximum benefit, you have to make sure they are complete.

Firstly to make life easier, give your press release a heading. If workers at a factory go on strike, and you release information on the strike, headline your press release "Wilson-Rowntree workers go on strike over pay" or "Wilson-Rowntree workers strike". But keep it simple -- all the headline serves to do is give the journalist an idea what your release is about.

Then make sure you have what journalists call the "five w's" -- what, who, where, when and why.

Right at the beginning of your press release, you must make sure you have:

WHAT is happening

WHO is doing it

WHERE it is happening

WHEN it is happening

WHY it is happening

Here is an example:

Workers

At Wilson Rowntree

went on strike

yesterday

because of bad pay.

WHO

WHERE

WHAT

WHEN

WHY



These "rules" apply to all issues. If you're a community organisation fighting for lower rents, and you decide to protest outside the rent board offices, your press release has to have the five w's.

WHO you are

WHERE you are

WHAT your're doing about the rent

WHEN you're going to do it.

WHY you're going to do it.

This means:

Members of the Cradock Residents' Association

WHO

have decided to demonstrate

WHAT

outside the East Cape Administration Board office  
in Cradock

WHERE

tomorrow

WHEN

in protest against the recent 50 percent rent increase

WHY

It's easy. Just state the obvious facts.

And once you've drawn up your press release, check you've answered the five W's.. just to be sure.

Once you've spelt out the main issue, give more detail. Say how many people are involved; what they are asking for; how long they've been negotiating with the authorities, what the response has been; what the workers feel; what future action they're likely to take. Make sure you have all the facts.

There are several other fairly obvious "rules" regarding press releases.

+Use simple language. Short sentences, short words. Don't use cliches - phrases like "the apartheid regime" tend to lose their value after a while -- and don't use jargon -- particularly in trade union news.

+Use vigorous language. Make it easy for the journalist -- use words like accuse, blame, challenge, reject, warn.

+Don't use abbreviations. You and all your members might know what Cradora, Peyco or Ayco stand for, but a good number of journalists won't.

+Use quotes. If your organisation is protesting against an issue, have someone quoted in the press release, such as a president or organiser. Use direct quotes from that person as much as possible. They brighten up a statement, and journalists like to use them in their reports - they personalise

an issue. For example, it's weak to say: Mr. Sisulu said the workers would only go back when they had forced management to pay R3,50 an hour. It is much stronger to say: Mr. Sisulu warned: We won't go back until the bosses pay us what we deserve -- a decent wage."

#### THE EMBARGO

This is one of the most useful aspects of a press release. It enables you to delay the release of your information. For instance, if your union intends calling a strike, you can send a press release before the time giving the background to the strike. This allows the journalist to do research, find illustrations etc. Or, if you intend releasing a very complex report, say, on allegations of police brutality, with complex interviews and affidavits -- it is helpful for the journalist to be given time to study that information. Then, when he or she writes a report on your document, it will have been fully researched.

Another benefit of an embargo is that it allows you to choose who you release your information to. If you embargo a report until noon, it will be just right for an afternoon newspaper. If you embargo until midnight, it is ideal for a morning paper. It is up to you how you use this, though -- you could upset good contacts if you mess them up with your embargo.

Also, don't embargo just for the sake of it. Only use one if it's essential.

*To embargo a press release write "Embargoed until 12.30 on the 10th June".*

Finally make sure your press release is neat. If possible, print it on your organisation's letterhead. Try to have it typed. Number the pages. And avoid making mistakes -- the neater the press release, the more impressed a journalist is likely to be. Don't forget the date and the name of whoever's issuing it, with a telephone number if possible. The journalist may have a query, and they must be able to contact SOMEONE to solve their problem.

## PRESS CONFERENCES

### What is a press conference?

A press conference (or news conference) is an occasion when an organisation invites a number of journalists from different media to hear what the organisation has to say AND to ask questions. IF USED WISELY, press conferences can be a tremendously useful tool for an organisation to gain positive publicity. Some organisations, however, overdo press conferences by holding them when they have little newsworthy to say, wasting both their own and the journalists' time.

