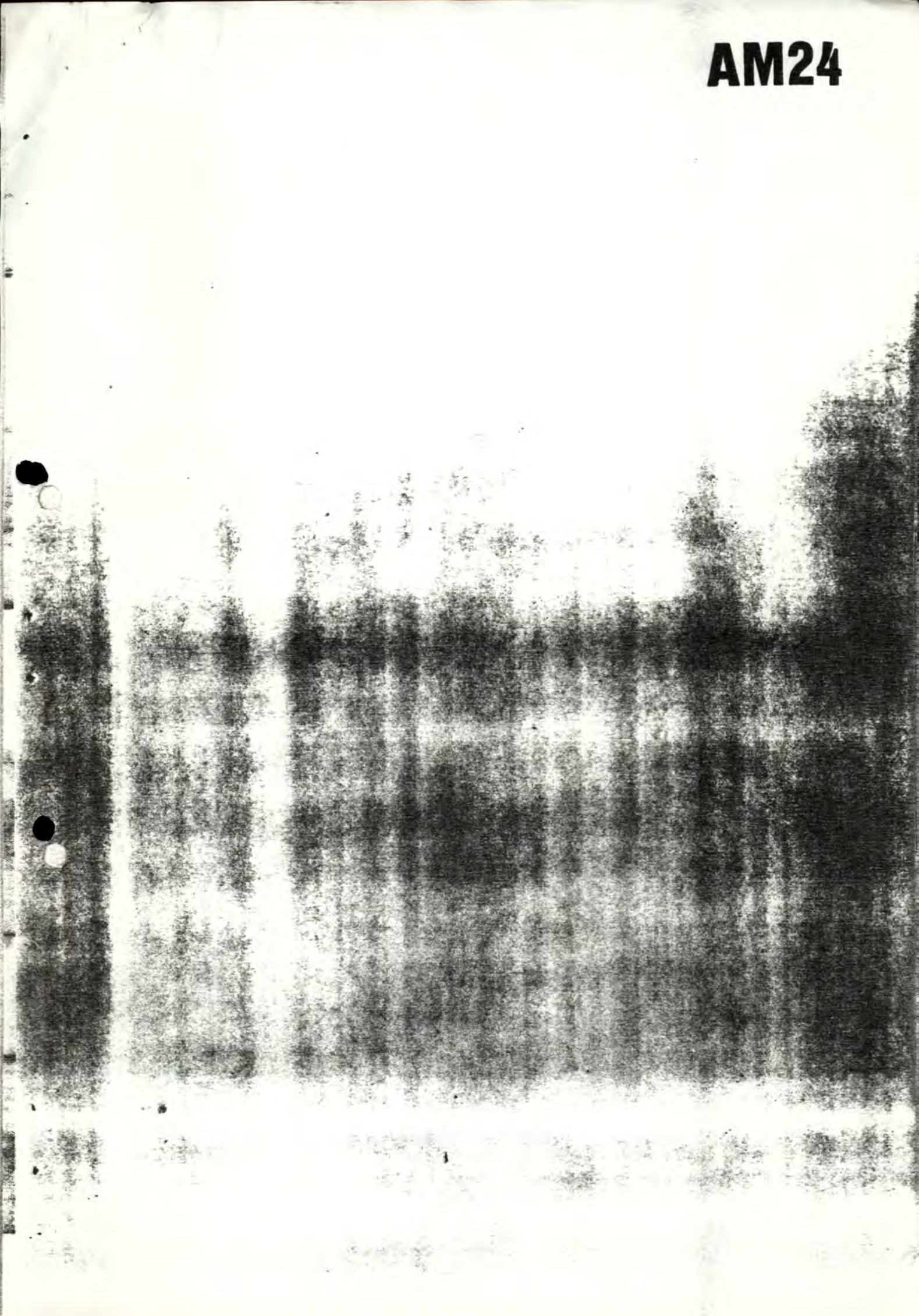


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SOWETO CIVIC ASSOCIATION



WORKSHOP 8 9 10 JUNE

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Report of the workshop of the Soweto Civic Association, held at Wilgerspruit on 8th, 9th and 10th June, 1984

- I. The workshops will take place over one week-end per month from May to August. The purpose of the workshops is to develop organising skills among civic members.

