

INTRODUCTION

Over the past while, thousands of South Africans have begun to reject apartheid and look for new political homes. There is thus an urgent need to establish structures that can begin to incorporate these potential democrats into the progressive movement.

In certain instances, this process has already begun. For example, the student sector has a fairly long tradition of organisation in NUSAS, while more recently, young conscripts have been mobilised by the End Conscription Campaign (ECC). There are also moves to establish branches of youth and women in the white areas, that can affiliate to existing UDF organisations. Many professionals are beginning to join alternative professional bodies. Finally, many women have become involved in the struggle through an organisation such as the Black Sash.

However, there is as yet no structure/s in Cape Town that can mobilise and organise in the white area on a large scale, and, more importantly, give many older white South Africans a political home in the progressive movement. To this end, the Claremont/Observatory area committee of the UDF, through a ten-week commission of inquiry and much internal discussion, have come up with a number of proposals.

We would like these to be examined and debated in the various forums of the UDF, within UDF affiliates, and by other progressive organisations. We ask that comrades consider these proposals seriously, and see them as a concerted effort to broaden and strengthen the ranks of the democratic movement.

MOTIVATION

The leading force in our struggle for national liberation is the black working class. This means that the main task of the democratic movement is to mobilise and organise among the oppressed and exploited masses.

There are however a number of secondary tasks that complement the struggles of the masses. One of these is the need to organise in the heart of the ruling bloc itself. More specifically, this means systematic work amongst white South Africans as the holders of privilege and power.

There are a number of good reasons why this work should be done. If the ruling bloc can be weakened, the task of the democratic movement is made easier. One of the historical strengths of the apartheid regime is its ability to organise whites into a solid cohesive group, willing to defend their privileged position through support for harsh repressive measures against our organisations. There is an urgent need to try and break this unity, and to widen the cracks that have already begun to emerge.

However, we must be clear at this point. We do not claim that it is work in the white areas alone that causes the major tensions and contradictions within the ruling bloc. It is the hammer-blows of the mass movement that cause the cracks and the splits to appear. It is the united strength of the people's organisations that sows the seeds of doubt in the minds of those who have traditionally supported the apartheid system, and which causes the crisis in the ranks of apartheid to deepen.

This is precisely what has happened over the past few years. There are now many whites who know that Botha no longer offers them security and a stable future. They are beginning to look towards extra-parliamentary forces such as the UDF. But these whites will not make the break with their past attitudes and political organisations unless we reach out and organise them ourselves.

White South Africans seldom join the struggle by chance. This is because it is generally in their material interest to support apartheid, or at least not fight to get rid of it.

When white South Africans begin to feel the 'heat' of the progressive movement, during times of mass mobilisation, they are more ready to attend meetings, read pamphlets and the alternative press, and even identify with the actions of the oppressed and exploited. However, it is not sufficient to leave it at this. If we are not able to provide a political home in the democratic movement for whites mobilised during periods of mass activity, then most will drift back into the narrow confines of white reactionary or reformist politics.

Most white democrats who are in the ranks of the people's camp are there because they were reached by an organisation at some stage of their lives - either when they were at school or university, or when they were faced with questions such as the call-up. They were organised into the democratic movement.

PROPOSAL:

Our main proposal is to establish a non-racial, democratic form of organisation that is directed at those areas where, because of the Group Areas Act, white South Africans tend to live.

We are not proposing that a "white organisation" be established, either locally or nationally. No members of the area committees expressed any wish to work in a whites-only organisation.

On the contrary, all members of the area committees voted for the new organisation to be an affiliate of the UDF, working closely with all the other affiliates on joint campaigns of the Front.

Our proposal for a non-racial form of organisation is consistent with all other affiliates of the UDF in the Western Cape. For example, the Cape Areas Housing Action Committee (CAHAC) is not regarded as a "coloured organisation", despite the fact that it only organises in those areas defined as "coloured" by the Group Areas Act. Similarly, Western Cape Civic Association (WCCA) is a non-racial organisation, despite the fact that it only has "African" members.

It is the very emphasis on non-racialism that we believe will enable us to draw more white South Africans into the democratic movement. It is through our active membership of the democratic movement that we can begin to provide leadership and direction to white South Africans.

PROPOSAL FOR A NON-RACIAL POLITICAL ORGANISATION PRIMARILY RESPONSIBLE FOR ORGANISING WITHIN THE RULING BLOC. THIS MEANS WE WILL BE WORKING IN THE WHITE AREAS OF CAPE TOWN, WITH THE AIM OF BRINGING THE PEOPLE OF THESE AREAS INTO THE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT.

1) Political line

This organisation will be affiliated to the UDF, which implies accepting the Freedom Charter, because:

- i. We have found that a growing number of people want to be part of the democratic movement through participation in the UDF.
- ii. Our affiliation to the UDF distinguishes us from other organisations working in this area.
- iii. Our affiliation will ensure that we are accountable to the democratic movement.
- iv. It will provide us with links to other UDF affiliates.
- v. It will enable people in these areas to contribute to the UDF and the processes of the democratic movement.

