

Adopted by the Transvaal Region

TVR region: C-13

Bab. 1

FEDERATION OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN, P.O. Box 10876, Johannesburg.

Suggestions for the organisation and development of Women's Clubs

The Federation's tasks are two-fold: firstly it is our duty to unite women of all races in militant protest on issues affecting women and children; and secondly it is our task to create a body of "informed, active and militant women."

Both the Transvaal and the National Executive Committee Reports have given the lead on the Women's Clubs, and we have adopted these reports. We are now bound by our resolutions and reports:

"The task of the Federation must be to assist in the development and expansion of these clubs, to maintain them in the close solidarity of the Federation, to stimulate their growth, and through them to educate and prepare women to play their full role in the community, in the struggle for the fundamental rights of their children, and for the ending of all racial discrimination"(N.E.C. Report.)

We must expect to be judged as an Executive by our own efforts to implement our resolutions and reports. Our resolutions must not be allowed to become paper resolutions - and we ourselves must not become "paper dolls!" The Transvaal Region has already 27 affiliated "Save Our Families Associations" which are in fact Women's Clubs. This number is quite enough to start with if we are going to do a good job of organising them properly. I suggest that we should now give priority to their development, rather than to pressing for the formation of additional clubs. I believe that others will form themselves according to the success of these clubs that have already affiliated.

TYPES OF CLUBS

There are several possibilities in the types of clubs that will be formed. They may be in the nature of vigilance welfare committees, or sewing clubs, or knitting clubs, or possibly just study clubs, although study groups should actually be one of the activities of the clubs themselves. Or they may be formed as Anti-Pass Committees in the first place, as in Natal, but this does not, of course, restrict them to anti-pass activities only. They can function on a far wider basis. Or they can just be Women's Committees and clubs for a particular neighbourhood. These are just given as examples of some of the different sorts of clubs that could be formed.

MEMBERSHIP OF CLUBS

The basis of membership should, of course, be very wide, although the very fact that the club is affiliated to the Federation means that all members accept our constitution and our aims. It is however very important that there should be a proper membership, and that the members should pay a membership fee, no matter how small. I would suggest that the membership fee should be paid monthly, because this means that at all times the club knows who its members are, and avoids the accumulation of paper members. The Transvaal Executive might well consider having membership cards printed, which would provide for the entry of monthly payments. The name of the club could be written in and this would assist in the regular collection and payment of membership fees.

The keeping of accurate membership records is very important. It is true that the clubs must protect their members from possible intimidation by the police, and membership records must be kept safely, but this does not mean that we must sacrifice efficiency. We must be methodical and also security conscious.

CLUB PERSONNEL

Each club or association must, of course, have its own Executive Committee and officials, but it is most important that there should be an organiser for each club. This person need not be the Chairman or Secretary, but should be a person who has had some experience of clubs if possible, or at any rate of some organisation. Sometimes a school teacher or social worker has that experience, and there may be good church workers who could use their experience in keeping the club

activities going and making them attractive to the members. Indeed, there are probably women in every club who would be suitable, even without actual experience in the past. The Transvaal Executive's duty should be to arrange regular training conferences for the club organisers - perhaps also for the club officials.

CLUB MEETINGS AND FUNCTIONS

Meetings should be held at least once a fortnight, weekly if possible, but it is better to have a good fortnightly meeting than to have a poorly attended weekly meeting. If the clubs are alive and attractive, the members will come and will bring more members.

Functions are very important because this is the way to draw new members. While the original members of these clubs are mostly the 'political' women, we must keep on making the approach to non-political women.

FUND RAISING

This must be strongly emphasised. We must realise that affiliation fees cannot possibly provide for the needs of the clubs, or even for the needs of the Region itself. The annual income from 27 clubs is, after all, only £27, of which £13.10.0 must go to the National Executive.

