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PREPARATION FOR THE UDF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The following is a summary of an Executive assessment. We hope that it will serve as a basis for preparing ourselves for the AGM.

1. The UDF (Western Cape) during 1984

The UDF has made a tremendous impact on the history of struggle. Important gains were made for the progressive movement especially in areas where there had not been a tradition of struggle like the rural areas and some "coloured" communities.

Our people identify the UDF with resistance to the government. We should now change this passive support into active support where people see that they need to be actively involved in changing their lives.

This broad acceptability needs to be deepened; our organisations must be strengthened.

There has not been even participation of all our affiliates in the work of the UDF.

At times there has been disunity in the ranks of activists which also led to poor participation in our work.

Differences which had existed prior to the formation of the UDF continued to exist and caused tensions within the Front. The UDF has, however laid the basis for resolving these. We are now bound by a common discipline within UDF structures and have common responsibilities to a national movement.

2. The Regional Executive Committee

At the moment only 10 of the 15 executive members are active, and attend executive meetings regularly. Others like Imam Hassen Solomon and Rev. Chris Nissen are playing valuable roles elsewhere.

Not all REC members have been successfully drawn into UDF activities. Only some REC members were fully in touch with UDF campaigns, sub-committees and structures. As a result it was often the younger members who were central to most of the campaigns and day to day running of the Front.

In planning for a new Executive we need to consider the following:

- * political clarity
- * time to do UDF work
- * balance between symbolic figures on the executive and those who can give guidance and take responsibility for work
- * balance between UDF work and work within organisation

3. Assessment .../

Assessment of Portfolios

President : Should be a symbol of unity and have a history of struggle. Must be broadly acceptable. Should be more than just a figure head. Should be active in decisionmaking and guidance in the Front.

Vice-presidents : Should be more than just substitutes for the President. Should, together with the President and Secretaries be responsible for planning meetings, co-ordinating work and communicating with organisations.

Secretaries : Tasks must be more clearly defined. Overall responsibility for the Front to be shared by others. Possible solutions to the overburdening of the Secretaries are to divide up the tasks and to involve non portfolio members in tasks like minutes, finding venues, agendas etc.

Publicity Secretaries : We should consider separating publicity and media because they are very different jobs which require different skills. We should also consider having an older person who could project a mature image of the Front. The public spokesperson for the UDF must be somebody who can respond to a wide range of issues within the policy framework of the UDF.

Treasurers : We only have one active treasurer now. We need to have a treasury which functions properly. The treasurer must be able to make UDF fundraising a priority. Organisations must also take more responsibility for UDF funds. We should also look carefully at how we spend our money in UDF.

Additional Executive members : Must assist with the tasks of other executive members. Should share responsibilities for Sub-committees and play a more active role in the UDF.

4. Relationship of REC to affiliates

Contact between the executive and affiliates should take place outside of GC as well. Perhaps certain REC members should be given the responsibility to liaise with organisations regularly. Meetings with executives of our affiliates is another possibility. This will be important especially before we take crucial decisions and during intense campaigns.

The REC needs to play a far greater role in ensuring that regions function properly and are participating in UDF work.

Other important matters which had been discussed in our GC assessment and which we must look at carefully:

Structures and decisionmaking

How do we take decisions in the UDF? We have often called emergency GC's at very short notice because we had to respond to an urgent issue. This meant that all our members in all our organisations were not always involved in taking decisions. How can we find ways of taking democratic decisions which will allow us to respond quickly?

How can we ensure that EVERYBODY in the UDF accepts majority decisions and participates in the implementation thereof?

What role do the following structures play in decisionmaking?
GC, the executive, regions, sub-committees and activist forums?

Education .../

Education and training

How do we see education and training taking place?

- Should it take place on a regular basis?
- How should it be done - by a permanent sub-committee?, by REC members who co-ordinate and draw in, with the consent of our structures, others from time to time?
- What kind of education should take place?

Rural Areas

There is now a properly functioning Rural Council. How do we include these areas in our decisions? Due to the problem of distance, what links can be established between our GC and the rural Council? Worcester and Paarl are part of our GC as well as the Rural Council. How do we see this?

We also include an NEC input paper which was delivered at an NEC workshop and the Working Principles of UDF (W.C.)

Other important aspects to be looked at in preparation for the AGM:

- Broadening the Front : Starting afresh to include more organisations into the UDF at central level as well as at a local level.
- Fundraising to pay off our debts. Also for 1985 at a local/central level.
- Our regions and area committees.
- Our working principles and resolutions must be reviewed.
- The proposed date for the AGM is March.
- What kind of AGM do we want? Should we have an open AGM, should only some sessions be open?
- Should we have a rally as part of the AGM?
- Should we have a theme? If so, what?
- The executive wishes to meet with all organisations before the GC if possible, but certainly before the AGM.

Conclusion

Comrades, the last half of the year has seen the destruction of the lies told by Botha, Hendricks, Sebe, Rajbansi and others like them. We also came out stronger after the referendum debate.

We are, however, also painfully aware that there are still many shortcomings in the Front. Let us prepare ourselves properly to enter the AGM and the year which faces us with a positive spirit. Let us rise to the challenge and march ahead stronger than we were on the 20 August 1983.

A. Goalsetting

It is necessary for us to set our sights high, but we should also be realistic. An incorrect assessment of what is possible can lead to public embarrassment for the Front and can be used to undermine the confidence of the people in the Front. Our activists also become demoralised if they had worked very hard and failed to attain goals we've set for ourselves.

In future proper assessment and planning should take place in all structures which will be expected to contribute to the attainment of a particular goal. Logistics should be worked out as far possible before we commit ourselves firmly.