2) Tasks

a) Our primary tasks are:

- i. to provide a political home for white democrats:
 - ii. to influence important sectors of people who are not presently interested in joining the democratic movement; and
 - iii. to disorganise strategic elements within the ruling bloc.

b) We have seen that previous organisational advances of the democratic movement have been achieved by organising people politically around their own experiences, consciousness and material realities. It is therefore important:

- i. to intervene in the white community and to develop strategies which will shift larger numbers of whites into the democratic movement. In fulfilling this task we are advancing the non-racial component of the democratic movement.
- ii. to take advantage of existing fissures and win support from the traditional allies of the ruling bloc.
- iii. to develop a very wide outreach beyond our membership, and to extend the influence of the democratic movement into the white community.

c) We believe that the voice of white democrats should be heard within the democratic movement.

d) We feel it necessary to encourage skilled personnel to commit themselves to contributing to the future democratic non-racial South Africa.

3) Programmes/Activities

a) Being directly represented on UDF structures, we will participate in UDF campaigns, and take forward the demands of the democratic movement, e.g. the Million Signature Campaign, Anti Election Campaign, Christmas Against the Emergency, and the National United Action Campaign.

b) We will address fundamental political questions, interpret and explain the political beliefs and aspirations of the democratic movement

and in so doing win support for the struggles fought by the masses. For example, we will explain and take forward demands such as unbanning the ANC, releasing detainees and political prisoners, ending the emergency, troops out of the townships and the demands for a living wage.

c) We will continue to participate in campaigns and alliances with other organisations working in our areas, e.g. the Free the Children Alliance, Votes for All Alliance and the End Conscription Campaign.

d) We will intervene in ongoing political debate, and encourage action, in the white community, around issues such as:

- * The post-apartheid economy
- * Alternative political structures
- * Process of negotiation
- * Repression and the military
- * Group areas
- * Open schools
- * ASGs
- * Tax
- * Civil liberties
- * Apartheid legislation
- * Crime

e) We will identify sectors where it is important for us to work with people such as businesspersons, academics and church groupings.

f) We will provide forums for political debate and education.

g) We will provide creative activities for participation of those not wanting a large commitment as well as those who want to be active - a range of levels of involvement, from defiance to special interest work, to mere attendance at meetings.

4) Membership

a) We will encourage dual membership of democrats working in ECU, Sash, EDASA, NUSAS, etc. We are not intending to poach members of these organisations, but expect that part of their task would be to take the message of the UDF into their structures.

b) Membership will be gathered from all over Cape Town and perhaps more widely. There would probably be branch structures, with sub-committees and a more committed core.

c) Although organising in white areas, membership is open to everyone.

d) Different types of membership are envisaged:

i. Activists from our previous area committees and other comradely organisations.

ii. Members of other organisations, e.g. professional and political groupings, who will participate in our organisation and its political forums but might see their main commitment to their other organisations.

iii. Presently unorganised Capetonians. For instance, people who have come to us through housemeetings, placed themselves on our mailing list, or attend an occasional meeting or activity.

iv. People previously untouched by our political work.

5) Profile/Image/Leadership

a) An authoritative organisation of white democrats clearly identified as part of the democratic movement.

b) A broad and accessible profile that will facilitate older/professional people joining us and finding a political home.

c) Our leadership should reflect the extra parliamentary organisations operating in the white areas, e.g. prominent individuals, and people from other organisations. We must also consciously develop a leadership from within the organisation. This leadership should be elected, accountable and visible.

d) We will project a dynamic pro-active profile, with a programme of action consisting of demands to be met as preconditions for negotiating a non-racial, democratic South Africa.

e) We will establish comprehensive internal education programmes to develop the political consciousness and maturity of all members, as well as allowing for their special interests.

6) Broader structures

Such an organisation will probably form a component of an umbrella Area Committee with organisations such as UWCO, UAYCO, church groups and other local groupings. It should link to current regional structure as well as have direct representation at the UDF General Council. There is thus a need for clear procedures of mandating and decision-making at all levels.

Collection Number: AG1977

END CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN (ECC)

PUBLISHER:

Publisher:- Historical Papers Research Archive

Location:- Johannesburg

©2013

LEGAL NOTICES:

Copyright Notice: All materials on the Historical Papers website are protected by South African copyright law and may not be reproduced, distributed, transmitted, displayed, or otherwise published in any format, without the prior written permission of the copyright owner.

Disclaimer and Terms of Use: Provided that you maintain all copyright and other notices contained therein, you may download material (one machine readable copy and one print copy per page) for your personal and/or educational non-commercial use only.

People using these records relating to the archives of Historical Papers, The Library, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, are reminded that such records sometimes contain material which is uncorroborated, inaccurate, distorted or untrue. While these digital records are true facsimiles of paper documents and the information contained herein is obtained from sources believed to be accurate and reliable, Historical Papers, University of the Witwatersrand has not independently verified their content. Consequently, the University is not responsible for any errors or omissions and excludes any and all liability for any errors in or omissions from the information on the website or any related information on third party websites accessible from this website.

This document is part of a collection held at the Historical Papers Research Archive at The University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.