

Motivation on schools organization for WC
August 1987

Dear comrades

I think its important to put a couple of points ~~in~~ on paper about the state of schools organization around the country at the moment, for the purpose of national committee discussion.

These relate specifically to some differences which have arisen between the type of organization being built in Grahamstown, Cape Town and Joburg on the one hand, and in Durban on the other. As you know, PAC, PAAG and Linx have established themselves as independent high school organizations. PPG, on the other hand, is developing as a subgroup of ECC.

PPG is proud of its relationship with ECC, and is very loyal to ECC, which it relies on both for direction and ~~with help for~~ as a source of organizational skills. Although its media covers a variety of topics, its emphasis is on carrying ECC's message into the schools (e.g. in Echoes July - Aug '87). In this regard it plays a similar role to Cape Town's schools group, for instance, which, as an ECC subgroup, carries ECC's message into the schools. Although it co-operates with organized pupils on specific projects, it does not organize

pupils itself. This function is left to PAAG, which has organized pupils with remarkable success.

PAAG, and Linx and PAT in Joburg and Grahamstown, is proud (and jealous) of its independence. More than this though, all three organizations see specific political strengths in their independence.

They believe:

- Their independence is something of a safeguard for them security-wise. Any attack on them must be made on them themselves, for what they and only they are doing. It is more difficult for the state to attack them by association, insinuation or smear.

- their independence i.e. their existence as organizations run by pupils for pupils, makes them far more easily acceptable to other, less actively political pupils
- it is impossible for them to be characterized as "tools" of other (adult) organizations
- they are able to avoid the somewhat derogatory "youth wing" appellation which the The Citizen in Johannesburg has tried to use in its smears of Linx
- it is more difficult for claims of "manipulation" of "naive" children by adult radicals to hold water. (This is an allegation made by John Lambton in a telex put on the SAPA wire and cited in a Financial Mail article on Linx.) It is a serious allegation - one which the system could easily use to hammer us, with the support of most adult whites.

The point of all this is obviously not that we must leave pupil organization to flounder, as it will do at this stage without assistance. Passing on political and organizational skills is a long process and must be done thoroughly. Pupil organization needs our help and support.

But this is not the same as to say that it must fall under our organization structures. It is the way in which we help our younger comrades, and the consciousness of autonomous, independently run mass organization that we help instil in them, that are the crucial issues, I believe.

The pupil organizations in Joburg, Cape Town and Grahamstown feel very strongly about these issues, and correctly so I think. PAAG in Cape Town have organized 150 pupils - something a single subcommittee of ECC could never do. Moreover, the three organizations together are trying to lay the groundwork for long term national pupil initiatives that appeal to the mass of white school pupils. And they are adamant that organizational independence is a prerequisite for the success of this project.

Though there is clearly no guarantee of the success of this or any guarantee that the state will ignore this initiative any more than it is ignoring any other, it is important that this initiative is not contingent on the image, the reputation or the fate of any other organization, such as ECC.

I think what I'm saying falls within the ambit of the feeling at previous NCs: that ECC can be (quietly) proud of its role as a catalyst for organization without having to claim each initiative as its own. This is certainly true for security reasons but more important, I think, is that ECC has matured politically to the point where it can conceivably serve as a catalyst for a whole range of initiatives; but by remaining structurally and organizationally independent will be helping to give rise to new and autonomous sites of organization and struggle - which may well outlast us.

What I'm motivating, then, is that for security reasons (security of schools organization and of ECC), for broad political reasons, and because of the specific political positions of PAA, Linc and PAAG (all of which exclude the possibility of affiliation to or alliance with any other organization) that PAA evolve, as soon as possible, into an independent schools organization in line with schools organization elsewhere.

If this argument is accepted it is still probable - and indeed desirable - that someone (or some people) from Durban ECC continues to give PAA all the support that they require to establish themselves as an

autonomous organization.

The primary constraints at the moment, I think, are PPG's dependence on ECC, and their very strong loyalty to ECC. This manifested itself at the national pupils meeting as a very defensive response to the issue of independent organization. (PPG members gave the impression to the other organizations that they were responding to what they perceived as a personal attack on them, which was not the case at all. Discussion of issues like this was in fact the whole point of the meeting).

Quite how to take PPG beyond this, to a loyalty to the needs of schools organization and of the democratic movement in a broad sense (for it does seem to require independent schools organization in Durban, if Durban is to be part of the initiative) will be largely up to Durban ECC. Without wanting to minimize difficulties, I do think that the fact that PPG have taken such a strong lead from ECC so far seems to be cause for optimism.

With the correct political advice and hard work it should be possible to build an independent PP which responds directly to all the concerns of Durban pupils and helps to take forward the national initiative.

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