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Book 19 (13)

MINUTES OF THE FIRST NATIONAL GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE UNITED
DEMOCRATIC FRONT HELD ON THE 6th and 7th APRIL 1985 at
AZAADVILLE, TRANSVAAL.

SATURDAY : 6th APRIL 1985

Regions Present :

Transvaal (including Transvaal rural areas); Natal; Border;
Western Cape (including Western Cape rural areas); Eastern Cape
Orange Free State. and Northern Cape.

Session One:

1.1 Opening Address

By President Oscar Mpetha.

Comrade Mpetha welcomed all delegates and thanked them for attending the conference. He expressed sadness at the fact that the other Presidents, Comrades Archie Gumede & Albertina Sisulu and our other NEC members and comrades are sitting in jail and cannot share his joy in attending the first National General Council of the UDF.

Comrade Mpetha stated that the crises which the South African Government had experienced on 24th August had intensified through the clear rejection of the "New Deal" and the current struggles being waged against it. He also saluted those whose lives were taken in these struggles, those who are in detention and in jail.

Comrade Mpetha reiterated that the Apartheid Regime and their puppets had to take responsibility for the state of civil war in which our country is gripped. He warned that our peoples' anger is increasing because their legitimate demands are being met with naked violence from Botha and his junior partners. Also, that these wanton acts of murder, harassment, detention and imprisonment will not deter our people in their march to freedom.

Comrade Mpetha delegated each delegate with the responsibility to participate fully in discussions and to conduct themselves in such a way that the NGC will lay the basis for a programme

of action which will give life to our NGC theme :

From Protest to Challenge From Mobilisation to Organisation.

This would ensure yet another step towards a South Africa where THE PEOPLE SHALL GOVERN!

1.2 Standing Rules:

The following standing rules were accepted as guidelines for the NGC :-

a) Regions will have the following numbers of votes :

Transvaal - 43 votes

Natal - 50 votes

W. Cape - 56 votes

Border - 28 votes

E. Cape - 28 votes

N. Cape - 11 votes

OFS - 15 votes

The NEC will be empowered to review this. However, consensus will be sought as far as possible.

b) A person will be allowed to speak only once on a topic. The mover and seconder of a motion will be allowed the right to reply.

c) In the event of a debate, equal time will be allowed for the different points of view.

d) Delegates were to use English as far as possible but they should feel free to use any other language.

1.3 Keynote Address:

The keynote address was delivered by Comrade Curnick Ndlovu. Comrade Ndlovu is listed and his speech may not be quoted.

The chairperson thanked Comrade Ndlovu. The NGC agreed that delegates will only ask questions on matters which they wished to seek greater clarity on and that indepth discussion of the keynote address and secretarial report should take place in the different commissions which will allow for greater participation.

Comrade Ndlovu was asked to explain:-

- a) the task of the national democratic forces in organising the African majority for national liberation;
- b) the balance of forces in the rural areas.

Point (b) was referred to the commission on rural areas and Bantustans.

In response to Point (a), Comrade Ndlovu explained that the African people formed the overwhelming majority of our nation and that they suffered the most oppression and exploitation in our country. For these reasons, the struggles of the African masses had to be central feature of our struggle for liberation. The explanation was accepted.

1.4 Secretarial Report:

By Comrade Popo Molefe.

(Copies were distributed at the NGC).

Clarification was sought on the following:-

- a) Whether late responses to rapid intensification of mass struggles displayed a weakness within the UDF.
This was referred to the commission on the organisational aspects of the Front.
- b) The alternative structures which the democratic movement has to develop.
Comrade Molefe explained that this referred to democratic organisations operating outside the framework of the government. He stressed the need for these to become the organisations of the people through which they could determine their own lives.
- c) The effects of the Kennedy visit.
Comrade Molefe explained that Senator Kennedy's visit had not been a UDF campaign and was therefore not evaluated in his report. It was agreed that we need to develop a clear approach to matters like these.
The matter was referred to the commission dealing with UDF's International Relations.
- d) How the UDF's ability to reach our people was affected by the fact some trade unions were not affiliated to the UDF.
This was referred to the commission on the UDF & The Working Class.
- e) How to deal with assaults on UDF members and supporters by community councillors in Natal.
This was referred to the commission on repression.

f. It was pointed out that 189 women had been arrested in New Crossroads in the Cape during a campaign against rent increases and that more than 20 people had died in the Crossroads struggle against Forced Removals. Comrade Molefe agreed that this was a serious omission and apologised.

