

C99

Bew "C 99"

REPORT ON CIVIC WORKSHOP

PROGRAMME

Friday

9.00pm Supper
10.00pm Slide and Tape show on history of Alexandra

Saturday

7.00 am Wake up
8.00 am Breakfast
9.30 am Introduction
11.00 am TEA
11.30 Input on History and Nature of Civic struggles
1.00pm Lunch
2.00pm Group Discussions on Black Local Authorities
4.00 TEA
4.30 Report backs
5.30 Theory of Mass mobilisation and mass work
7.00 Supper
7.30 Continuation of discussion on mass work
9.30 Film Norma Rae

Sunday

7.00am Wake up
8.00am Breakfast
9.00am Group Discussion on Co-ordination
11.00am Report back on group discussion
12.00am Evaluation
12.30am Lunch

Introduction

FRA

Formed in 1981. Consists of a federation of residents association in 'Indian Areas', it has no formal membership. This is because different people become involved as a result of different activities. The present aim is to consolidate a core membership. Taking up the roads issue. The aim is to resuscitate the organisation

Leandra Action Committee

Formed in 1983. Result of resistance to the government's intention to evict residents from the township. In 1984, Leandra was reprieved. At present has three subcommittees: transport, education, and advice. At present there is a problem of resources and dependency on Johannesburg. There are no trade unions in the area.

Ratanda Civic Association

The organisation was formed in 1984. At this time there were no

organisations in the area. The first issue that was taken up was the rent increase and from there the community council issue. The organisation has no signed up members, but can get about 500 people to a meeting. Organisers believe they have the support of 80% of the residents. Presently taking up the LLA issue as the ERDB has announced that there will be BLA elections in the area.

Duduza Civic

Formed in October 1983. Issues it has taken up have been the rent increases and the sewerage masterplan. An interim committee was established and it started negotiating with the community council. At that time people were not ready for the organisation- this has now changed and we are issuing new membership cards. Present issue is the bucket system. We are having problems with harassment and venues for public meetings. Interim committee 10 people.

Orlando Civic

Formed early 1984. Issues it has taken up have been high rents and electricity. 15 members in the branch. They are trying to get the local councillor to resign. Plan is to organise house visits in order to protest against the councillors.

Mfolo Civic

Formed post 76. Issues taking up are roads, bridges and electricity. People are afraid to identify with the organisation. They are planning to break the area up into zones.

ERAPO

Membership of 1200. Branches in Thokoza, Watville, Davyton, KewThema, would like to have a branch in Katlehong and closer relationship with organisations in Tembisa and Duduza. Also planning a branch in Tsakane. Erapo won the scrapping of the rent increases in Davyton last year. Involved with the 'homeseekers committee' in Katlehong, as well as with the bucket system in Katlehong. In Davyton people engaged in a campaign against the rent increases, planning to take up a 'councillors must resign campaign.'

Alexandra Civic Association

Formed originally as the Alexandra Action Committee in April 1982. Participated in the bus boycott in early 1984, as a result many committee members detained for five months. Presently trying to bring parents and students together.

Tladi/Moletsane

30-40 members. people not responding well. At present the emphasis is on building activists and distributing pamphlets and newsletters.

History and nature of civic struggles

The paper presented is attached to this report.

The following points were made in the discussion that followed this paper:

1. We are not rooted deeply in the masses.
2. We preach unity, however there is very little unity and as a consequence, we have failed to unite people and therefore there is very little action. Action remains sporadic.
3. We are presently in an era when we need to mobilise people. but our activists have not got to the masses. In order to reach the masses we need to call meetings, one of the problems is that we cannot get venues to hold meetings. The masses are ready and aware, but they need to be activated, we therefore need to have mass meetings where we can get a mandate.
4. If we call mass meetings, we must have a reason, its not enough just to voice our grievances. The problems with mass meetings is that people see them as ends in themselves. So mass meetings should come in the form of a rally after the ground work has been done. Mass meetings cant be used for a discussion, but as a show of strength.
5. We talk of door to door work, but we have not achieved it.
6. People's participation in organisation fluctuates. They are happy after a demonstration, and then they leave when the excitement is over. This means that the spade work has to be done again and again.
7. Just responding to issues as they arise , kills our organisations. If there is a three month period when nothing happens, we will loose people. We dont have to wait for the government t to do something before we respond, there are constant issues in all areas all the time. The people also dont have a place to lodge their complaints. We must establish advice offices in our local centres.
8. The day to day issues can be dreary, we need to be creative and engage in discussion and develop exciting ideas.
9. Civic should also be trying to unite all community issues.

