

**U10-c**

THE STRUCTURE OF THE FRONT (U.D.F)

File "U 10-C"

The TASK GIVEN TO US IS A DIFFICULT ONE. We have been requested to prepare an input paper on the "STRUCTURE OF THE UDF". Not the "STATIC STRUCTURE" but a paper on the present "developing structure" of the UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT.

The UDF was born and ultimately launched at a time when the NATIONAL FORUM had taken the centre of the political stage in the media. All of a sudden, the Coopers' and the ALEXANDARS', had become the NATIONAL POLITICAL HEROES. The launching of the UDF regional structures, the massive national launch of the UDF at MITCHELL'S PLAIN shattered this myth and the DEMOCRATIC FORCES assumed their rightful place.

More than 600 organisations had come together to lay a foundation for greater UNITY. Unity of all forces seeking a "single, non-racial, unfragmented SOUTH AFRICA. SA South Africa free of BANTUSTANS and GROUP AREAS" "A creation of a TRUE DEMOCRACY in which all South African will participate in the Government of OUR country".

In accordance with the afore-mentioned ideals Community, womens', Students', workers', SPORTING and other ORGANISATIONS HAD COME TOGETHER to say NO to the REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA CONSTITUTION - YES to the UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT.

The United Democratic Front is structured such that it allows the maximum possible participation of organisations in decision making and in effecting such resolutions. Its structure takes into account the history of organisations within the front. It seeks to allay fears caused by nature of each organisation and the numerical strength of such organisations. Each organisation is accepted and treated as on equal. The key question power over this or that organisation. The dominant factor, especially in the TRANSVAAL, is UNITY. Other regional structures ie. NATAL, the FREE STATE, NORTHERN CAPE, EASTERN CAPE and the WESTERN CAPE are structured slightly different though similar in many respect.

Such a structure will not remain as it is. Conditions, whether they be political, economic or social they never remain the same. If a structure is to respond adequately to the demands of the ever changing conditions, it must be dynamic. It must change as the situation changes. It should take into consideration the concrete realities in any given situation. This remain the challenges to which we should respond.

The UDF is not a/.....

The UDF is not a "UNITARY STRUCTURE". It may be dominated by one particular ideological position, but has no single common or all embracing ideological position. It is an organisation of organisations. It is made of different organisations welded together by the broad principles out-lined in the UDF DECLARATION. The FRONT consist of, among others, TRADE UNIONS, POLITICAL ORGANISATIONS, STUDENT ORGANISATIONS, WOMENS' ORGANISATIONS, COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS, YOUTH ORGANISATIONS and SPORTS ORGANISATIONS.

The UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT is a product of specific conditions. It did not emerge from a vaccum. Nor is it imposed on organisations. It has grown organically from the struggles waged by the democratic forces at workplaces, schools AND UNIVERSITIES, Civic level, mosques and churches.

For ONE WHOLE YEAR, the UDF TRANSVAAL policy making body has been, and to date continues to be the GENERAL COUNCIL. Here issues are examined, referred to individual affiliates where, a mandate is sought for the support of this or that idea. The decisions are a TRUE REFLECTION of the thinking of MEMBERS in these organisations. It should be noted that DEMOCRACY or rather THE PROCESS THEREOF has not at times been fully utilised or engaged in within INDIVIDUAL ORGANISATIONS due to numerous factors. The FRONT has, however, stood unwavering in support of DEMOCRATIC DECISIONS at all levels.

The GENERAL COUNCIL is made of TWO DELEGATES from EACH AFFILIATE. OBSERVERS have been allowed to gain entry into the GENERAL COUNCIL MEETINGS. On occasions they have contributed in the discussions. The DELEGATES have, however, not allowed OBSERVERS to STIFLE or INFLUENCE discussion on serious policy issues. ONLY DELEGATES are allowed the right to cast votes. Numerous SUBCOMMITTEES such as the MEDIA, EDUCATION, FUNDRAISING and REPRESSION have been formed to fullfill specific needs of the UDF and or INDIVIDUAL UDF AFFILIATES.

The UDF EXECUTIVE and the ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES do relatively well defined tasks.

After doing an EVALUATION of its activities, the UDF adopted the AREA COMMITTEES as MEANS through which the FRONT will seek or is seeking to be more effective in its work. Such committees have been formed in:

- PRETORIA
- VAAL
- SOWETO - LENASIA - ELDORADO PARK - NOORD GESIG
- WEST RAND/.....

- WEST RAND
- JOHANNESBURG
- EAST RAND

These committees constitutes of delegates from individual affiliated organisations. Discussion on numerous issues including among others, the role of OBSERVERS and non-observers is still being considered by individual AREA COMMITTEES. This discussion by its very nature is serious and "INVOLVED". It is worthwhile to consider these following points:

(a) DECISION MAKING -

- \* Can the area committee take decisions on behalf of organisations
- \* How are decisions to be taken
- \* What should the power of each Area Committee be
- \* Where does this power start where does it end.

(b) DISCIPLINE -

- \* What should the level of disciplined political conduct be
- \* Who should liase WITH THE PRESS
- \* What should the relationship be between the AREA COMMITTEES; In the Area Committee and how should organisations within the AREA COMMITTEE relate to organisations outside the FRONT.

(c) PROGRAMME OF ACTION -

Much more important we should beware of the danger of making the AREA COMMITTEE a TALK-SHOP. Action should be built into it. We should be able to transform the UDF through the AREA COMMITTEE into a meaningful and VIABLE WEAPON of CHANGE. At all cost by all means we should refuse to make the FRONT a futile debating forum. If we do work at mass-level success is guaranteed.

