

Y4

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DURBAN HOUSING ACTION COMMITTEE
CIRCULAR /83-
REPORT ON GROUP DISCUSSIONS

The following is a brief report on several group discussions questions identified at the DHAC meeting of 24 August 1983.

1. PROBLEMS IN COMMUNITY ORGANISING

1.1. Problems affecting organisations:

- 1.1.1. many organisations are loosely structured, adhoc in nature
- 1.1.2. no programme of action
- 1.1.3. imbalance between civic and UDF work
- 1.1.4. handling of political issues at civic level
- 1.1.5. extent of political input on day to day community work
- 1.1.6. need for greater co-ordination of groups working in the same area - consultation eg. youth and civic organisation in Sydenham
- 1.1.7. initiate work in new areas has the added difficulty of identifying problems in the area
- 1.1.8. need to revive lapsed organisations
- 1.1.9. limited work-force
- 1.1.10. large number of activists during campaigns - drop out afterwards - problem of how to keep activists
- 1.1.11. development of local people both in new and old areas
- 1.1.12. development of working-class leadership
- 1.1.13. there is insufficient contact with local people to ensure their development
- 1.1.14. must not development dependency on students
- 1.1.15. problems of recruiting people into the organisation
- 1.1.16. how to ensure grassroots participation
- 1.1.17. problems with racism

1.2. Concerning communities:

- 1.2.1. settled communities - "contented"-adapted to problems
- 1.2.2. need to understand and assess community consciousness better - not looked at regularly and systematically
- 1.2.3. racist attitudes

1.3. Activists:

- 1.3.1. training of community organisers
- 1.3.2. limited work-force doing both UDF and civic work
- 1.3.3. how to respond to "contented" community - style of work to change

- 1.3.4. limited technical skills - publications chairmanship etc.
- 1.3.5. differences in organisational method - house visit
- 1.3.6. recruitment of activists
- 1.3.7. no assessment of consciousness of activists

2. SOLUTIONS PROPOSED

2.1. organisations:

- 2.1.1. need for formal structuring of organisations- formal membership/cards
- 2.1.2. creating close identification with organisation
- 2.1.3. campaigns to popularise organisation
- 2.1.4. development of model of ideal organisation - use as a standard for guiding work
 - need for regular evaluation - develop standard criteria
 - need to weigh achievements against objectives and aims of organisation
- 2.1.5. need to root organisation in the people - ensuring day to day access and contact
- 2.1.6. democratic participation - develop procedures to ensure this at all levels, particularly at mass level

2.2. Programme:

- 2.2.1. work during lull period - maintenance activity eg. advise office
- 2.2.2. broaden community organising perspective from issue orientation to include service activities
- 2.2.3. DEAC workshops on theory and skills

2.3. Training Programme:

- 2.3.1. technical eg. publications
- 2.3.2. making assessment of community
- 2.3.3. theoretical skills
- 2.3.4. develop a common approach for house-meetings, visits etc.
- 2.3.5. different training packages for different calibre of organisers -
 - people with minimal involvement in organisational work
 - organisers in the field
 - leadership level
 - community members conducting house meetings
 - others

2.4. For Activists:

- 2.4.1. training programmes
- 2.4.2. development of common organisational method eg. house visit
- 2.4.3. recruitment programme
- 2.4.4. need for change in style - agitational approach
- 2.4.5. development of activists in each local area - remove problem of dependency
- 2.4.6. skills in recruiting local activists and their subsequent development
- 2.4.7. need for assessment of level of consciousness of activists
- 2.4.8. need to develop model of ideal organiser

3. ROLE OF DEAC

3.1. General tasks:

- 3.1.1. identify issues that might affect affiliates
- 3.1.2. keep in touch with authorities like DCC
 - get information
 - apply pressure on issues
- 3.1.3. initiate discussions on important problems
- 3.1.4. effect of PC on ratepayer areas?

3.2. Need for a programme

3.3. Relationship to affiliates:

- 3.3.1. advise and assess with local problems and issues
- 3.3.2. need for channel of communication to facilitate quick response to local problems
- 3.3.3. organise broad support on local struggles
- 3.3.4. need for a sub-committee to discuss/investigate relationship between DEAC and its affiliates - relationship not clearly defined
- 3.3.5. officials should attend area meetings

3.4. Liason with fraternal organisations - establish and maintain contact with similar organisations eg. CARAC

3.5. Obligations of affiliates:

- 3.5.1. need to report accurately and honestly to ensure correct assessments of situations
- 3.5.2. there must be continuity for those who attend DEAC meetings

- 3.5.3. representatives to DHAC meetings must report back to areas fully and accurately
- 3.5.4. areas should meet before DHAC meetings so that issues are discussed
- 3.5.5. establish contact persons for passing on of information

3.5. Co-ordination:

- 3.6.1. contact between areas - exchange of information and experiences
- 3.6.2. mobilising work-force for areas that have problems
- 3.6.3. joint action - co-ordination of activity on common problems
 - identifying issues which could facilitate joint action
 - issues with potential
 - * water surcharges
 - * housing policy
 - * local govt. proposals
 - UDF programmes of action

3.7. Meetings:

- 3.7.1. make arrangements ensuring that they are convenient particularly for working people
- 3.7.2. need for regular and fixed dates to be set
- 3.7.3. reps. should attend business meetings
- 3.7.4. all activists should attend discussions

3.8. Training:

- 3.8.1. workshops on theory and technical skills
- 3.8.2. input on ideal model of a community organisation

3.9. Workshops:

- 3.9.1. developing concept of ideal model
- 3.9.2. how to assess consciousness of activists and communities

3.10. Organising:

- 3.10.1. organising new areas - set up organisations
- 3.10.2. look at problems of organising areas with Town Boards
- 3.10.3. ratepayer organisations - affiliation to DHAC

3.11. Structure:

- 3.11.1. need for fulltime personnel ?
- 3.11.2. should DHAC establish a citizens advice section
- 3.11.3. need for a central contact point
- 3.11.4. is the name (Durban) a limitation to outlying organisations joining

Collection Number: AK2117

DELMAS TREASON TRIAL 1985 - 1989

PUBLISHER:

Publisher: **Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand**

Location: **Johannesburg**

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