Group discussions

1. What are the problems residents face in the township?
2. What struggles have arisen due to these problems?
3. How are the masses responding now?
4. What has been the role of organisation in this situation
5. What is the mood of the masses now?
6. Does the mood of the masses match the strength of our organisation
7. What are the tasks facing our organisations?

Problems residents face

1. Increases in rents and service charges
2. Housing- too small and in a poor state of repair
3. Constant presence of police in the townships
4. Presence of councillors
5. Lack of transport and high fares
6. Insufficient schools and facilities
7. Poor amenities, bad roads, open drains, the bucket system clinics, health facilities, sporting and recreational facilities
8. Ignorance and low level of political consciousness
9. Evictions
10. Housing shortage,
11. Roads and electricity
12. Unemployment

2. Struggles arising from these problemsIssuesMethods

Rent

mass demonstrations, refusal to pay rents

Housing

confrontation with boards, demonstrations

Police

-> Mass action, atrocities exposed in media

and councillors

Transport

boycott of buses, delegations to transport companies, putco petition

schools and facilities

development of parent's committees,

poor amenities

development of civics, confrontation with

Ignorance/level of consc.

boards delegations and demonstrations

Water and electricity

Attempting to organise people

Demonstrations

3. How are the masses responding to this situation

1. The people are indepently angrey, they need to be organised, in order that this anger transformed into action.
2. Masses realised councillors not working for them, they are joining civics, and responding to calls to demonstrate aganist the BLA's - occupation of rent offices etc.

4. What role have our organisations played in this situation

1. Organisations provide a forum for expression of people's feelings therefore the role of our organisations is to look into ways to channel energy of the people
2. Civics are teaching people about the local authorities act, doing house to house campaigns and getting councillors to resign
3. Minimal role played by the civics , most of the struggles spontaneous and not well organised, (some exceptions)

5. The mood of the masses

1. Some apathetic, others defiant
2. Uncertainty in people's attitude therefore poor organisation of activists, need for research
3. Masses angry, but not an unorganised anger, spontaneous actions.

6. Does the mood of the masses match the strength or our organisations

1. No organisations fizzle out easily, people people dont have an ongoing platform in the form of organisations to express their anger, the responses are inconsistent because of poor organisational structures.
2. Our struggle is unevenly developed, this is due to the weakness of our organisations. What is the reason for the present situation? is it that the weakness of our organisations means that the struggle of the masses surpasses our organisation, or is this the natural result of mass action

7. Tasks facing our organisations

1. People need to move, we must make an assessment of the people's expectations
2. We must build our organisations by teaching people about the nature of our society; teaching them organisational skills; improving communication with the masses; developing a common understanding amongst leadership and activists; increasing discipline and developing a strong identification and commitment to the organisation.

Questions on co-ordination

1. Have you had contact with civic organisations outside your area?
2. What has been the nature of this contact?
3. Is there a need for co-ordination of civics, if yes, why?
4. What form should it take and why?

Summary of discussionContact in the past

Informal, incidental contact

No working together

Individuals from organisations played a supportative role

Formal contact through UDF

Some examples of contact, eg Erapo and Duduza over the bucket issue

Need for co-ordination

Share information

strengthen other organisations

Consolidate our ranks and create greater unity

common approaches and strategies

Common training programmes

share resources, skills cars, etc

Need leadership, research

Possible dangers

Could get caught up in co-ordination

Problems of ambitiousness of people who want to serve on national structures

Must not create dependency of weak areas on strong ones.

Forms of co-ordinationShort term

Ad hoc committee

Joint strategies and work

Focus on African areas

Necessity to bring in coloured and indian areas

Take a report of this workshop to other areas

Look at the Transvaal region

Bring together people from different regions,

Consolidate action committees and form organisations where none exist

Long Term

Transvaal wide civic structure

Resignation of BLA's

Evaluation

Content: very good

Attendance: not so good

Planning: should have had involvement of other organisations in planning, this would have created greater commitment

Time: people need to sleep over to avoid starting late

General: important step because brought people together

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