### What are the advantages of a press conference?

If a press conference is properly organised, it gives a number of strong advantages. The holding of an important press conference can be a news story in itself. A well-run press conference also allows an organisation the opportunity to

- get its message across to a range of media outlets all at one time, saving work and time.
- provide more detailed information and explanation of your organisation's case than you can give in a press release. (Please refer to the separate briefing sheet on Press Releases.)
- present your organisation's case on YOUR terms and at a time and place of YOUR choosing.
- meet face-to-face with reporters, some of whom you may not have met before or only have dealt with over the telephone.

### CAUTION

DON'T hold a press conference unless you have something 'newsworthy' (something really quite important) to say. For if you don't have a strong news story for your press conference, journalists who turn up will consider they have wasted their time - or you may risk no-one turning up at all! Either way, you damage your organisation's reputation in the eyes of journalists. You also waste your own organisation's time and money in preparing for and arranging a 'non-event'.

One rule-of-thumb: if you can get most of what your organisation wants to say on a press release, then don't hold a press conference - concentrate your energies instead on distributing a release.

### When to call a press conference?

There is no definite or infallible rule about when to hold a press conference but here are some examples of situations where press conferences can be called successfully:

- when your organisation launches a new campaign, starts a new service, takes a new initiative or direction, makes an important new appointment or publishes a new report or survey.
- when your organisation wants to comment in detail on a major issue already in the news e.g. when your organisation is involved in a

controversy or dispute which is attracting media attention and you want to present fully your organisation's side of the case. (N.B. This last situation may require you to set up a press conference very quickly indeed to catch newspaper deadlines.)

### What to do?

Holding a press conference usually involves a bit of preparation, though it can be speeded up if need be.

#### In advance

- 1) Get an invitation out in time to all the relevant journalists you know, giving the basic information about the conference (WHO will be speaking WHEN and WHERE) and some brief information about WHAT the speaker(s) will say and WHY the conference is being held.

You can invite journalists over the phone but it is better, if you have the time, to produce a short release (please see a model invitation at the end of this hand-out) several days before and distributing this by hand delivery, mail or telex so that it arrives in good time.

Generally speaking, the more advance warning you give reporters or their newsdesks the better - unless, of course, it's a real emergency or crisis when you can let journalists know at the last minute that you are going to hold a snap press conference - for example, in half-an-hour's time at somewhere convenient.

- 2) Give careful thought to the timing of the press conference. The best time is often to hold it mid-morning if you're going for the next day's morning paper (avoid clashing with the times of other important events which could reduce attendance at your conference) and the right length of time is generally 30 to 45 minutes. Stick as far as possible to these times (though you may start a few minutes late to wait for late-comers) and try not to over-run as journalists are busy people with other stories to cover or deadlines to meet. Work out the amount of time to allocate to each of your speakers, allowing 10 or 15 minutes for journalists' questions. (N.B. You will need someone to chair the press conference whose job will be to introduce the speakers, take questions from journalists and wind up the conference.)
- 3) Choose a suitable room for the conference in an accessible place and with enough seating. Make sure it is reasonably quiet so that the conference is not disturbed and that any radio reporters present can make a clear recording.

If you have the time and resources

- 4) Plan to make available at the conference a written statement or extract from the speeches and any other background paper you think useful e.g. information about your organisation. Arrange for an exhibition or picture display if you have the material.
- 5) Telephone the key journalists you want to attend just a day or two before the conference to check that they received their invitation. They may not have decided whether to come or not, so have your

arguments ready to persuade them of its importance.