We should also define far more clearly what objectives we have i.e. whether the emphasis is on depth or high profile activity. During the elections we also learnt that it is not possible to sustain two intensive campaigns with different profiles at the same time (i.e. elections and MSC).

Criteria for affiliation

1. Organisations The UDF must continue to encourage as many kinds of organisations with their interests, irrespective of their size or constituency. We should be realistic about the fact that we will rely more on some affiliates to do the mass work while that of others are valuable in other respects.

Where we need to make a distinction, is in terms of decision-making. A formula should be found where numerical representation at decision-making. Forums like GC should be commensurate with the capacity of an affiliate to take practical responsibility to implement decisions of the Front.

2. Regions We should critically assess what the point is at which regional status is accorded. It appears as if our earlier motivation that inclusion into national structures will stimulate the development of regions, has had some adverse effects. Very often this has drained those areas, because of the demands placed on them. They are often compelled to respond to activities which were decided on by national structures where the pace is determined by the stronger region. In the long run this can undermine development.

We should accept that the core of the UDF will always exist around urban areas like Johannesburg, Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town. However, fairly substantial structures are developing in some of the rural areas which form part of our existing regions. We need to find ways of incorporating those areas more directly into decision-making of the UDF, because distances from the towns responsible for them often makes this impossible.

Possible .../

Possible guidelines for the future:

- Conditions must have been allowed to develop to the extent where there is a general council which can meet regularly and consists of affiliate organisations.
- Organisations in the geographic area, must launch the region and apply for national status once they feel they are in a position to take responsibility for (i) surrounding area (ii) national campaigns.
- Re-assess existing regions w.r.t above criteria
- Assess whether regional boundaries should be re-defined to create smaller more manageable regions.

C. Decision-making:1. Processes:

We need to strike a balance between the need for UDF to respond speedily to crisis and the need for all our affiliates to be party to and committed to decisions we take.

Practical proposals in this regard are that agendas of national gatherings be sent out timeously and that allowance be made for discussion thereof by affiliates and that affiliates be encouraged to make suggestion w.r.t. NEC agendas. We should accept that we will have to respond to urgent issues and take decisions without following this procedure. The nature of such discussion and decisions should however be disseminated as soon as possible to all affiliates.

2. Autonomy of affiliates in relation to decisions:

It is unhealthy for any of our affiliates to actively go against majority decisions taken. We should however understand when some affiliates are not in a position to participate actively in some of our campaigns. Such affiliates should however be encouraged to look at means of playing a supportive role.

In terms of our past practice, we need to assess flexibility/autonomy and its implications for unity in the Front.

D. Accountability:

The formation of the UDF marked a new era of closer co-operation between progressive forces in S.A. Most of our affiliates do not have the experience of having worked in an alliance like the UDF. While we encourage affiliates to take up campaigns, we must bear in mind that the work of our affiliates will invariably have a bearing on the work of the rest of the Front. As affiliates, we should feel dutibound to consult with or at least inform the rest of the Front about all campaigns we propose to tackle, particularly when campaigns will be mass based. This can only serve to strengthen such campaigns and contribute to unity in action.

E. Discipline .../

E. Discipline:

Because we are a Front and not a political organisation, the only basis in terms of which we can take disciplinary measures against any affiliate or individual, is the principle enshrined in our declaration, resolutions and working principles. We should endeavour to foster sound relationships among our affiliates but we should be aware of the UDF's limitations to try and resolve differences among organisations especially where those differences arose because of dynamics outside of the Front.

If such transgression does occur, REC's and NEC should not be structures which decide on the form of discipline. Such matters are best dealt with collectively through forums like Regional GC's.

UDF has no real discipline over individuals in the Front - organisations must take responsibility for their membership. We should however bear in mind that the best guarantee for discipline is to inculcate a sense of trust and a strong loyalty towards the front and its objectives. Drastic disciplinary measures should only be considered after comradely attempts to explain to those at fault, had failed or if the fundamental principles of the UDF had been consciously flouted.

F. Structures:

We need to assess whether our existing structures are appropriate for the work it is intended to do. The following are some practical proposals:

- NGC
- should gather only once a year and serve the purpose of an AGM
 - should only take place after regional AGM's
 - representation per region should be determined w.r.t. numbers only. Regions should decide how best they and their affiliates can be represented.
 - we should determine how national formations will be represented if the above proposal is accepted
- NEC
- to be held less often
 - its work should revolve largely around policy and broad guidelines for work
 - emergency NEC's to be called only if regional feedback is not the best method at arriving at a national position. Practical decisions to be taken by appropriate structures e.g Treasury, Secretariat, Publicity department
 - all reports to be circularised prior to NEC and only matters arising to be discussed
 - given the logistics and finances involved in having an NEC, we should assess its size.

G. Education and Training:

We are very conscious of the need for far more systematic education and training of our activists as well as new people who are being drawn in. We need to assess whether this is best done through permanent, high structures or more informally.

There are two .../

There are two categories which are not necessarily related.

- 1) Equipping our activists with organising skills. This is best done when based on practical experience e.g briefing before going into areas and assessments afterwards.
- 2) Broadening the political understanding of those within the Front. Regular open discussions or forums should be encouraged as long as these do not become substitutes for structures like GC to discuss policy matters.

We should look at how experience in this regard can be shared.

H. Relationship to non-affiliates:

Our emphasis should always be to seek those areas where co-operation is possible. It is important that we should continue to try and win over all progressive organisations.

As far as other political tendencies are concerned, our most serious consideration should be those which have a mass base. By now we should be able to be realistic about the areas and nature of co-operation which is possible. It is our task to ensure that we and those not affiliates never lose sight of the fact that the apartheid state is the enemy and that if any ideological differences do exist, we should respect those and not allow it to undermine the potential areas of unity.

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