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THE PROPOSED UDF-ECC TOUR OF THE UNITED STATES - A PROPOSAL FROM JOHANNESBURG

The Problem Defined

The War Resisters League, the American Committee on Africa and the Clergy and Laity Concerned have already reached an advanced stage in their planning for the proposed UDF-ECC tour of the United States early next year. However, after initially welcoming, and in fact initiating the tour, the process from this side has been stalled. Last month the ECC National Committee suggested that the idea of a joint UDF-ECC tour should be replaced with the idea of separate tours, and sent the issue back to the regions for further discussion.

The Johannesburg ECC General Body discussed the idea and felt that the tour should go ahead, but that the National Committee's suggestion of some level of separation should be accepted.

Subsequent to the General Body meeting Laurie received a letter from Matt Meyer of WRL in response to his own letter which had explained ECC's reservations about the joint tour. Matt's letter (enclosed) sets out WRL's difficulties with the idea of completely separate tours and stresses the urgency of ECC making a decision on the matter. He mentions they have already started planning the details of the proposed tour - dates (March 5 - April 5), itinerary and so on. He also emphasises that a "'by chance' occasional meeting with UDF tour scheme will not work".

The Johannesburg ECC Exec therefore called an urgent meeting to discuss whether there was a way out of the dilemma and whether a compromise could be reached. The meeting was called at short notice and therefore cannot be said to be a Johannesburg General Body response. Rather, the proposal outlined below is representative of the majority feeling of this special meeting. It will be discussed by the Joburg GB next week.

The Dilemma

In our search for a solution our first consideration was obviously the interests of the Campaign - what possible losses could be incurred from such a tour, what gains we could make and whether any damage would be done to ECC by withdrawing from the tour. Secondly we looked at other considerations outside of ECC's immediate interests and finally on the basis of our analysis we attempted to find a solution.

Our understanding of the potential dangers of a joint UDF-ECC tour for ECC can be summarised as follows:

- 1). Negative publicity as a result of overt links with UDF.
- 2). Negative publicity as a result of being too closely connected with the ANC.
- 3). Being implicated in supporting disinvestment and sanctions.

The potential consequences of some or all of these dangers could be:

- 1). Right wing (APN-Type) publicity contributing in undermining our potential support base. Articles of a negative type in other papers could have an even more severe effect.
- 2). Publicity of this nature contributing towards alienating our more conservative membership; this having the effect of driving us closer to the "People's Camp".
- 3). The state using the opportunity to crack down further on ECC.

The potential gains from such a tour were seen to be:

- 1). Strengthening our ties with the Peace Movement and Anti-Apartheid Movement overseas.
- 2). International publicity on a larger scale than previously.
- 3). Increasing our understanding of the international scene.

The positive effects of these gains could be:

- 1). Using the publicity and strengthened ties to increase US support for our campaigns, and more significantly to provide us with solidarity and hence a level of protection.
- 2). Building our status as a major South African organisation.
- 3). Funding.

The one potential loss in not going (other than missing out on the potential gains) was seen to be the possible damage we could do to our relations with the WRL and other groups by withdrawing after having initiated the idea.

The potential ancillary gains can be summarised as follows:

- 1). For the WRL the tour is seen as a major way in which to build links between the US Peace

Movement and the anti-apartheid movement (the two major sections of the US progressive network). This link is seen as a way to strengthen a progressive cross-organisational alliance in the United States.

2). For the anti-apartheid movement the tour could provide an important link with the struggle in South Africa, would provide valuable information at a mass level about what is happening in our country and would help assert a progressive agenda within the anti-apartheid network in the United States.

3). The UDF NEC have agreed to send two reps on the tour and therefore presumably expect to make gains from it.

Assessing the Pros and Cons

In examining the potential losses which could be incurred by ECC in embarking on a joint tour our feeling was that the prime problem was not the link with the UDF per se. It was mentioned, for example, that ECC has several UDF member organisations, that Janet is both an ECC and UDF leader, that Benita is acting JODAC chair and a former ECC chair, the majority of ECC office bearers are past office bearers of UDF affiliates and that some of these facts have already been emphasised by APN and friends. Therefore in a sense the damage has already been done and, in itself, being linked to UDF on such a tour would make little difference. However, given our emphasis on not being seen as being part of the "People's Camp" we should not be actively encouraging this view of ECC.

