

U4-b

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Ben. "U4-6"

U.D.F. EDUCATION COMMITTEE - EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR CIVICS. - 27th/28th/29th APRIL

VENUE: DALESIDE (ST. JOHN BOSCO COLLEGE)

REPORT:

This is a report of each session of the education weekend.

Under each session we have reported under these headings:

AIM: what we hoped to achieve in the session

METHOD: how we ran the session

QUESTIONS: the questions which were discussed in the session

REPORT: the reports of the groups in answer to the questions

ASSESSMENT: looks at whether the session worked, we also used the evaluation forms from the civic association members who attended the weekend.

Participants; There were 35 participants at the workshops. Another 10 people came and went.

(18 - SOWETO ; 2 - EAST RAND ; 2 - ALEX ; 3 - PRETORIA ; 5 - VAAL ; 5 - EDUCATION COMMITTEE)

SESSION 1: INTRODUCING OUR CIVICS.

AIM: to get participants to introduce their civics, so that they could know a bit about each civic.

METHOD: Each civic met and answered the questions. They wrote their answers on newsprint and reported back to the whole group. The group asked questions of information.

QUESTIONS: the questions answered by the civics were:

1. what is the name of your civic?
2. how old is your civic?
3. how was your civic started?
- 4 how does your civic work? :
 - (a) what structures do you have?
 - (b) when do you meet
 - (c) what activities has your civic done?

REPORTS: the civics that attended were

Alex Civic Association (one year old)

Soweto Civic Association (5 years old)

Soweto Branches - Mzimhlope, Mapetla, Phiri, Pimville MEADOWLANDS,
- NALEDI, ORLANDO WEST.

East Rand People's Organisation (Daveyton Branch) (3 years old)

Mamelodi Action Committee (18 months old)

Vaal Civic Association (7 months old)

Q3 - The civics were started in different ways, in some areas activists from other areas helped local activists to start the civic, In other areas a mass meeting was called.

Q4 - Structures: most civics have an executive or steering committee, and some areas have branches and inter-branch meetings. Other structures are general groups dealing with topics like "Commuters" or "hostels"

Q4(b) The civics have regular meetings for the committees and groups, these meetings either once a week, or once every two weeks, or once a month depending on the group.

Q4(c) - the issues that civics have taken up include: transport boycott, rent, electricity and water prices, anti- community council campaign, school problems eg the high failure rate, housing, the Million Signature Campaign, Women's Day.

- the methods used include mass meetings; pamphlets; fund-raising; petitions; house meetings; door to door; using media like newspapers, UDF news and the Eye;
- other activities have been, helping to start a COSAS branch, setting up a woman's organisation, benefit society, classes for students.

ASSESSMENTS: This was a good introductory session, it helped people to learn about other civics, and it allowed people to share ideas and methods used. Some comrades would have liked more time for this session.

SESSIONS 2: EVALUATION OF ANTI- COMMUNITY COUNCIL CAMPAIGN

AIM: To evaluate the campaigns run by the different civics and to assess the gains and losses

METHOD: the civics answered the questions and wrote the answers on newsprint. They reported back to the whole group. There was a general discussion in the whole group after each presentation by each civic.

QUESTIONS: 1) What structures did your civic use to run the campaign
2) list all the different things your civic organised during the campaign
3) what was the % vote in your area? Why was this so big/ small?

The answers to the next four questions were not recorded on newsprint

- (i) how effective were the activities you organised ?
- (ii) what could have been done to reduce the % vote in your area?
- (iii) what gains did your organisation make as a result of the campaign?
- (iv) Now the BLA is enforced what do you plan to do?

REPORTS: 1) Structures: the civics used existing civic structures, in addition in some areas ad-hoc committees were formed involving other organisations in the campaign
the civics also used UDF news in the campaign.

2) Things organised during the campaign- these included public meetings; pamphlets, posters, workshops on the BLA, house- to -house, placard demonstrations, disrupting election meetings, press-statements

3) the percentage vote in each area and the reasons for their size were;
Mamelodi -28% - this was high because there was not enough publicity.and there were problems with venues.

Daveyton - 18,6% - this was low because of our work

Soweto - 10 % - this was high because people were opposed to Tebehali and

people believe Tshabalala's promises.

Vaal - 14% - This was low, it was a decrease since the previous election

Alex - there was no election because we persuaded the opposition parties to dissolve so we won before the elections.

To make the campaign more effective we should have had more house to house meetings, also we should have won the churches onto our side - this could have helped us with venues, Better planning and evaluation throughout the campaign would have made things better.

In the campaign we gained experience. We politicized people and allowed them a chance to voice their grievances, this boosted the civics and in some areas helped to build stronger civics. Also we formed links between different organisations. The problem is that many of these gains were not consolidated because there was no follow-up.