The second workshop will be held ~~13TH & 14TH~~ ~~15th July, 1984~~ at Wilgerspruit. Transport will leave from Dube Y at 7.00 pm. on Friday ~~13TH JULY, 1984~~.

- II. The following branches/areas were represented

Diepkloof 3 delegates; Orlando East 2 delegates; Orlando West zone 1, 2 delegates; Zone 4,5,6,7, was represented by 1 delegate; Mofolo 1 delegate; Klipspruit 7 delegates; Semacame 1 delegate; Moroka two delegates and 1 delegate from Dube.

- III. PROGRAMME

Friday

We started on Friday night with exercises in getting to know each other. We also set personal goals for ourselves of what we hoped to get out of the workshop. Later, we watched films and some of us found that we had stayed up too late

Saturday - Session I

The theme for the day was: What is the role of a civic organisation?

Session I- Program of the Soweto Civic Association

We started with a panel discussion on the Program of the Soweto Civic Association. Members of the panel told us about the history of the Civic; its policies; the campaigns the civic has taken up; the structure of the civic and the strengths and weaknesses of the way in which the civic has worked or is working.

This is a summary of the main points which came from the panel and the group discussion.

History of the Civic Association

It was 1976, the community was in uproar. Thousands of people were mobilised against Bantu Education.

It was under these conditions that the Committee of 10 was elected at a public meeting. Those nominated onto the Committee of 10 (referred to as Com. 10) were: Dr Motlana; Mr V. Kraai; Mr L. Mosala; Mr T. Manthata;

.....2/

has always been a serious problem.

To increase membership ^{some of} the branches worked with burial societies and stokvels. Social events such as braais were held to recruit members and to raise funds. But financial statements were not forthcoming in some cases and this caused tension.

In Diepkloof, civic members organised feeding schemes for pensioners.

There was also the problem of buildings which were burnt down during 1976. These buildings became a danger in the community. In some areas, the branches wrote letters to the superintendent demanding that the buildings either be renovated or demolished. In this case, the branches won clear victories. (Maledi was the area affected) *Dube is Campaigner the Post*

Other areas took up the electricity issue. They obtained facts and figures from Black Sash and used this to educate people about the issue.

In Diepkloof, members arranged for funerals for the men who were executed. When political leaders die in the community, they arranged the funerals. *Oyl. West.*

The shack issue taken up in Orlando ^{East} was partially successful. Civic members were helped with material aid. ??

Diepkloof and Klipspruit are working on the Putco busses issue. They have also started an advice office.

Policy

The policy of the SCA is to work outside government created bodies which are there to divide and control our people. Community Councils and now the Black Local Authorities Act are created to give urban blacks a token say in local government. It is there to divide so-called legal residents from illegal residents. The civic rejects this.

The civic is clear that we cannot have local autonomy while we have no direct representation in both local and central government.

NB { The early initiative of the civic was seen to be in line with Black Consciousness. But, the civic always saw itself as a community organisation. A broad based civic body interested in the civic needs of the people and their problems. The civic allows for people of different political persuasions to come together to meet the needs and interests of the people.

Structure

The co-ordinating structure of the civic is the comm. of 10 which functions as the executive.

There is an inter-branch structure where representatives from the branches meet. And then there are the local branches in the following areas:

Diepkloof, Klipspruit, Maledi, Semaoame, Tladi, Orlando E., Orlando W. Zone 1 and 2, Mofolo, CWJ, Zone 4,5,6,7 Meadolands.

The following are areas where there were branches, but which have collapsed. In three areas there are contacts. These are: Moroka, Dlamini, Emndeni, Meadowlands Zone 8,9,10, Zone 1-3, Dube, Chiawelo, Mzimhlophe Transit Camp.