There will be three types of fund-raising:

1. FOR THE FEDERATION AND THE CLUBS' DEVELOPMENT. We need full time personnel very badly and for this there must be funds. It might be suggested to the clubs that they could work on an organised plan. Two clubs every month should have a special fund-raising function, and then the plan could be spread over a whole year. If each club could raise £15 at its function, we should have enough for a fulltime organiser. This would not, of course, excuse the Transvaal Executive itself from the necessity to raise funds through Jumble sales, cake sales, parties, etc.

2. FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS WELFARE COMMITTEE and the Banished People. The Federation has undertaken to assist this Committee in its work for the Banished People, and we must take this commitment seriously. Again the plan suggested could be used, and a schedule worked out, either for the clubs separately, or for the clubs in a particular area, or both methods, to raise funds during a particular month for the banished people. For a start, I suggest that the clubs should ask their members to donate something from each member, and include in the roneo'd list, so as to build up the Christmas parcels.

3. FOR THE FUNDRAISING WEEK which is planned for the liberation movement as a whole. This is set for October 12th to the 18th, or thereabouts, and we must assist, because we are part of the general movement for the liberation of our country, and the future of our children, which can only be secure when all are free.

EDUCATION

It is the task of the Federation to bring political consciousness to its members, through the affiliated clubs and organisations. And political consciousness is really knowledge, knowledge of what is happening around us, and of local conditions; this is the real foundation of "political consciousness". Here in the Transvaal, our groups are called "Save Our Families Associations," and the women must make themselves aware of local conditions and difficulties, and all the issues that affect our families and our children. This, of course, covers a very wide field. It includes the following:

RENT (the difference between economic and sub-economic); PERMITS AND PASSES; CLINIC SERVICES; PRIVISIONS FOR CRECHES; SCHOOLCHILDREN AND "KEYSTRING" CHILDREN; BANTU EDUCATION SCHOOLS; PENSIONS - Old Age and Disability; CHILD WELFARE (including adoptions, etc.); LIGHTING, SEWAGE, TRANSPORT, etc; INFLUX CONTROL; WAGES AND UNEMPLOYMENT; LOCAL GOVERNMENT - Advisory Boards, Bantu Urban Councils, Municipal Councils; JUVENILE DELINQUENCY;

A study of these matters will lead to the understanding of the grievances and the local issues/^{on} which the women, led by the Federation, should take action.

We must also educate our women on the condition of women in other lands. This means the Protectorates, the African states, and also the countries in Africa which, like ourselves, have not yet gained their freedom. Then we must also look at the conditions in other countries, in America, Asia, Europe and Australia, and observe the struggles of the women there and their achievements.

HOW IS THIS TO BE DONE?

The Transvaal should consider the running of regular study conferences for the club organisers, every 3 months, and these should be planned for a whole day. Talks and demonstrations would be given on special subjects, so that the organisers would go back equipped for the building of their clubs. Instructions could be given on the keeping of club records. The conference should be strictly for training, and must not be too large. Perhaps separate conferences could be organised for other club officials. These study conferences would, of course, include sessions for political education as well, and discussion on current events. Possibly the Transvaal Executive might consider an initial one-day study conference for the Executive members, when there could be discussion and papers on club organisation generally.

This may seem a pretty overwhelming programme for the Transvaal, but we must realise that being on the Executive doesn't mean just attending meetings. It carries a duty to develop the organisation. It means constant work and sacrifice of our leisure time. Our executive consists practically entirely of working married women, and time is very scarce and precious, but we have accepted our positions on the executive and we must accept our responsibilities.

If the clubs develop as they should - and as they can develop - we can create a really worth-while women's organisation, which can proudly play its part in the political struggle, where we know that we must play our proper role, because we cannot reach our own goal of recognition for all women, until all people are free, until all people have fundamental rights. With the knowledge that the women in our clubs will gain, with the unity they will achieve, they will readily go forward with the rest of the liberation movement in the demand for a National Convention to lead to the universal franchise.

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