The next tasks are to destroy the Black Local Authorities and to strengthen our civics.

ASSESSMENT: Many comrades found this session very useful, because they could learn from their own and each other's experiences. Also this session pointed out the need for consistent work and planning, not just work during a campaign.

SESSION 3: HOW DOES OUR STRUGGLE FIT IN WITH OTHER STRUGGLES?

AIM: To bring out the links between the struggle over issues like Rent/ Electricity etc in our civics and (i) the struggle of civics in "Indian" and "Coloured" areas
(ii) The struggle of our people in the rural areas
(iii) the political struggle against the new constitution and the Koornhof Bills.

METHOD: We had a panel of speakers which were supposed to consist of; one person from a civic in an "Indian" area, one person from a civic in a "coloured" area, one or two people from a political organisation (TIC/Anti-PC) and one person from a rural area.

Unfortunately a few comrades could not come (although invited) and so the only speakers who turned up were a person from a civic in Lenasia (FRA) and one person from the TIC.

After they spoke we were divided into small groups (randomly chosen) in order to discuss these questions:

- (1) In what way is our struggle in African areas linked to the struggles of civics in other communities?
- (2) In what way is our struggle in the urban areas linked to the struggles of our people in the rural areas
- (3) We have heard all the loud noises being made about the new constitution. We have also heard the TIC people talk about their struggles against it. Do you think there is any link between our problems in our local areas and the new constitution?

We then had report backs on one question at a time - and discussion of the report backs. We finished off with a short summary of the links between our various struggles (in Civics/ student bodies / women's organisations/ unions etc)

REPORT: (1) the FRA and TIC people presented a summary of the structures of the FRA and its links to the political organisation. Both of these organisations exist in Lenasia and many activists work in both organisations.

The structure of the FRA was described as a number of residents associations from different parts of Lenasia that are linked together in a federation - the FRA. The six different residents associations often take up issues that would concern only the people in their area, but any issue that concerns the whole of Lenasia is taken up by the FRA as a whole.

The FRA has an executive; and a working committee of activists. It also has a number of womens/ youth / and cultural associations affiliated to it.

The FRA is in turn a participating member of CRAC - the Coordinating Residents' Action Committee. This body exists to bring together civic organisations from all over the Witwatersrand - but at the moment only civics from the "coloured" and "Indian" areas are participating

The comrades explained that they see a separation between the type of struggle fought by a civic and those fought by a political organisation like the TIC. They feel that a civic has the potential to mobilise a broad base of people in the community around some of their immediate problems ie rent/transport/ poor living conditions etc.

The role of the political organisation is to bring out the political content of these basic struggles and to make sure that these struggles are coordinated into an assault on the State at all levels - local as well as national.

Those activists who have this level of political understanding would involve themselves in civic affairs with a view to ultimately politicizing these local struggles via the TIC.

It was stressed that although the civic was seen as a very important site of struggle, it was not to be confused with a political organisation. Political struggles were often based on the mobilisation that had been achieved on a civic level, but a civic is not a political organisation and should not be confused with one.

(2) There was some discussion around the issues raised by the TIC/FRA comrades. One of the issues raised was whether the same kind of arrangement should/could exist in African areas. Was there a need for an organisation like the TIC that could deal with more directly political issues? Was the UDF the type of organisation that could deal with these issues in African areas?

This led to some discussion about the nature of the UDF as a "front". Some people felt that we should not try to compare the Lens situation too closely with the situation in many African areas. There were different conditions that may require different types of organisations to deal with them.

This discussion continued after the group discussion and led us into discussing the UDF. By this stage it was quite late and so we decided to finish off with a short talk / summary by Mike and then go straight into the discussion on the UDF and its relation to Civics.

Mike's talk tried to summarise a lot of what had already been discussed. He pointed out that we need to try and understand the links between the struggles in different areas in terms of the government's strategy in those areas.

When we try to draw the links between the struggles of youth / women / trade unions / civics / political struggles etc - we must stress the way these problems are caused by a united strategy on the part of the enemy.

The problems we face in youth organisations, in civics, in rural areas, in trade unions in political struggles are all linked because they are all caused by the government in its attempts to reorganise oppression in our country.

He went on to explain this: The government is now forcing all our people to register as homeland citizens. It is pushing all the homelands to accept independence as soon as possible.. In this way it is trying to 'get rid ' of all the Africans in SA. Our people are now going to be treated as foreigners (Transkeians, Vendas etc) in South Africa. This will help the government to claim that it is a democratic government that represents all the people of SA. As there will no longer be any African people in SA (they will all be in or from Bophuthatswana / Venda / Transkei etc) - there won't be any problems with the fact that they are excluded from running the country.