The point was made that we need to look into restructuring the civic suited to our needs at this point in time. Members also felt strongly that by the next annual general meeting the title 'Comm. of 10' should be dropped for reasons which are explained in the following section.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Civic Organisation
Identified by panel and group discussion.

- poor co-ordination of the work of the civic
 - no office which makes it difficult for people to get in touch with the civic
 - rents campaign - we lost branches as a result of the campaign. And, because we did not have the strength to pull it off ?
 - no financial statements from the braais
 - at a mass level, the people think that the civic is a 'benefit society' (welfare).
 - rents campaign - in taking the matter to court, we took the struggle out of the hands of the people ?
 - Committee of 10 - people seem to see the Comm. of 10 on the one side with them on the other. They see the com. of 10 as doing things for them. The question of who is the committee accountable to, was raised. This has caused ^{of the} tension and mischief makers have as a result tried to undermine the civic.
 - the loss of membership and dwindling branches is a serious problem which needs attention
 - we must be honest about our mistakes and our strengths.
- WHO IS THE CIVIC ACCOUNTABLE TO

Suggestions from this Session

- Need to restructure civic
- to make policies clear and to come to terms with ideological problems which are disorganising the civic ?
- honest assessment of why membership has dropped since 1981
- the need to equip ourselves with the skills

Suggestions from this Session (cont.)

- on how to organise
- need for co-ordination of civic work
- serious efforts should be made to reach out to non-existent branches
- at the next AGM. serious consideration should be given to dropping the title 'Com. of 10'
- Lastly, it was felt that we should adapt our structures suited to the times in which we are organising. The question is: what type of structure do we need for the civic under the present conditions?

It was after this panel discussion and general exchange of views that we broke up into small groups to discuss the following questions.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS OR OBSTACLES THAT YOU ARE FACED WITH IN YOUR LOCAL BRANCH?

- Lack of resources such as venues. Some churches are afraid to be associated with the civic. Also a lack of finance, photostat machines etc. Local branches do not have letterheads and are using Comm. of 10 letterheads which is a problem.
- The lack of office space has been a hindrance as the people do not know where to find the civic. We need offices for community services.
- Lack of organising skills among civic members. Members are not regular and consistent in their civic work. A lack of commitment on the part of members. All this has resulted in the civic lacking a strong and committed workforce to do the day-to-day work of the civic.
- The structure of the civic was raised as another problem. Members felt that there was a lack of communication between branches and the Comm. of 10. The feeling was that issues were raised at local level and that the Comm. of 10 does not hear them.
 - | Inter-branch meetings have however, been found to be useful. But, then there was no system of follow-up of decisions and suggestions. Good ideas were not implemented. Members felt that branches were not very effective.
- A lack of projects at the local level which are simple and within our means of achieving. As a result, it was felt that people lose confidence in the civic. "What are we doing? And in most cases we are not doing anything.

For example, there were braais, the people came but there-after, nothing happened", reported one group.

- Many people feared political involvement and saw the civic as a political organisation.
- The makgotlas were felt to have some control or influence over the people
- The weaknesses of the rents campaign, the failure of the court case and our lack of report ^{back} to the people, resulted in demoralisation. For ^{the} people, it meant that the civic cannot do anything for them. There seemed to be ^{no} report back to the people after we lost the case. We need to deal with failures. We take up issues, when its over, it fizzles out like a candle.
- Policy - some people in our branches tend to feel that we can achieve more if we go into the community councils. Our problem is our failure to draw a clear distinction between the community councils and a people's organisation.
- Leadership - people had different expectations of the leadership. Others expected the Comm. of 10 members to do the day-to-day work of the civic.

The point was made that the community saw the comm. of 10 as professionals. As educated people who are apart from them. It was felt that the civic leadership should be more mixed and that there should be a place for the 'Ordinary man' in the street to serve the people.

It was also mentioned that the comm. of 10 members are blamed for all the problems. But, that they too are over extended. In the minds of the people there was confusion between the Comm. of 10 and the Soweto Civic Association.