The NGC Adjourned for lunch at 1.30.

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Session Two:

2.1 NGC re-convened at 3.00 pm and broke up into seven (7) commissions:-

- i) The Education Crises
- ii) Repression
- iii) Tri-Cameral Parliament & Black Local Authorities
- iv) The organisational aspects of the UDF
- v) Labour & Working Class issues
- vi) International Relations
- vii) Bantustans, Rural areas & Forced Removals.

2.2 Reports of Commissions:

2.2.1. International Relations

- The broadest possible consultation should take place.
- The UDF should initiate and maintain such relations in so far as it advances the struggle against Apartheid
- The UDF needs to retain its anti-imperialist character in such relations
- Further discussion was needed on the strategies and tactics we need to employ.

2.2.2. The Education Crises

- Crucial issues identified were the struggle for democratic representation for students which had to be linked to social & political representation; poor conditions at educational institutions, victimisation of progressive teachers and students
- The role of the UDF was to form co-ordinating structures for students, parents and teachers in all

regions. Such structures should not have arbitrary decision-making powers.

- The UDF should popularise the Education Charter campaign and encourage its affiliates to participate in it.
- We should also oppose the use of the SADF in our schools
- More attention should be given to organising teachers

2.2.3

Organisational Aspects of the UDF

- A need existed for on-going, national co-ordinated training programmes. This would sharpen the analytical skills of our members and enable and assist us to develop adequate strategies. It will also contribute to a common understanding and minimise conflict.
- REC and NEC activities and portfolios needed to be streamlined to ensure more efficient functioning.
- Specific portfolios will ensure even participation and avoid over extension
- A permanent national working committee needs to be formed to ensure an even understanding within the Front.
- In order to strengthen organisations, care had to be taken to involve all organisations in our programmes. Resources had to be made available in weak areas. The process of strengthening has to work both ways. Organisations must take responsibility for strengthening themselves and the Front through campaigns. Organisations must take more initiative in terms of UDF campaigns and their participation within it.
- High profile activities were necessary, but should not become a substitute for building solid organisation.
- In terms of our programme of action, we need to have a clear strategy to draw in non-affiliates; Our demands should be clear in each campaign and our theme and its implications must be internalised.
- A code of conduct can ensure discipline and build greater maturity and comradeship.

2.2.4

B.L.A. and Tri-cameral Parliament

- Very little time was spent on discussing the tri-cameral parliament

- Gains made in these campaigns (particularly the anti-BLA) were that these structures were totally discredited and people's political awareness was raised. Democratic local organisations were recognised as representing the people.
- Repression and lack of venues in the townships presents some problems in developing organisations as alternatives. In terms of our programme of action we need to develop a better understanding of community organisation to cater for the political and social needs of our people (eg : Advice Offices).
- Unrepresentative local structures must be destroyed and authorities must be forced to liaise with the democratic organisations.
- Political rights of the African people must become a central focus of the UDF work
- A resolution condemning the Informal Black Forum must be drawn up
- It is almost certain that sections of the Immorality Act and the Mixed Marriages will be scrapped in an attempt to give credibility to the tri-cameral parliament. The scrapping of these laws will not improve the quality of life of our people, nor will it grant them full political participation
- A peoples' judicial commission should be established to record the crimes of collaborators
- Whites must be encouraged to join the extra-parliamentary struggle.