On the day

- 6) Arrange the chairs seating your speakers as a panel (preferably behind a table) at the head of the room facing the seats for the journalists. If you have any relevant posters, placards, banners or other similar material arrange them in a way that will make a strong visual background for photographs.
- 7) Keep a record of the journalists who attend by asking people to write down their name and newspaper on a sheet (see below) which you will provide as they come in.

e.g. 6th JUNE PRESS CONFERENCE LIST

<u>NAME</u>	<u>MEDIA</u>
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Make sure your chairperson also asks journalists to identify themselves in the conference when they ask questions. It is useful to have a complete list of the journalists you invited and then after the conference tick them off to see who is missing.

- 8) Be generally helpful and hospitable. For instance if reporters/photographers want a special session to interview/photograph one of your speakers, try to help set this up and find a suitable place for this. If it is possible to lay on tea or coffee after the conference this can provide an excellent opportunity to meet journalists socially and get to know each other better.

MODEL PRESS CONFERENCE INVITATION (fictitious example)

ALPHAVILLE COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

P O Box 1926  
Alphaville  
2040

Strictly embargoed until midday 5th June

PRESS CONFERENCE TO RESPOND TO MINISTER'S REMOVAL THREAT

You are invited to attend a press conference to be held by Alphaville Community Association at 11.00 a.m. on Wednesday 5 June in St Peter's Church Hall, Alphaville, when full details will be released of the response of community leaders to last week's Ministerial statement in Parliament on removal plans.

Marsha Collins, co-ordinator of the Western Cape Anti-Removals Campaign, will speak at the press conference as will Mr Albert Mdingwe, Chairman of Alphaville Community Association, and other prominent local church and community leaders who will explain why they are taking action.

R.S.V.P. (and for further information) to:

Lawrence Mkhwanazi  
Tel: Alphaville (04321) 73-5341

# HAP PRESS KIT

## PRESS OFFICERS

If publicity is important for your organisation, then you should consider appointing one person as the organisation's Press Officer and not just leave it to the Chairperson or the Committee to handle along with their many other responsibilities and demands on their time.

### What are the advantages of having a Press Officer?

One person who is given special responsibility for dealing with the media will be more effective than a number of different people doing a little bit of press relations work now and then. A press officer can

- provide continuity to your organisation's publicity drive, learning from and building on past experiences with the media.
- keep your organisation up-to-date with press contacts and with the press coverage the organisation gets.
- plan a positive strategy towards the media rather than simply reacting to press enquiries and journalists' ideas of stories.

From the journalists' point of view, it is much easier to have one person in the organisation to deal with and make initial contact with rather than a chain of changing names and telephone numbers.

But if the job is to be done well, the person who is appointed press officer must be someone who is reliable, efficient and really knows the organisation. The press officer must be able to give press comments or answer journalists' queries as spokesperson for the organisation. The organisation must feel sure that the press officer can represent it publicly.

### What is the role of a press officer?

- \* Act as the main channel of communication between your organisation and the media.
- \* Study how the media works and how it can be used to advance your organisation.
- \* Make a proper list of all the media outlets which might give coverage to your organisation.
- \* Develop good contacts with journalists and help journalists who are making enquiries about your organisation.
- \* Monitor the newspapers and radio for mentions of your organisation and coverage of relevant issues. Cuttings should be kept of all important stories.
- \* Draft press releases.
- \* Arrange press conferences.
- \* Give briefings or interviews to the press or arrange for other suitable people to give them.
- \* Think up (news or feature) stories and 'sell' them to journalists.
- \* Give advice to other people in your organisation on being interviewed and encourage them on how to use the media.
- \* Consider making a complaint when coverage is unfair.

# NUSAS ORGANISATIONAL HANDBOOK

## ORGANISING PUBLIC MEETINGS

= 1

### 1. HIGH PROFILE ACTIVITIES

#### 1.1 GENERAL

High profile activities are activities which aim to attract a large number of people. They feature prominently on the campus and perhaps beyond campus as well.

The following types of activities may be characterised as high profile but the distinctions are not rigid:

Campaigns	Orientation Week
Protests and mass meetings	Fundraising activities
Focus weeks	Cultural activities, eg play or film festivals.