Communication with the comm. of 10 was also raised as an issue of concern.

- The view was also expressed that "sometimes we forget why we are doing civic work. Its for the people, but some of us do it for ourselves".

This has caused alot of personal problems.

- Then there are the intellectuals. "They live out their lives in cocoons, they are uninvolved and influence people to take part in 'talkshop' politics.
- Lastly, the people flood the civic with personal and financial problems such as, high electricity and water bills which they cannot afford. They see the civic as helping them with such problems.

Question 2 - What do the people think of the civic? - continues on next page

*poor attendance of inter-branch...? meetings!
Lack of projects or ~~advice~~ ^{work} that can involve
the whole civic Association - ^{eg} ~~the~~ ^{as it} ~~happens~~ ^{happened}
against the rent increase; Campaign against
Community Council election;*

WHAT DO THE PEOPLE THINK OF THE CIVIC?

Members reported that in some areas the civic has a poor image. The people tend to blame the Comm. of 10 and do not see it as their organisation.

There is also the misconception that the civic is for educated and politically minded people. Others feel that there is no place for civics, all they want to do is talk about the 'national question'.

There is also an over reliance on the leadership to solve problems. Others see the civic as an alternative to the local authorities and the community councils.

It was felt by one group that despite the problems, the civic has built up credibility in the community and has its greatest appeal among adults in the township.

WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE ROLE OF A CIVIC ORGANISATION?

The following are the responses to the above question:

- it is a mass organisation. It is an organisation of a broad cross-section in the community. A civic organisation organises people around concrete day-to-day issues such as, housing, health, township maintenance etc.
- it helps to organise people to see that they have the ability to solve problems themselves.
- it organises people to meet ^{their} needs
- a civic has an educational and an informative role in the community. For example, teaching people how to read metres so that they are not overcharged.
- we are striving to build a nation. And, it is through our civics that we build the foundation, a grassroots foundation of that nation. And, then, we can build our future government.

To mobilise the masses around the oppressedness at this level into a mass action against it.

END OF SESSION ONE

Session II - Community Organisation in the 1980's

A paper was presented on the above topic. This is a short summary of the paper on community organisation in the 1980's.

Our history of resistance, particularly in the 1950's was a time of mass action. Thousands of people participated in the defiance campaign, in the women's march to Pretoria and other mass campaigns of that time. We learn from this that our organisations had an appeal to the masses. And, were rooted in the masses.

The silent and dark years after the state of emergency in the early 1960's, was broken by student action. And, the Black Consciousness movement of the late 60's and 70's. These organisations were essentially student based and did not succeed in the organisation of the vast mass of the oppressed - the working class.

But, in 1973, the trend changed toward worker action when thousands of workers went on strike in Natal. And, the growth of the independent trade union movement was on the agenda.

Soweto 1976 was the turning point - South Africa was never to be the same again. This was clearly a mass uprising, but it remained a student and youth revolt. The sons and daughters of the workers of Soweto said no to Bantu education. There were massive stay aways with workers supporting the students.

The question that we must ask is this:

1976 in Soweto thousands of people were mobilised to take action. But after that, there was nothing, not even strong organisation to take the struggle forward. Why?

In the post 1977 period, particularly in Natal and the Western Cape, the need for strong mass organisation were recognised. The Fattis and Monis workers went on strike in Cape Town and the country came out to support the workers with a boycott. And so, we see a strong emphasis upon joint struggles between community organisations and trade unions. There were many similar struggles of this kind in the years to follow.

In the post 1980 schools boycott period, we see organisations at every site of struggle. Every sector of our society had to be organised. Students, women, civics, trade unions, youth, sports and progressive religious groups. There were also community newspapers to publicise the struggles of our people. Cultural groups were also started.

These organisations set themselves the task of organising our people around day-to-day issues which affected them. In the communities civics attacked local government and demanded better living conditions and houses, security and comfort. On the factory floor, workers organised for a living wage, decent working conditions and the right to join unions of their choice.