At the same time the government is now going to allow "Indian" and " Coloured " people to come into parliament as its junior partners. It will be able to say that all South Africans are now represented in parliament and all South Africans can now run the country together. At the same time it has made sure that it will remain in control of things and that the white government will still dominate as before.

At the same time the government is trying to solve the problems of the millions of people that will remain in the urban areas. These people cannot be sent off to the homelands because they are needed in the industries in "white" SA. At one stage the government thought that it could send all the African people to the homelands and only allow them to come back as migrant workers when they are needed.

When it became clear that this would cause too many problems for big business in the urban areas, the government changed its plan. It is now trying to separate off a small group of urban people - from the large majority of rural people and migrant workers.

All our problems at local level (poor housing, lack of recreational facilities etc) come from the fact that the government never intended that we ^{should} stay in the urban areas. We were all supposed to be temporary workers, so it was "not necessary" to spend a lot of money on the urban townships.

Now that the government has changed its plan, it has decided that those of us who are to be allowed to stay in the urban areas will now have to carry the cost of improving our townships. After many, many years of milking us of all the work we can do - without even building decent houses for us - the government has now decided to do us a favour. It will now allow us to stay and become "privileged urban blacks" as long as we pay for these privileges ourselves.

There are many other things happening at the same time in schools etc. The point is that all these different problems that we face in different areas are all as a result of the governments new TOTAL STRATEGY. They believe that in this way they can solve all the problems that they are having at the moment and that oppression will be able to continue for the next 1 000 years.

The only way to oppose them effectively is if we make sure that our struggles are united. The struggles on the youth front, the womens front, the union front, the rural front and the civic front must all be linked together and united in ^a common attack on oppression and exploitation.

ASSESSMENT: This session would have been a lot better if the comrades from the rural areas and the "coloured" are civic had been with us. This would have given us a far wider range of experiences to discuss and compare.

(ii) The session raised a lot of questions that needed much more discussion and were certainly not answered properly. But they were useful because we began to discuss them and they can be taken up again - in our civics and in other education sessions.

(iii) although a lot of participants responded positively to the session - it also was quite confusing for a lot of people. It seems to be one area that needs a lot of attention in the future.

SESSION 4: WHAT IS THE UDF AND HOW DO CIVIC ORGANIATIONS FIT IN?

AIM: To examine the UDF in order to understand what a UNITED FRONT is and how civics fit in.

METHOD: This changed from what we had planned as the UDF media committee and the MSC organiser were included in the session. We were also running very late so the planned talk and discussion were changed into a brief introduction to the

the media presentation and the Million Signature Campaign.

REPORT: Comrade Kehla from the media committee presented an assessment of the media used by the civics during the Anti- CC campaign(We have attached it to this report) He also made it clear that although a lot of good media was produced during the campaign very little media has been produced by civics since the Campaign. He stated that although the UDF committee could not undertake to produce media for civics , - nor could it finance media for the civics, it could help in the training of people within the civics so that media could become an ongoing part of our organisations.

Comrade Murphy told us about the Million Signature Campaign and how few signatures had been collected. He pointed out that one of the aims of the campaign was to build up the affiliates - not to distance them from their work. But in order for this to be done - affiliates had to think seriously about the best way of approaching the campaign within their own organisations.

In the discussion that resulted, it became clear that very few civics had really managed to clear up what their relations to the UDF was. In some areas people feared that the UDF was trying to take over things in the organisation. People ended up by saying that this problem was a serious one that had to be dealt with as soon as possible - but that it should also be dealt with carefully so as not to cause more problems.

ASSESSMENT: We did not really achieve our aim of examining the UDF and how our civics fitted in. We did not even touch on the question raised during the previous session; ie. Was the UDF a "political organisation" that could play the same kind of role in the African Areas that the TIC plays in "Indian" areas. Although many people felt that this was not so - the issue was not really discussed. This was partly due to a lack of time, and too many other issues being raised.

This issue must be tackled again in future education events or within our organisations.

SESSION 5: THE FILM

AIM: Entertainment and also ^{to see} something related to the struggle if possible.

REPORT: We showed the film "the Fifth Offensive" which was about the struggles of the partisans in Yugoslavia (under Marshall Tito) against the Nazis in the second world war.

We had some problem with the projector , but we eventually fixed something up and showed the film. We did not have any organised discussion after the film

ASSESSMENT: The film was good in that it gave people a feeling for struggles that have occurred in other countries. We did not discuss it; which was a pity. In future

we should try and get the kind of film or slide-tape show that can be both entertaining and are worth discussing. Films can be very effective in giving information and creating a more realistic way of understanding a situation.