What we hope to do, is to discuss these different types of activities and provide some guidelines on how to organise them as effectively and efficiently as possible. Some of the points we have raised may sound mundane or even silly but all too frequently, campus organisers forget little things which can have disastrous results.

#### 1.2 MEETINGS

The first four activities usually involve a meeting at some stage with speeches and/or audiovisual material which is advertised on campus.

When planning such meetings we should bear the following in mind:

##### 1.2.1 Goal

This will determine what speakers one should invite, what atmosphere one wants to create, etc. For example:

If one wanted to protest against a state action, then

- the speaker invited should be high profile to attract a large crowd of students
- there should be a motion and singing at the end to engender a spirit of solidarity
- speeches should be short and make a few important or strategic statements rather than explaining concepts
- there should be a lot of good, very visible publicity

If the meeting is commemorative then:

- one should try to invite a symbolic person eg. an old member of FSAW on August 9 (National Women's Day)
- a controversial issue may be best dealt with in a debate

It is important to bear 2 things in mind: Firstly, if our audience is students, we have to ensure that issues are not only exciting, controversial or emotional, but also broad enough to attract and interest students. We need to deal with issues in such a way that students can relate to them. And secondly, meetings (especially high profile ones) do not change people overnight. They can not be used for educative purposes or to replace educative activities.



They are most useful to

- engender a feeling of solidarity and unity
- make a stand on an issue
- launch or raise an idea, initiative, campaign, action

But the meeting must be followed up by other kind of activities for it to be most useful.

### 1.2.2 Planning and Co-ordination

Planning should take place as far in advance as possible. Then many people can participate in the planning and that the speakers etc. that one wants will be available.

When deciding on a date, try and see that it

- does not co-incide with any other major campus activity eg. Rag, Christian Mission
- does not fall over or near public and religious holidays. The day before public holidays are usually half-days and students leave campus early
- does try and co-incide or relate to an important event, eg. Sharpeville Commemoration meeting should be held on March 21st; meeting on spies should be held soon after spy disclosure
- does perhaps try to co-incide with a time when a specific, non-student group can attend, eg. a meeting on youth preparedness could happen during school holidays

It is also important to co-ordinate and plan meetings with other campus groups, and academics and some instances with off-campus groups - eg. invite non-student groups to participate in an Anti-Republic Day rally.

### 1.2.3 Administrative Details

Below is a suggested checklist.

Book a venue	A venue should be accessible (eg. not far from a canteen if the meeting is over lunch). It should not be too large for the numbers expected (rather too small).
chairs table rostum drinking water	For the audience and speaker(s).
microphone system	Microphones are not usually necessary for small meetings but desirable. Sound systems often give trouble so check them before the meeting.
audio-visual equipment	Slide/tape shows, movie projectors, video projectors inevitably give trouble which can be avoided by checking beforehand. There are numerous models which are often not interchangeable.

	<p>Slide/tape shows work much better if synchronised. This can be done beforehand by most university audio-visual units. The slides will then change automatically.</p> <p>The speaker should be asked if he/she agrees to have his/her speech tape recorded.</p>
tape recording of meeting	<p>It is very useful to have a tape recording of speeches especially when speakers do not write their speeches. Tapes or transcripts can be kept in Resource Centres.</p>
press	<p>It is useful to find sympathetic contacts in the commercial press who can perhaps give advance publicity as well as good coverage.</p> <p>The University press officer can often notify the commercial press.</p>
chairperson	<p>A good chairperson is important especially at meetings which could get chaotic or where instructions need to be issued.</p> <p>The chairperson must know the correct details about the speakers in order to introduce them and know how to handle questions. He/she should have a fully written out list of all announcements. It is much better for the chair to make announcements than for somebody to stand up from the floor.</p>
question time	<p>A roving microphone or a second microphone at a corner of the stage can be useful. At controversial meetings, people who want to ask questions should be asked to queue or a list of names made.</p>
announcements	<p>Meetings are useful to make announcements about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- a recent publication or T-shirt you are selling</li><li>- a seminar following the meeting</li><li>- the following day/week's activity</li><li>- an invitation to join Project Comms</li><li>- fundraising that is needed</li></ul> <p>Announcements should be made at the beginning or middle of a meeting and not at the end when people are leaving.</p>