Through this, we learnt that our struggle for a better life in our communities was not separate from our struggle for higher wages. It was also not separate from our struggle against apartheid and against capitalist exploitation. It was part and parcel of our struggle for a free and a democratic South Africa.

Today, we know that change is certain, that change will come. But who is going to bring that change? Will it be you and me? Will it be a hand full of activists? Or will it be the masses?

We must have faith in the people, in the vast majority of Black workers who are the most oppressed and exploited who will lead our struggle. And so, we must pay attention to the organisation of the working people not only at work, but also in the communities.

Does it mean that because we who are the most oppressed, that we will spontaneously take action and win our freedom? No, there is no short-cut, only organisation can bring long-term results. Without organisation, we will only see sporadic and spontaneous outbursts that will fizzle out like a candle.

We must therefore address the question of organising, educating and mobilising our people. This is the challenge facing us. We must take the politics to the masses, but not on our terms. But, on their terms.

This input paper was followed by group discussion. There were three questions and each group had to answer one. Short extracts were prepared to guide the group discussion. Refer to appendix A1, A2 and A3.

Report Back - Question - Why do we organise?

- . to protect that which we strive for
- . to recognize that there is strength in a group united
- . to channel the discontent of the people
- . to raise consciousness
- . to organise people around their daily problems. But also for long-term political struggle
- . the rulers use a strategy of divide and rule. It is easy to rule a people who are divided, but hard to rule a people who are united.
- . in unity there is strength.

Report Back - Question - Why do we organise in our Communities?

- . residents are affected by problems in their communities
- . to make residents vigilant about the oppressive practices of local authorities
- . in our communities we make links with other organisations of the people.

Members did a role play based on the case study (refer to Appendix A2). It was a housevisit to a family talking to them about why it is important to organise in our communities and that they should join the civic.

The role play helped participants to practise talking to people, know what types of questions to expect and how to conduct themselves. The importance of preparing and training new members in our branches to do door-to-door work was stressed.

Report Back - Question - Is our civic work political?

- Yes. Our civic work is a response to the oppression, the control and the vicious apartheid laws against our people in the communities where we live.
- it is an attempt to better the lives of our people. To relieve them from their suffering. This situation that our people find themselves in is a direct result of the political situation in our country.
- our task is to fight bread and butter issues and to educate the people about how these problems are linked to politics.

After the report back, we set about answering the question: What is the role of a civic organisation? It was divided into different sections. What follows is that very process of discussion and arriving at our answer.

- a. In answering this question, we made a list of what a progressive civic organisation is not. It is not an organisation:

- which stands on the side of local authorities - Administration Boards, Community Councils or any government created body which was designed to keep us in bondage
- which makes money out of the people
- which denies the people the opportunity to play an active part in building and strengthening that organisation
- which denies the people their right to a democratic say
- which exists in NAME only, or what is called a paper organisation
- where the leaders speak for the people without consultation
- where the leaders are on the one side and the people are on the other
- it is not a political party

- b. Now, we tried to answer the question: What is a progressive civic organisation? It is an organisation which:

- fights for the rights of residents in the communities. It also defends residents against attacks on their living conditions
- fights for better living conditions
- serves the people (not the bosses who exploit the workers. Or the government and its puppets such as the Administration Boards and community councillors who oppress our people)

- it is a people's organisation. An organisation which is for the people and by the people
 - it is a democratic people's organisation. It respects the people's right to make democratic decisions in their organisations. It is the people's right to have democratic control over the affairs of their organisation
 - it builds people's power and their belief that they can and will change things
 - it develops our awareness of why we are oppressed and exploited
 - it develops the will of residents to fight back. To say no to oppression and exploitation in our communities
 - it develops leadership of the people
 - it must be a training ground to develop new people and draw them into the struggle. And to train them to become future organisers
 - builds our understanding of why we need to organise and of the importance of organisation in our struggle.
- c. We then asked ourselves what types of problems/issues does a civic organise people around?