2.2.5

Repression

- State repression is increasing and is both subtle (eg: evictions, loss of jobs, misinformation, banning meetings) and naked (eg: shootings, community councillors, vigilantes) to kill extra-parliamentary forces so that their puppets can operate freely.
- In response to repression we need to:
 - draw more people and organisations into our activities;
 - information and advice centres should be set up to counter disinformation; International pressure must be intensified through constant contact and information;
 - supporters of apartheid must be pressurised and exposed;

activists should be more disciplined and security conscious; Education and development of leadership must take place; Organisations must be strengthened and broadened and deepened to survive a total clamp-down on the UDF; Regionalism and sectarianism must be overcome; activities must be more wide-spread; People must be educated about their legal rights and affidavits on repression must be drawn up.

- Repression must become an issue around which we mobilise and organise our people
- We must demand the unconditional release of all detainees and educate people about the laws under which people are charged.

2.2.6 Labour & Working Class Issues

- Our programmes must address the issues facing the working class
- Many workers are not part of the progressive trade unions. This placed a particular responsibility on community organisations. Attention must be paid to the struggles of unemployed workers (eg: UIF; the improvement of benefits, bulk buying schemes; etc).
- Education on the South African economy and related matters like unemployment, must take place within the UDF
- We need to develop a clear definition of working class leadership
- We must encourage the participation of people without formal education and skills, particularly in affiliated trade unions
- UDF must encourage the formation of one Trade Union Federation in South Africa.
- A labour sub-committee should be formed to deepen relations with affiliated and non-affiliated trade unions

2.2.7 Bantustans, Rural Areas & Forced Removals

- Vast sections of the rural areas are Bantustans
- Lack of resources, severe repression and ethnic divisions are serious problems

- UDF should embark on a national anti-Bantustan campaign to promote national unity against ethnic divisions
- The link between Bantustans, pass laws and influx control must be stressed
- Serious attempts must be made to reach out to migrant workers
- The campaign against forced removals must be waged more systematically
- UDF volunteers and organisers must move into areas facing forced removals and help to build democratic organisation
- we must develop better working relationships with and an understanding of all organisations operating in such areas.
- Training for rural organisers must take place
- Women form the majority in rural areas and must be organised
- Experiences must be shared amongst communities. A UDF anti-Forced Removals committee; Projects and Advice Offices needs to be considered.
- Education on how to resist state repression must take place
- We must ensure that more information about events in rural areas can be made available
- The church in such areas must become more involved. The formation of Ministers Fraternal must be encouraged.

2.3 Paper on the Cost of Living:

By Comrade Amanda Kwadi.

Comrade Kwadi pointed out that many of the struggles which are currently being waged by our people were related to the rising cost of living. She predicted an ever-increasing^{rise} in the Cost of Living and emphasised that it was a priority for the UDF and its affiliates.

Comrade Kwadi also outlined how the high cost of Apartheid is forced onto our people i.e. through price increases (eg: petrol) and by cutting subsidies (eg: on bread).

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The NGC was urged to find practical ways of linking current struggles into a Cost of Living campaign which will link economic struggles to political demands.

Conference adjourned for Supper at 6.45 pm.

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2.4 NGC re-convened at 9.00 pm.

Regions went into caucus to discuss:-

- i) Reports from commissions
- ii) Resolutions in accordance with such reports
- iii) Programme of Action
- iv) Recommendations to in-coming NEC

Draft resolutions committee consisting of one rep. per region; as well as a committee to look at proposed amendments to the national working principles, was set up.

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SUNDAY : 7th APRIL 1985

Session Three:

Regional caucuses continued. NGC was re-convened at 12.30 pm.

3.1. Resolutions

The resolutions committee submitted draft resolutions as amended by regional caucuses.

Clarification was sought on:-

- i) UDF membership & service in the SADF. NGC agreed that persons serving in the SADF will not be allowed to be an office bearer of the Front, nor serve in any official capacity in it.
- ii) The entire content of the resolution on women. The resolution was read.