More significant would be the question of being linked with UDF's activities in the United States - being implicated by their actions. If, for example, the UDF publicly met with the ANC or advocated sanctions would we not be implicated if the tour was seen as a joint one? This was seen as a strong argument for some level of separation of tours and relates closely to the two points below.

The question of the ANC was not, in itself, seen as a major problem. On three occasions during Gavin's tour he had to turn down engagements because of the presence of ANC members on the platform and this caused no real problems. Gavin discussed the proposed tour in detail with the three sponsoring organisations and there was a complete understanding of the necessity for ECC to keep its distance in this respect. Also, the tour is being planned months in advance and therefore the possibilities of chance platform meetings are slim. As Matt Meyer put it in his letter: "We are clear that ECC could not or would not share a meeting with any organisation that was not legal, or with any banned movement, even if the UDF at times would".

More of a danger, we felt, was the issue of disinvestment. With the exception of the Peace and Women's groups the issue of disinvestment would probably be the main one for most of individuals, groups and audiences we would be addressing. This would mean that on many occasions our reps would face questions on disinvestment, and perhaps would be encouraged to speak on disinvestment platforms. While the questions are no problem, avoiding sanction platforms could be more tricky.

However, it must be borne in mind that even from the US side the tour is not being seen as a vehicle for divestment pressure. As Matt explained in his letter: "But to present the legal spectrum - black and white reps together - to activists here, would indeed be a first and an historic moment for the peace and anti-apartheid movement here to go beyond disinvestment towards direct links and support work. The myths of: the military, Black v White, Black on black violence, etc. could be addressed as never before".

(UDF-ANC-DIVESTMENT)

In each of these areas the potential dangers exist mainly in so far as they are used by the state, its surrogates, or the press. We therefore tried to assess the likely extent of "unfriendly" interest in this respect.

Our feeling was that the chances of major South African negative press interest were slim. The establishment press did not report much on Gavin's tour, and all that was reported was positive. For example it was reported in several papers that he addressed the UN, but never that he addressed divestment rallies. Likewise there was little negative publicity around the tours of Annemarie, Steve, Laurie and Steve, Janet, Ivan or Justin - at least in local papers.

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Council victory over the APN might make her and others think twice about launching a diatribe of that nature, we can not rely on this holding back state-linked groups from smearing us forever. After Gavin's tour the APN carried a brief defamatory report although this was drawn entirely from facts mentioned in a letter he sent which had been intercepted. Next time around she, or her informers, might be more awake.

Our feeling was that, where possible, we should avoid providing ammunition for the likes of Aida Parker. In the past we have found that the damage caused by these attacks has been considerable and we have had to go to great lengths to recover. While the APN only has a readership of 2 000 ultra-rightists, the spin-offs in terms of subsidiary publications reaches some of our potential support base. The fact that we are able to put up a good defence when these attacks occur does not remove our responsibility for avoiding situations which encourage these attacks.

While the effect on our membership is perhaps not great, if we are talking about getting to conscripts then this could be a significant factor in future. We should avoid situations therefore which might lead to the alienation of our potential membership.

Finally, any negative publicity of this nature could invite a state response. While it would be naive to think that a tour of this nature would cause the state to react, they certainly could use the opportunity to put the boot in. Obviously any action we embark on which could invite a harsh state response needs to be weighed up carefully against the potential gains.

One of the main potential gains we identified was the prospect of strengthening ties with the peace and anti-apartheid movements. We felt this was important, but not overly so. Through Gavin and Ivan's tours these links have already been made to some extent, although the tour agenda involves travel in many areas previously untapped by ECC and therefore offers the opportunity to make new contacts as well as strengthening old ties. Also, a feature of the proposed tour will be building contacts with women's groups which neither of the previous tours had done.