This was our answer: a civic organises in communities which have very clear geographic boundaries. The issues are housing, maintenance of houses; township maintenance such as garbage removal, drainage, sewerage; transport, electricity, water, services and facilities, recreation, health and safety. All issues which affect residents in their struggle for better living conditions. And, to exercise control over their lives.

- d. How do we organise?

These are a few of the very basic points:

- start where the people are at. (this is often referred to as the concrete conditions within which we organise?)
- move at the pace of the people
- operate within the people's experiences, their customs and how they understand the world
- organise people around the day-to-day issues and problems which affects them. No issue is too small to be taken up if we make gains from it.
- small victories or gains, even small successful projects, can build confidence and the will to fight on
- our organisations are not 'talk shops' - they have very clear tasks
- we believe in building a mass base, a grassroots base to our organisations. A base that will be organised, educated and mobilised.

- * we organise on the basis of active participation of the people. And, on their right to make decisions
 - * we build power step by step, street by street, area by area and then only can we say that a civic organisation is a mass based organisation.
- e. We also asked ourselves where does a civic association stand in relation to other organisations of our people?

This is how we explained it:

Today, we have organisations for almost every sector of our society. Youth, students, women's organisations, civics, residents or tenants associations. We have cultural, sporting and religious organisations. We also have trade unions and political organisations. We are organising people where ever they are.

A progressive civic organisation makes the links between struggles waged where we work and where we live. It makes the links with people's organisations at the work place and in the communities. Further, it also makes links with people's organisations locally, provincially and nationally.

For instance, struggles can be waged locally. But depending on the situation, local organisations can join hands with organisation provincially. And, even nationally. The campaign against the government's new constitution is such an example.

We believe that only through unity of our people in struggle, through organisation, can we go forward.

We see ^{then that} there is not easy walk to freedom.

- f. Is our civic work political?

A civic organisation takes up local issues that people face in their daily lives eg. housing. These issues are political, yes. Housing is affected by political policies of the government such as the Group Areas Act.

But, we also make a distinction between first level and second level organisations. A first level organisation appeals to a particular constituency only. Civics to residents, students organisations to students, women etc.

A second level organisation brings all these local organisations which are organising particular groupings, together. It brings them together to fight for national political demands. A second level organisation would challenge every aspect of political domination and economic exploitation of our people. A second level organisation would also have a national political program.

Now we can say that the UDF is such a second level organisation. But the UDF is not a political party. It is a FRONT of 600 organisations. These organisations have come together to oppose the new constitution and the Koornhof Bills. So we see that this coming together of organisations was for a particular purpose. These organisations in the UDF may have different political points of view. But, they all agree on a bare minimum of points. These points are in the UDF declaration and that is;

- . a non-racial South Africa
- . a democratic South Africa based on the will of the people,
- . and, a single South African nation free of Bantustans and the Group Areas Act.

Although a civic organisation is a first level organisation, it can and must make the political links. For instance, a civic organisation can give meat to our ideal of a democratic South Africa. It can do this by practising what it preaches and that is to organise democratically. Further, our civic organisation can incorporate the demands of our people as a whole. Such as the demand for housing, security and comfort. Or, the right to live and work where we choose. A civic organisation can also go a long way in making concrete our ideal for building a single South African nation. eg. in Soweto, there are different groups of tribal backgrounds. The government has always exploited this fact. The civic can play a vital role in unifying our people at a local level. This unity will be forged in struggle .

There are many ways in which a civic organisation can make the links with political oppression and economic exploitation in our country. A civic which fails to do this, would have failed the people and would end up in being no more than a welfare society.

In the 1940's the women organised around the food shortages. Their slogan was a rich one and it made the linkages. They said:

"Today we fight for bread, tomorrow for the vote and then for freedom for all".

END OF SESSION II

Session III - Case Study of Soweto

This was a presentation which members found very useful.
REFER TO APPENDIX B FOR THIS PAPER - A CASE STUDY
 OF SOWETO. - useful facts and figures that every civic
 organiser should be armed with.

Why is it important to know the area where we are organising?