motion for meeting	<p>A motion which all students can vote on can be useful as a show of solidarity and strength as well as a method of student democracy.</p> <p>Motions should be short and simply written.</p> <p>If they are complicated, they should be printed and handed out to students as they come in or placed on the chairs.</p>
banner and other 'decorations' for the venue	<p>For example, at a Republic Day meeting a banner could be put up behind the speakers with a slogan such as 'No to an Apartheid Republic, yes to a People's Republic.'</p> <p>A slogan can be written on a blackboard. Decorations could include a display at the back of a hall or at the entrance.</p>

#### 1.2.4 Speakers

Anybody with an experience in the student movement will agree that thinking of an appropriate speaker, finding that person and then getting him/her to agree to speak is one of the most frustrating and time consuming tasks.

There is no finite list of speakers; it is important when looking for speakers to ask for advice and suggestions. If one person refuses it is a good idea to ask him/her who they would suggest. In some instances, it is easier to work through contacts or people who know the potential speaker, than going to that person directly.

There are no rules either about what constitutes a good or bad speaker, but here are some guidelines to follow when looking for speakers:

- (i) A prominent, well known or popular person is often useful to attract a crowd. His/her opinion will also carry more weight than that of somebody who is unknown.
- (ii) A prominent person could be complemented by somebody who can take a more detailed or indepth approach to a topic.
- (iii) Especially, for campus-related meetings, a speaker with a sense of humour is invaluable.
- (iv) For some events, a symbolic person could be appropriate, eg. Zinzi Mandela at a Free Mandela meeting. One could also invite people simply to sit on the platform or make a statement for symbolic purposes.
- (v) Getting a speaker who is directly involved in an issue can be very exciting, eg. a striking worker at a strike support meeting.

Below is a suggested checklist for speakers:

<p>Has the speaker been: <u>invited</u> <u>confirmed</u></p>	<p>Confirmation should be done the day before.</p>
<p>Has <u>transport</u> been arranged</p>	<p>Air tickets can be booked through SASTS and should be confirmed at least twice. Try to get a ticket to a speaker before the day of his/her flight (if he/she can book his/her flight and get payed back later, it is much easier). This is especially important with controversial speakers.</p> <p>Try also to get a speaker to come the day before so if there is a delay he/she will still make it to the meeting.</p> <p>Ensure that when you book a ticket you have the correct name and spelling.</p>
<p>Has the speaker got access to <u>parking</u> on campus</p>	<p>This is especially important on big campuses and can sometimes be specially arranged.</p>
<p>Does the speaker need <u>accommodation</u></p>	
<p>Does the speaker want to <u>meet</u> other people/groups</p>	<p>If the speaker is from out of town he/she may want this arranged.</p> <p>A press interview/conference could be arranged for a prominent speaker.</p>
<p>Does the speaker know the <u>topic</u> of his/her talk</p>	<p>Often speakers are given a topic and expected to deliver the goods. Speakers usually appreciate more details about who their audience is and what is expected of them. One could go and discuss the topic with them or take along some literature, eg. NUSAS Resume or latest student publication.</p>
<p>Does the speaker have a <u>copy</u> of talk</p>	<p>This can be given to the press prior to the meeting, used afterwards in a publication or kept in one Resource Centre.</p>
<p>Does the speaker mind being asked <u>questions</u></p>	<p>Most speakers are willing to answer questions but it is polite to ask.</p>
<p>Does the speaker mind attending a <u>seminar/discussion</u> afterwards</p>	<p>This can happen immediately after the meeting or later that afternoon and is a useful opportunity to ask the speaker more in depth questions. This can sometimes be a forum for recruiting new people.</p>
<p>Have you sent the speaker a <u>thank you note</u></p>	

