

Bew #C93

STATEMENT ON LAUNCHING OF THE UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT (WESTERN CAPE)

"I can safely say to the Nationalist government that the past is theirs, but the future is ours."

-- Oscar Mpetha, veteran trade unionist and community leader, after his election as President of the United Democratic Front in the Western Cape, Sunday, July 24.

The UDF in the Western Cape was launched at a conference in Cape Town on Sunday July 24. There were over 400 delegates and observers from about 20 big organisations in attendance. Among the organisations present were:

- * Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (CAHAC), with 20 affiliated civic organisations.
- * Cape Youth Congress (CAYCO), with 37 youth branches.
- * United Womens' Organisation (UWO), with 19 branches.
- * Western Cape Civic Association (WCCA), with 7 branches spread across the African townships of the Western Cape.
- * Islamic Council of South Africa, with 38 affiliated organisations.
- * Western Cape Traders Association, which has 2,000 members.
- * Congress of South African Students (COSAS), with 19 branches in the Western Cape.

The following organisations were also present: Inter-Church Youth, Azanian Students' Organisation (AZASO), The Ecumenical Action Movement (TEAM), Students Union for Christian Action (SUCA), National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), Young Christian Students, Muslim Judicial Council, Muslim Students Association, Media Workers Association of SA (MWASA), WPCC and the Thornhill Residents Association.

J. de Vries

These organisations adopted a Declaration which commits them to reject and resist the Constitutional and Koornhof Bills and to form a united front. The basis for the decision stems from the following beliefs:

1. That South Africa belongs to all who live in it.
2. That the government must be based on the will of the people and the people themselves must govern.
3. The belief in a single South Africa free from racial, ethnic and sexual divisions and free from economic exploitation, with a common citizenship for all.

The conference also endorsed the Declaration adopted at the Transvaal Anti-SAIC Congress and pledged to unite with Democratic Fronts in other centres. In accordance with this, it was decided to launch the UDF nationally in Cape Town soon.

A number of people who were considered to be symbols of unity were accorded the honour of patronage of the UDF Western Cape. Among them were Nelson Mandela, Allan Boesak, Sheik Nazeem Mohammed, Johnny Issel, Oscar Mpetha, Hassan Howa, Christmas Tinto, Amy Thornton, Andrew Borraine and Advocate Dulla Omar.

Together with Oscar Mpetha, President, other executive members elected were Christmas Tinto and Joe Marks, joint vice-presidents.

The UDF will campaign to ensure resistance to the Constitutional and Koornhof Bills by all people. This will be attained by organisations joining to form area committees and linking these regionally.

The keynote came from Oscar Mpetha, who said: "The Nationalist Party is in pieces because it is being threatened by our unity. The more we unite, the more they are frightened. One organisation one South Africa. UNITY IS STRENGTH!"

REVISED UDF STATEMENT ON REFERENDUM;

The UDF was formed to oppose and resist the Constitution and Koornhof Bills, and those processes that led to the present referendum. This is because every step that led to this referendum has been undemocratic.

This referendum misses the essence of the SA question. The real question is about SA is still whether apartheid and all that it implies is the right order of things for this country's people or not.

Starting with the Union Act in 1910, through the imposition of Republican status in 1961, up to the present 'new deal' trickery, our people have never been consulted by the government of their country.

It has always been decisions made by white people. The present referendum carries on that undemocratic tradition. It is a calculated step to create a false sense of democratic decision making. This will be used to legitimize the past, present and future policies of this minority white regime.

We assert that an acceptable and truly democratic constitution cannot be worked out in an atmosphere that is full of fear, mistrust and harassment of one section of the population by another. Such a constitution can only be worked out in an atmosphere that included the release of all political prisoners, the unbanning of the banned and restricted, and the return of all those forced into exile.

We call on our people to show once and for all that they are determined to control their own destiny by doing all in their power to halt the Constitution Act and Koornhof Bills.

The implementation of this Constitution Bill can only lead to a situation of deeper conflict in this country.

All of us must oppose this Constitution through the UDF Programme of Action.

REFERENDUM

The UDF was formed to oppose and resist the Constitutional and Koornhof Bills. We reject the entire process that led to this referendum. And we also reject and will oppose all processes which will be set in motion by this so-called new deal. Through the forthcoming referendum on November 2, the present minority government will seek to force upon the people of S.Africa a constitution that is not based on the will of the people.

This referendum misses the essence of the South African question in that it shifts attention away from Apartheid as such to its formal appearance. The real issue about S.Africa is still whether Apartheid and all that it implies is the right order of things for this country's people or not. Most white people and, to a lesser extent, sections of the voteless majority in the country have fallen into the trap of elevating the referendum and its pending outcome to the legitimacy of the past, present and future policies of this minority white regime.

We assert that an acceptable and truly democratic constitution can only be worked out in an atmosphere which is free of fear, mistrust and harassment of one section of the population by another. That includes the release of all political prisoners, the unbanning of the banned and restricted and the return of those who have been forced into exile.

In rejecting this undemocratic method of deciding on the future of the people of South Africa we call on our people to show once and for all that they are determined to control their own destiny by doing all in their power to halt the current process of Apartheid legislation.

In keeping with this call the UDF regional councils have been charged with the responsibility of working out schedules for the implementation of the programme of action which should culminate in regional mass rallies shortly before the implementation of the referendum and Black Local Authorities election.

Ours is a broad non-racial outlook which embraces everybody and we insist that it must be reflected in every decision and activity we engage in. Due to this and other considerations we addressed ourselves to the referendum question in a different manner, i.e. what can the UDF initiate in order to consolidate opposition to this Constitution Act, and all the legislation that is likely to flow from it. Our programme of action is a very clear response to this question.

NEWSPAPERS

Sunday Times, Daily Dispatch, Finance Week, The Friend and The Natal Mercury

Recently these newspapers and publications have come out in full support of the so-called new constitution thus becoming extensions of the state's propoganda and ideological tools alongside the Labour Party.

After careful consideration the National Executive Committee has referred this matter to the regional councils for final decisions. It is important that action in this regard should flow from popular feeling if it is to enjoy maximum support.

The added advantage in this approach is that regional newspapers will be considered regionally.

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