We felt these links to be important in two respects. Firstly, they provide us with support and solidarity when we face repression. The letters of support for detainees, the ambassadorial protests to the government, the interest of senators and congressmen, the protest activity in the United States and so on puts pressure on the authorities to ease off in certain respects. If nothing more it ups the cost of them cracking down on us. It was mentioned, for example, that the fact ECC hasn't been hit harder this Emergency might have something to do with the fact that we have established extensive international contacts.

Gavin and Ivan's tours attracted considerable US press, radio and TV interest. The proposed tour is expected to be far more high profile and therefore is likely to attract major US publicity. Because of the nature of the US media's interest in South Africa this publicity is likely to be entirely positive. Again this publicity provides us with a level of protection from the state because it means that any action taken against us will have an international audience. This publicity can also have the effect of building our status at home - meeting with senators, congressmen, governors etc can contribute to our image as a serious and important organisation if it is picked up on local news wires.

This also feeds into the second area where links with US organisations and individuals are important. To a certain extent they provide our membership with a level of encouragement and a feeling of not being alone. Again though, this should not be over-stressed. As we have already made contacts of this type this kind of support is not dependent in the proposed tour although the tour could certainly contribute to it. The same applies to the publicity.

Perhaps a more important gain from such a tour is the prospect of it being used to increase funding. Gavin's tour (which was not aimed at fund-raising) drew over \$12 000 (R28 000). Fund raising opportunities have been built into the agenda of this tour and

it could be used to raise large sums of money. Unlike other forms of support getting the money would be largely dependant on the tour going ahead. However, while ECC is not exactly flush at the moment, we need to bear in mind that foreign fund-raising is a sensitive area and we should be looking more towards finding local sources of revenue. Also, we do have reliable sources of foreign funding at the moment so there is no absolute necessity to tap new wells, although it would be nice.

Finally we have the question of what we can learn from the tour. While certainly new insights can be found in a tour of this nature, it needs to be borne in mind that the outside world is not new to us and the US in particular is a country which we are reasonably well acquainted with. Nevertheless, without doubt fresh and inovative ideas are waiting to be brought home.

The only potential loss in not going is the damage this might cause to our relations with the WRL, the rest of the peace movement and the ACOA and CALC. But WRL at least is a strong ally and while they would understandably be pissed off with us if we withdrew they would certainly not drop us.

However, there was a feeling that we had some level of obligation to the WRL. The idea of this tour came from ECC during Laurie and Pete's India tour in 1985. ECC raised the idea of a joint UDF-ECC tour and WRL started working on it immediately. Because of difficulties with funding the joint tour was not possible immediately and the WRL therefore proposed the idea of the March 1986 tour to prepare the way for the more high profile UDF-ECC tour. One of the main reasons they put so much energy into Gavin's tour was to use it to get funding and support for the UDF-ECC tour.

The proposed tour is being seen as a major part of WRL's agenda for 1987 and much of 1986 has gone into preparing for it. The advanced level of preparations is not the result of over-eagerness on WRL's part but rather a result of ECC's prompting. Until the last ECC National Committee the only thing holding preparations back was UDF support. Once UDF agreed to go on the tour WRL were given the go-ahead, and therefore Matt Meyer's surprise at our backing off is understandable.

But, on this issue our feeling was that we should not allow our "moral obligations" to act in "good faith" (by sticking to our previous agreements) to outweigh our primary political obligations, and therefore WRL's disappointment should not be a primary consideration.

Finally, we looked briefly at the "ancillary" gains that could be made from such a tour.

The gains for WRL, the US Peace Movement and the US anti-apartheid movement would be considerable. The value of the tour is being seen by all groups concerned as very high. They believe it can help build links between progressive blacks and whites in the United States and strengthen ties between the peace and anti-apartheid components of the American "left".

Aside from assisting the groups, coalitions and networks, the tour could also have the effect of playing an educative role in the United States - especially about non-racialism, white opposition to apartheid, opposition to the SADF, militarisation etc. In other words it has the potential to play a role in building the international component of our struggle.