# NUSAS ORGANISATIONAL HANDBOOK

## SEMINARS

### 2.2 WEEKEND, REGIONAL AND NATIONAL SEMINARS

#### 2.2.1 Forms of presentation

- a) Audiovisual media (movies, videos, slide/tape shows)
- (i) As much media as possible should be used to vary the programme - people do get tired of too many discussion sessions.
  - (ii) Media can be selected to fit in with the seminar as a whole or with a particular topic.
  - (iii) Media should be followed or preceded by discussion.
  - (iv) Points can often be made effectively 'in reverse' through the use of Dept. of Information movies, for instance.
- b) Talks
- (i) Selection of topics depends on the nature of the seminar. Introductory seminars should select a few of the following:
    - current issues
    - issues of importance to the implementation of the NUSAS theme
    - background and position of the student movement
    - areas of weak understanding or confusion, eg. feminism
    - the immediate acquisition of skills, eg. poster making, public speaking
  - (ii) The person presenting the talk needs to be very accessible, and have a good understanding of the kind of audience to expect.
  - (iii) Talks should not go on for too long and should be followed by questions and discussions, either with the whole group or in smaller groups.
- c) Games
- Games which involve role playing, jumping up and down, skits, etc. can be used to vary the programme. Learning can often happen more effectively through games but one has to be wary of the game becoming so much fun that it obscures the serious intent. Games should be accompanied by some other kind of input, ie. explanation or evaluation.

The games most commonly played include:

- (i) Getting Acquainted Games - They are very useful at the beginning of a seminar to play a game to introduce people to one another and to create a more relaxed atmosphere.  
See addendum for examples.
- (ii) Simulation Games - These games are very useful to involve people actively in a learning process and to confront people with some stark realities. They work best if they are as realistic as possible. However they are only successful if accompanied by an evaluation or some theoretical or empirical input.

- (iii) Skits - A skit can be used to demonstrate (often in a amusing way), dynamics that exist within a group, society, etc. They have been successfully used to point out sexism and other values in society or how we think that we do, but actually don't act democratically in our organisations.

Asking a group to do a skit, is a learning experience in itself and can help create group unity.

- (iv) Guerrilla Theatre - Guerrilla theatre is difficult to explain. It is the complete opposite of conventional theatre in that it does not have a script, does not take place in a theatre. Instead a real life situation is acted out to an unsuspecting audience and on occasions the audience can be involved in the acting. For example, at a seminar an announcement can be made that the police are about to raid and a few people can act out problematic responses. The goal of this guerrilla theatre would be to provide a way for people to see how they would cope with a situation as if it were real.

Examples of guerrilla theatre include:

- report of a police raid, detention
- news of a boycott

When initiating guerrilla theatre here are some points to bear in mind:

- make the incident as simple and realistic as possible
- brief a few people beforehand, asking players a few questions to help them get a feeling for the role
- have at least one "stress" role player
- cut before it goes on too long, pull feelings from players and participants. Focus on behavior, not intentions.
- be sensitive to people who might get hurt accidentally, eg. lovers of person's supposedly detained.

#### d) Breaking up into groups

Breaking up into groups is essential to increase participation and encourage people to meet one another.

- (i) Groups should be small and consist of a variety of people, eg. from different campuses, old and new people, etc.
- (ii) This is a common way to divide people up into small groups: Say you want seven groups, then you would ask someone to begin 'counting' by calling out: 'One'. The person next to them would then call out 'two' and so on, counting in series until everyone had called out a number between one and seven. Then you would ask all the 'ones' to form a group, all the 'twos' to form another, etc.
- (iii) When the groups meet they should sit in a circle. It is important to start with introductions, for instance people could go round the circle and say their names and what they are doing.