SESSION 6: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

AIM: A general brainstorming session to get ideas on what civics could do now that the campaign is over. To try and focus the ideas brought up in previous sessions ; especially the session evaluating the campaign and the session linking civic struggles to other struggles.

METHOD: At the start of the session it was made clear that NO DECISIONS COULD BE MADE for civics at this meeting.

People were divided into groups and discussed the question.

The groups reported back to the plenary .

QUESTION: We have been discussing the anti- CC campaign and its links to other struggles and our role in the UDF. Keeping this in mind

What do we need to do in our civics?(Please list all the ideas)

REPORTS :(1) We need to strengthen our civics:

-get more members

leadership training and skills training

- work out program of action based on issues facing us.

-know our limitations and don't promise the impossible

-follow up the anti-CC campaign

-have regular house meetings

(2) Comrades must be disciplined

-we must be democratic and consistent

-we must be frank , fair and responsible

-we must practise what we preach.

(3) The work of civics need to be coordinated

- perhaps through the UDF

-perhaps through an office for civics

(4) Civi must coordinate with other organisations and groupings

-churches, taxi associations, hostels, sporting organisations
cultural organisations, artists etc

-these groups should be involved in our work

(5) Open an office

-for advice work

-so people can know where to reach us

-for a regular venue for meetings

(6) Advice work

-Legal aid, health advice, rehabilitation for criminal

- be able to refer people to other advice centres.

(7) Propaganda

-newsletter

(8) Start mutual benefit societies (eg Stokvels)

(9) Educational work

-investigate needs

-run educational events

-prepare material

(10) Cultural and recreational societies linked to the civics should be set up

(11) Projects relevant to the communities

-creches

-literacy programmes

(12) Propagate UDF values

(13) politicize people

-symbolize the links in our struggle eg by using different speakers like students, workers etc on platforms

(13) Expose powerlessness of local government using day to day issues.

ASSESSMENT: This session was useful to raise possibilities, and again emphasised the need for ongoing work between campaigns It was also helped as a lead in to the next session.

SESSION 7: SKILLS SESSION

AIM: To look at how to set useful goals and to plan, and to show why this is important

METHOD: Input, then a discussion in the big group
Practise of planning in the small groups.

INPUT: Looking at the ideas from the last session we can say that they are all goals that we can work for. Some of these goals are very general and won't really help us to plan our work. Eg the goal "To politicize our people" is not very useful as a goal because it does not really tell us what to do, or how to do it. With this kind of goal we can do very little work and still say that we are "politicizing our people"

There are certain things we can do to make our goals more useful:

(1) we must set goals that we know we can achieve. So a goal like "destroy the BLA" is not really easy for a new and small civic to achieve. But a goal like "Get 10 new members" is possible

(2) The goal must be set in such a way that we can assess it. After we have worked for a goal we must be able to say whether we have succeeded or failed. So if our goal is to "educate our members" we can't really know if we have succeeded or not. But if our goal is "to run a workshop on the BLA" we can assess it. We can assess whether the

the workshop happened, how many people attended it, if they learned a lot and if they joined the civic.

(3) When we set goals we must set a time limit , otherwise the work can go on for a very long time with nothing being achieved. The time limit will help us to be disciplined in our work. Examples of time limits are " have house meetings every week" or "run a seminar in the next month".

(4) When we set goals, we must be democratic and make sure that everyone agrees with the goal. We must make sure that the group is committed to our goal . If we don't have the group's commitment we will not get the work done.

(5) The goals we set must be specific. They must describe what we want to do. A goal like " Hold house meetings with residents every month" is more specific than a goal like "make contact with residents"

GROUP DISCUSSION:

How can we improve a goal like "Strengthen our civics"

We can make it more specific: "increase the number of members in our civic" , "run workshops to educate our members"

We can also build in time limits " Recruit ten new members every week"
"run workshops once a month"

This goal is achievable, if we work hard; We can assess if we succeed or fail, by asking if we have recruited new member, or held monthly seminars; There is time limit; and the group is committed to it, everyone thinks it is a good and important goal. And finally we can say that it is specific. All these things make it a useful goal.

INPUT: How to plan

Once we have set our goals we must plan HOW we will carry them out

(1) We must be clear exactly what we want to achieve - this is in terms of both our long term goals and the specific goals we are working for

(2) We then get suggestions of all the possible ways we could work for this goal. After listing all the ideas, we choose the best ones.

(3) Check out : can we do this?

Do we have time ? money ? people ? resources ?
if we don't, can we find them somewhere?

(4) Work out all the tasks we need to do

plan WHO will do each task

WHEN will the tasks be done

WHERE will we do all this

Then talk about:WHAT will we do if this plan DOESN'T WORK ?

(5) Plan ^a time to evaluate, during the work ' and after the plan has been carried out.

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