If we withdraw from the tour or insist on completely separate tours (which would be tantamount to withdrawal) the UDF side of the tour will also be cancelled and the gains they could make from it will fall away. The UDF agreed to go on the tour after getting approval from allies abroad, and presumably they believe it could be of benefit to them. However, we felt that as ECC our prime consideration was ECC and not the UDF or the WRL or the international struggle against apartheid. While individual members of ECC might also support the UDF this cannot be allowed to direct ECC's decision making. Furthermore, UDF NEC agreed to the tour but were not particularly extatic about it. Cancellation would hardly be devastating for them.

wing propaganda and state attack outweighed the gains in terms of international support, funding etc. We felt we could survive without the extra money and added support and publicity, and that our obligations to WRL should not be over-stressed, but that if any of the potential negative consequences came to fruition it could cause lasting damage to our campaign.

On the other hand most of us felt that if the potential dangers could be lessened then the tour could be of value for ECC. We therefore needed to search for a compromise which both alleviated the dangers outlined above and at the same time fell within the aims of WRL - if we wanted the tour to go ahead - ie we had to bear in mind Matt Meyer's comment on the question on the seperation of tours: "I hope that it is more a question of legalistic and logistical manoeuvring than a cancellation. But a "by chance"occasional meeting with UDF tour scheme will not work".

Our feeling however, in our search for a workable compromise, was that we should rather err on the side of caution than take a reckless approach in order to ensure the tour remains alive. In other words if the WRL feels the "compromise" we suggest is not acceptable then the tour should be cancelled.

On the question of the "seperation of tours" we feel this should go beyond the level of appearances, while recognising that the tour will be cancelled if this is too absolute. A few suggestions in this respect are:

- 1). That WRL alone be the sponsor of the ECC side of the tour (ie at a formalistic level the ECC is hosted by the WRL while the UDF is hosted by the other organisations - or perhaps by all three). Two advantages of this would be that ECC could avoid the direct link with the UDF and that ECC would not be sponsored by a divestment group like the ACOA.
- 2). That the ECC and UDF arrive and leave a few days apart and that they don't hold joint press conferences on arrival or departure.
- 3). That the tour is not advertised as a joint tour.
- 4). That while we accept that at times we will speak together and make joint appearances, and that it might sometimes be necessary for us to travel together, we nevertheless avoid the appearance of being part of an identical package. Therefore, where possible, we need to stay with different people, speak to different groups and at times do seperate media appearances.

In general our feeling was that while the level of seperation need not be absolute, it should be large enough to enable us to argue that we were part of seperate packages and for this argument to be credible.

Secondly, on the question of appearing on ANC platforms or on platforms with ANC speakers our refusal should be absolute.

Thirdly, on the disinvestment question we should attempt to avoid appearing on platforms solely connected with the sanctions/disinvestment issue. Our appearance on any platform should be compatible with ECC-related issues such as conscription, militarisation, resistance to conscription, as well as with apartheid, non-racialism etc.

On this point, and also with regard to some of the suggestions in terms of the seperation of tours issue, we felt that we should set guidelines rather than water-tight rules for those who representing ECC. There will be many times when the judgement of the ECC reps will be more appropriate in assessing a situation than any hard-and-fast "rules" made back home - ie when to appear with the UDF reps and when it would be imprudent to do so, whether a particular meeting is too closely associated with the disinvestment issue and so on.

Our feeling was that rather than seeing the tour as a training camp we should make sure that the people we send are experienced ECC people who are familiar with public platforms and who we would feel absolutely confident about in making difficult snap decisions of significance to ECC.

feel that if we do this and we follow the "compromise" approach outlined above the tour of considerable value to ECC and the democratic movement and would not expose

4. 6. 1986

arest Laurie,

long and warm (but not quite hot, if you know what I mean) Fall turning into Winter, quickly now reminding us that 1987 will be a fast-paced year, that the '80's are turning into the '90's an is alarming rate.

age 3 of the N.Y. Times reports: "Leaving South Africa Increasingly one with it's Troubles" in re: IBM & GM, and I cannot help but shift quickly to business - my friend, confidant, dear Laurie.

stler spoke to Ivan Tom, he'll pass the message no, and Ian Linden for another message passed. Your letter arrived 0 days ago, not dated, but clearly fresh - straight from Graceland.