- (iv) A leader/coordinator should be elected or appointed who can coordinate the discussion, make notes, and give a report back. Report backs should be given by new people, not old hacks even though they may have done it many times before.
- (v) A coordinator should also ensure that everybody participates and that some (especially older people) do not dominate. He/she can also be on guard for theoretical terms or jargon and ask that they be explained.
- (vi) Questions for discussion groups should be well formulated so that they can stimulate discussion and debate and so that it is possible for both new and older people to participate. Questions which require a lot of theoretical knowledge to answer are not good for discussion.
- (vii) Report backs of discussion groups should be short and precise. They could be written up on newsprint. If all groups are discussing the same questions, report backs often become tedious.
- (viii) Groups should be given a time limit and a coordinator could watch the time to ensure that the group is moving fast enough to cover all questions or issues.

### 2.2.3 Programme Structure

#### a) Introduction

It is essential to have an introduction to the seminar where:

- people introduce themselves
- the purpose of the seminar is outlined. If delegates understand the aim of the seminar, they are less likely to be disappointed by their expectations not being met.
- procedural matters, eg. cooking, cleaning, etc. are explained
- questions can be asked

#### b) General

- (i) It is useful to send participants a provisional programme before the seminar so that they know what they are coming to.
- (ii) The programme should be flexible however. It should be possible to change it during the seminar, depending on how things are going.
- (iii) The day should start with a paper or something which requires a lot of concentration and games should be played later when people begin to feel tired of sitting down.
- (iv) Time should be allocated as "free time" for walks in the mountains and other forms of recreation.
- (v) At national seminars, time should be set aside for campus delegations to meet. At these meetings, delegation leaders can check if people are attending and enjoying the seminar. Criticism is often voiced more easily here than at a full session. Delegation meetings can also assess the seminar and discuss how ideas picked up can be taken back to the various campuses.

- (vi) If people are travelling from far away, it is highly likely that some will arrive late (or exhausted) and the programme should provide for this. In other words, don't put the most important items first on the programme.
- (vii) In the evenings, some more social type events should be scheduled, eg. jorl, concert, 'sing-song', braai.
- (viii) It can be useful to appoint a 'steering committee' which is responsible for:
  - deciding on the following day's programme
  - organising rosters
  - getting feedback and criticismsAt national seminars, steering committee members could come from different campuses. They do not have to be the delegation leaders.
- (ix) The programme should end in time for people to leave comfortably, bearing in mind petrol times for instance. After the seminar people do not want to hang around waiting for petrol stations to open, etc.

See addendum for examples of programmes.

#### c) Conclusion and Evaluation Session

The seminar can be evaluated by means of a questionnaire, small group discussions or discussion by the whole group. Criticisms are less likely to come out in large groups. Questions asked during evaluation could include:

Did the seminar fulfill expectations?

If not, why not?

If so, how?

What aspect of the seminar did you find the least useful?

What aspect of the seminar did you find the most useful?

Recommendations for future seminars.

Comments/criticism/complaints about:

- organisation: food, accommodation, etc.
- structure: programme, content
- accessibility: 'domination', 'alienation'. etc.

#### 2.2.4 Practical Arrangements

##### a) Venue

When booking and deciding on venues, enquire on the following items:

- cost, accessibility to all centres, pleasantness of environment
- numbers - maximum and minimum that can be accommodated
- beds and bedding facilities