Resolutions on the following aspects were unaamously accepted: Detentions and the Treason Trial, Banning of the UDF and affiliates in the Bantustans, UDF's international relations, Trade Unions, Unemployment, Forced Removals, Rural Areas, Militarisation, Women, Black Local Authorities, Tri-Cameral Parliament & Black Forum, Citizenship, Imperialism, USA Imperialism, International

Year of the Youth, Education, Namibia and New Zealand Rugby Tour.

(The full text of these resolutions are in the NGC booklet sent to all regions).

Regions submitted recommendations for a Programme of Action. This is to be finalised at the first NEC Meeting.

Copies of the draft amended Working Principles were submitted to regions.

NGC Adjourned for Lunch at 1.20pm; and was resumed at 2.45 pm.

3.2 Amendments to National Working Principles

The draft amended working principles were read.

Clarification was sought on :-

- i) The motivation that NGC meets every two years.
It was explained that NGC can meet more frequently if necessary.
- ii) The necessity for a National Working Committee. It was explained that this would facilitate broader discussion and understanding in our ranks.
- iii) The position of National Organiser.
NGC agreed that this position should be more clearly defined by the NEC and therefore not included in the National Working Principles.

Acceptance of the National Working Principles as amended at the NGC on 7th April 1985 was moved by Transvaal and seconded by Natal. This was unanimously accepted by NGC.

(Copy of these National Working Principles is included in the NGC Booklet).

3.3 Financial Report:

By Comrade Trevor Manuel (Acting National Treasurer).

Comrade Manuel reported that it was impossible to submit an audited financial report because both national treasurers were imprisoned facing charges of treason.

The Security police had also confiscated National, as well as some regional, financial records.

NGC accepted the explanation and agreed that our lawyers be instructed to demand the return of all UDF documentation from the security police. Comrade Manuel was given permission to comment on the general administration of Finances within the Front. The following points were made:-

- The question of finances is a delicate one for all political organisations. Proper administration and accountability is of utmost importance
- Financial self-sufficiency would safe-guard our organisations and operations in the long run. Reliance on funds from Head Office minimised affiliate control over finances.

In terms of a future financial strategy, proper budgets will facilitate planned use of funds and undercut the tendency to overspend.

Acceptance of the financial report was moved by Border and seconded by Transvaal.

The report was unanimously accepted by NGC.

Session Four:

4.1 Elections for National Executive Committee

Comrades Laloo Chibba and Eric Molobe were called upon to act as electoral officers.

The out-going NEC was thanked for their outstanding contribution to the Front since its inception.

The following comrades were unanimously elected to Office:

National Presidents (Non- NEC Positions)

1. Comrade Albertina Sisulu
2. Comrade Archie Gumede

National Executive Committee

Executive Chairperson	: Curnick Ndlovu
General Secretary	: Popo Molefe
Publicity Secretary	: Mosiuoa Lekota
Treasurer	: Azhar Cachalia
Other Members	: Steve Tshwete

. : Zoli Malindi
: Mcebisi Xundu
: Edgar Ngoyi
: Makhenkesi Stofile
: Yunus Mohammed
: Trevor Manuel
: Mohammed Valli
: Derfick Swartz
: Jomo Khasu
: Titus Mofolo
: Oliver Mohapi

4.2 Statement from the NGC

A draft statement was read out by Comrade Lekota. After some discussion, the amended copy (included in NGC booklet) was adopted.

4.3 Acceptance Speech:

By Chairperson, Comrade Ndlovu.

On behalf of the newly elected NEC, Comrade Ndlovu thanked the NGC for the trust they had shown in those elected. He stressed that the UDF was facing tough challenges and that the NEC could only provide strong leadership with the assistance of all affiliates. He wished regions well in the implementation of a programme of action which will encompass our theme.

4.4 Vote of Thanks:

Heartfelt thanks was expressed for the contributions to the smooth running of the NGC made by the following comrades:

- The outgoing NEC
- Delegates
- Azaadville Community
- St. Mary's Cathedral
- Mr Carrim, the caretaker of the Azaadville community Centre
- Mr Saloojee, the cook
- caterers and volunteers from the Transvaal region.

4.5 The NGC was closed at 4.35 pm with the singing of the National Anthem

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