can I explain completely, the problems put forth by your letter? course I understand your problems (w/PPP and perceptions at that and the increasing attacks, etc.), but I cannot help but really feel that with a possible Aida Parker victory for ECC, and Dominique will on hold, you can only lose by backing ECC into the single issue alliance c-rner, away from your natural allies. If they want to ban that much, they'll ban you anyway. From that end, as I say, or ban the absolute need for the greatest possible political breath - (to the extent that this actually exists) would not be discussed and I and Gavin and I discussed (and must continue to discuss) and I and Gavin and I discussed ways of making the package acceptable for folks at home.

at from this end, my friend, it is absolutely impossible for us to a successful tour without putting ECC firmly in the context of the wider movement, which is led by UDF. Without UDF, American Committee Africa will pull out of the coalition immediately. Though Bayard would be thrilled, no significant Black leader - grassroots or governmental - would have high level meetings with you. Advances within the white mainstream (to the extent that this actually exists) would not be forthcoming. Ivan has tilted that field, and Gavin the more progressive end of it, but the next step must be with taken with your Black counterparts in the legal organizing sector.

on the other hand, a joint tour, as I and the WRL and the ACOA leadership would see it - would be a unique opportunity to present to the U.S. movement and people (for the first time in years and years) representatives of both African activists - the spectrum of people, Black and white - who are actually struggling legally within South Africa today. We are clear that ECC could not and would not meet with or share a meeting with any organization that was not legal, or with any banned movement, even if the UDF, at times, would. But to present the legal spectrum - Black and white representatives together - to activists here, would indeed be a first, and an historic moment for the peace and anti-apartheid movement here to go beyond disinvestment towards direct links and support work. The myth of: the military, Black vs. white, Black on Black violence, etc. could be addressed as never before.

Gavin

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Let me make clear that what we're envisioning and hoping for is a large scale "events" oriented tour. A meeting with the Mayors of Atlanta, Georgia and/or New Orleans, Louisiana, getting the key to the city, with special Senate and Congressional caucuses in Wash. D.C. / large meetings in NYC and San Francisco and elsewhere; some stops in the deep South; press conferences and cocktail parties, etc. etc. We've already started the planning since the go-ahead from Gavin last month, and as the days go by only more planning is being done. Tomorrow night there is an internal WRL meeting to discuss our role at the next coalition meeting, and to help plan for a special "Racism and Militarism" educational packet that we're producing for the tour. Next Monday another meeting with ACOA and CALCL will discuss fundraising, and will confirm cities and dates (which we've tentatively set, if o.k. by you, at March 5 - April 5).

So I need word immediately on what's on or off. I hope that it is more a question of logistical and logistical maneuvering than a cancellation. But a "by chance" occasional meeting with UDF tour scheme will not work. We'll hold off (maybe permanently) at printing UDF/ECC Tour stationery. But the tour package, from this end, needs to remain pretty much intact. Maybe folks (ECC?) need to travel in their individual capacity? Though even this I think, would be a drawback, and of course I and WRL would be disappointed if ECC couldn't come "officially" and in an organizational capacity.

There's much to be gained at this time as far as international solidarity. I hope that we can figure out a way out of this problem.

So much for hurried business. The book looks exciting. And the thought of you as close by as England is exciting, indeed. I've already passed the idea along to one good source, and will work on others in time. Marie and I are well, WRL is getting geared up, Susan S. is in Costa Rica, the New York Mets baseball team have won the "World" Series, and the November mornings are cold, even under my Indian shawl. Be well, my dear friend.

Till I hear your voice,

Love and Struggle,


Matt H.

Matt H.

P.S. - You all should have gotten a significant package, passed on to Beyers from Bill Scott here. It had some checks, and many letters of support from Sen. Kennedy, Bishop's Moore and Walker, etc. I'll check on this and to make sure it has been sent out. Keep your eyes posted, and if the worst has happened, I've got copies of everything, and could possibly get the checks re-written.

P.P.S. - Also in the packet was my new home telephone number, though all the old and safe addresses remain the same. Call me at 718-797-9589 in the wee hours, so's I know its you. Also, I've received a packet from you, several from Gavin & one from David S. Love to all.

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