- cooking facilities: pots & pans  
gas/stoves  
plates, cups, knives & forks
  - electricity - check access to plugs for movie projectors  
TV set for videos
  - access to telephones
  - bathroom facilities
  - meeting facilities - size of hall, other rooms
- b) Send/give to delegates before seminar
- introductory/background reading
  - provisional programme
  - welcome letter, detailing: costs  
what they should bring, eg. warm  
clothing, sleeping bag  
map of how to get there
- c) Take to seminar site:
- newsprint and other scrap paper
  - koki pens, pens, pencils
  - press-stick; masking tape
  - tape recorder, tapes - needs to be loud for jorls
  - posters, displays etc. for decorating walls
  - publications, posters, student newspapers, etc. for distribution
  - books, T-shirts for sale
  - registration forms
  - slide projector, movie projector, (check that they are in working  
order)
  - slide/tape shows, movies
  - guitar or other musical instrument
  - soccer ball or other sports equipment
  - song sheets
- d) Catering
- (i) One person should be responsible for organising the catering,  
ie. to: draw up menus and see that they are kept to  
ensure that meals are prepared on time
  - (ii) Delegates can help with the cooking and washing up. If dele-  
gates are unfamiliar with one another, this is a good place  
to meet others.
  - (iii) It is important that meals are prepared on time, to prevent  
people getting restless and the programme being delayed.  
If meals take a long time to prepare, the preparations should  
begin as soon as the previous meal is over.
  - (iv) At least 10% of delegates are likely to be vegetarian and  
need to be catered for.
  - (v) Most food should be bought in bulk at a large store in a  
major centre. Make sure that bread and other essentials  
are available nearby in case you run out.

- (vi) At big seminars an electric urn for tea and coffee is useful.
- (vii) Beer and wine is good for helping people relax and socialise. At small pub can be run on a roster basis.
- (viii) Don't forget to buy cleaning materials, eg. Vim, sponges. Sharp knives are always useful - it's a good idea to bring some extra.
- (ix) Cheap menus are difficult to plan. The more you are able to buy in bulk, the cheaper catering becomes. Check for vegetables in season.

Some ideas for menu's are:

Breakfasts: Muesli  
Porridge (difficult to use left overs)  
Bread and Jam

Lunches : Cheese, bread and soup/cabbage salad  
Potato salad and viennas  
Macaroni cheese  
Eggs, rice salad and bread

Dinners : Toppas and Spaghetti/rice  
Vegetable stew and noodles  
Mince and spaghetti  
A braai and potatoes

Every meal should be supplemented with bread. Cooldrinks at tea times with tea and coffee. Fruit with lunch and breakfast.

e) Arranging the Venue

- posters on walls
- chair/tables in semi-circle or circle
- on walls put up lists of, eg.: all delegates  
cooking/washing rosters  
Democracy Wall (blank poster for comments)
- place for sale or distribution of publications and literature
- safe place for storage of valuables

f) Registration

- (i) The following personal details about delegates are important for the running of the seminar and can also be useful for following up the people who come:

Name

University

Address (at varsity and at home)

Courses

Involvement on campus, eg. Projects Comm, SSD

Are you a vegetarian?

Do you play a musical instrument?

Where they are staying at the seminar site (to trace people when they oversleep!)

What do you think this seminar should concentrate on?  
What are you hoping to get out of the seminar?  
If there are options of things to do, ask which ones the delegate would prefer.

- (iii) Registration should be as efficient as possible - there is nothing worse than to come to a seminar which looks disorganised, especially as a new person.
- (iv) At national or regional seminars delegates should be allocated sleeping places with people from different campuses so that they can meet more people.
- (v) At registration, delegates could be provided with literature or background material, eg.:
  - introductory papers
  - song sheets
  - student newspapers

### 2.3 CONFERENCES

Conferences (and congresses) take many different forms. Thus we have made a few general points and then drawn up a check list.

Planning for conferences must start well in advance.

A successful conference will have a programme that balances speakers, discussions, seminars, workshops and joris. Too many speakers can make a conference too full and heavy. There should be some small discussion groups or seminars for people to throw out questions, ideas and get to know each other. If there are no sessions of this sort, one might as well merely have the papers published. People need time to relax, or else they will simply take time off during sessions which will result in poor attendance. What occurs at what time of day is also important - and one usually has to plan for delegates never arriving on time.

A committee for organising a conference is essential. Initially this can be quite small with an overall co-ordinator and others who take responsibility for organising different areas, eg. accommodation & catering, media/publicity, sound, speakers.

A larger committee should be set up closer to the conference, to do more of the administrative and practical work, eg.:

- photographer
- running the pub
- registration
- collecting press clippings
- taping the proceedings

Below is a list of the kind of things that have to be arranged for a conference.

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