Activity presupposes a PROGRAMME OF ACTION. Without such a programme nothing CONCRETE CAN BE ATTAINED. Such a programme be based on identified achievable realistic goals.

Whilst the AREA COMMITTEE should not be or be seen to be on the side-lines, It should not interfere with the autonomy of individual affiliates. Nor stifle individual organisations by "dominating the show" or "stealing the line-light". The UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT should - strengthen and build such organisations. For the FRONT is interested in UNITY of all the DEMOCRATIC FORCES. It seeks

- to highlight those positive aspects that unite us as
- against points of difference that are negative and divisi
- to fight/.....

- 4-
- to fight individualistic tendencies which are not open to criticism
  - to fight gossip
  - to promote accountability ie. seeks to make sure that activists and leadership preserve the image of both the UDF and affiliates or individual organisations affiliated to the UDF.
  - to make us patient, tolerant, and to respect one another's viewpoints.

(d) FUNCTIONS:

- role
- What do we see the Area Committee playing?
- What are the DUTIES of such a committee?
- \* What are its RESPONSIBILITIES?

These and more are KEY QUESTIONS that requires urgent attention. Our FRONT, the UNITED DEMOCRATIC FRONT has inspired the imagination of the masses. But do we understand the political mood in which the country is in? Are we in control of the situation, do we find ourselves being passively dragged into the vortex of the whirlwind unwillingly and without proper understanding?

The state and its surrogates has continuously warned and threatened the UDF. Indeed, some of the UDF affiliates have been nearly crippled. Scores of our activists are languishing in prisons. More are being detained on a daily basis. The situation <sup>is</sup> tense. <sup>^</sup> Anything can happen at any given moment.

The discussion today therefore should be looked at seriously. Our future is <sup>indeed</sup> dependent on today's deliberation.

*Antor*

REPORT FROM GROUP TWO

This group answered a set of questions on the **ROLE OF THE AREA COMMITTEE**, the **ROLE OF AREA COMMITTEE** in relation to **AUTONOMY** of **INDIVIDUAL AFFILIATES** and **democracy** (within the **AREA COMMITTEE**).

(i) **SUGGESTIONS ON THE ROLE OF THE AREA COMMITTEE**

- Bring together affiliates into a forum;
- Strengthen organisations
- Popularise the UDF

(ii) **SUGGESTIONS ON AUTONOMY OF EACH AFFILIATE**

Participants understands the role of UDF **AREA COMMITTEE** to be:

- (a) Co-ordinating; and
- (b) Seeking and generating active practical support for particular struggles in different communities
- (c) Promoting and showing non-racial struggle in practice eg. ensuring that **ACTIVISTS** are seen to be doing door to door work together in different communities.
- (d) to organise Petit-bourgeois organisations into the **AREA COMMITTEE** on condition that they support the struggle of the poor.
- (e) To ensure that organisations affiliated to the UDF are represented by delegates - in all **AREA COMMITTEE** meetings. Observers not to be allowed into these meetings.

(iii) **DEMOCRACY**

All decisions taken to be based on - the principles of **DEMOCRACY**.

(iv) **POINTS THAT EMERGES FROM PARTICIPANTS AFTER GROUP TWO HAD REPORTED:**

- The General Council should avoid appointing or electing people to serve in commissions (at **GENERAL COUNCIL** level) without first ascertaining
  - (a) the role of individual at local level; and
  - (b) how busy that person is with local organisational work

- \* The **AREA COMMITTEE** should strengthen organisation by playing a support role in their programmes and activities eg. UDF to consistently tell people that no individual can become its member except by joining affiliates.
- \* The **AREA COMMITTEE** should should popularise the UDF eg. printing UDF T-shirts etc.

- The **AREA COMMITTEE** should/.....

- The AREA COMMITTEE should organise more organisations that are not affiliated to the FRONT INTO the AREA COMMITTEE.

D. REPORT FROM GROUP THREE

This group answered a question on the AREA COMMITTEE'S PROGRAMME OF ACTION for the next fourteen months. The group felt it was impossible to discuss and draw a "PROGRAMME OF ACTION" in forty minutes. It (the group) listed points that will require attention when such a programme is drawn. These are

- (a) that such a programme should not conflict with programmes of affiliated organisations; and
- (b) that such a programme should be flexible and cater for emergencies.

The group further suggested that the following should constitute the content of the programme:

- Consolidating the AREA COMMITTEE;
- Improving Co-ordination of activities within the AREA COMMITTEE;
- Printing and distribution of the UDF NEWSLETTER; and
- Working on the idea of "BLACK CHRISTMAS"

COMMENTS FROM OTHER PARTICIPANTS:

- \* The AREA COMMITTEE should be supplied with a programme of action of each affiliate. This will improve Co-ordination and avoid unnecessary duplication.
- \* The 30th anniversary of the Freedom Charter in 1985 should be looked into.
- \* The United Nations Organisation's "INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE YOUTH" should be examined and the possibility of building this into the PROGRAMME OF ACTION looked into.

E. REPORT FROM GROUP FOUR

This group answered a set of questions on PRESS STATEMENTS and the POLITICAL PROFILE OF UDF AREA COMMITTEE. These following points were reported by this group'

- (a) UDF AREA COMMITTEE should limit itself to a co-ordinating role;
  - (b) UDF AREA COMMITTEE should avoid a high political profile;
  - (c) UDF AREA COMMITTEE should not stifle but ensure the growth of organisations; and
- ON PRESS STATEMENTS, the UDF AREA COMMITTEE

The group said:

- (i) Area Committee should not issue press statements, especially on policy issues.
- Other participant said
- (ii) that some press statement are mere announcements eg. statement on venue, date, time and Agenda of a mass meeting;
  - (iii) they also felt/.....

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