- we come to know what the problems and issues are for the people
- we get a feel for the experiences of the people so that we can meet them where they are at
- it helps us to make contacts. To establish our presence in the area
- it helps us to build up our knowledge of the area including FACTS AND FIGURES
- we get to know what type of tactics are acceptable to the people
- lastly, it helps us to make an assessment of the situation in the community. It guides us in working out how we should go forward. And, it gives us the chance to assess the willingness of the people to become active in civic affairs.

From the case study we emphasised the following points:

- Research an issue - FACTS AND FIGURES
- Identify common issues that affects everybody or large numbers of people. Nail down the issue.
- The people must agree that it is an issue
- Agitate around that issue - that is, EDUCATE
- Come up with concrete demands, that are feasible and that can realistically be achieved.
- Plan a program of action - how are you going to set about organising
- ACTION - mobilise for action.

We broke up into two groups for discussion and selected two areas in Soweto that members were familiar with. These areas were White City and Jabavu. They had to discuss the following questions. See overleaf.

The questions were:

- Who are the people who live in this area? Describe.
- Rank these problems from the most burning to the least from 1 - 3
- What are the three most burning problems to the people of this area?
- Formulate a concrete and an achievable demand/s.

Lastly, how will you organise and take action around this issue?

REPORT BACK - JABAVU

Who are the people of Jabavu?

They live in sub-economic houses, they are generally low-income people. There are large numbers of pensioners and widows. They come from mixed ethnic groups. The area is also a strong hold for the Sofasonke Party and tend to be pro-community councils. There are *25,000 people in Jabavu.

What are the burning problems in this area?

Over-crowding; crime; no fences around the houses; no pavements; poor maintenance of houses; the township is filthy. There are no recreational facilities and the high electricity charges is a real issue for the people.

The burning problem and demands

We identified the filth in the township as a priority issue around which we could organise the people of Jabavu. And, around which we could see a possible positive outcome. Armed with our facts that the people pay R4.00 per month for garbage removal as part of their rent, we demanded the following:

- We demand a clean and hygienic township in which to live.
- We demand rubbish bins for each house
- We demand that the health inspectors do their jobs and inspect this township
- We demand that our rubbish be collected twice per week.

How will we take action?

- House to house campaign to educate the people about the issue
- We will recruit a workforce as we go along
- Train activists on how to do door-to-door work and educate them about the issue.
- work towards housemeetings on every street
- We would let this climax in a public meeting where we will launch a petition.
- If this fails we will demonstrate

- * and if everything fails, we will refuse to pay service charges as part of our rent.

A possible slogan: * We demand a clean and healthy township

- * Away with filth one fam. one dustbin.
- * We pay for service charges, we demand a clean township.

END OF SESSION III

FIELD ASSIGNMENT: REFER TO APPENDIX C FOR THE FIELD ASSIGNMENT. ALSO APPENDIX D FOR A HANDOUT ON GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COMMUNITY.

The purpose of the field assignment is to get members to go back to their areas and to get to know the areas in which they are organising. At the follow-up workshop we will learn skills in organising and work out a strategy based on what comes out of the research into the communities.

ASSESSMENT

Members found the workshop useful, particularly, the method of group discussion. Members said that they expected to get lectures all week-end, they did not realise that they would have to do the work.

It was felt that everybody should get a chance to report back and that certain members reported back twice.

Suggestions for next workshop

- . how do you deal with conflict in the civic (personal or ideological)
- . how to keep the civic going and the group cohesive. Also, how do we deal with ideological problems which threatens the organisation.
- . personal growth, self-criticism
- . group dynamics
- . administration in running a civic
- . using media and organising
- . meeting procedures
- . recruiting new members
- . Inter-branch communication

NEXT WORKSHOP WILL BE 13th, 14th and 15th July, 1984

APPENDIX A1 - Extracts to guide group discussion

WHY DO WE ORGANISE?

NOTE: Read this carefully and discuss the questions and some of the controversial points. Deepen your understanding of why we organise. Allocate the last 10 minutes of group discussion to summarise the discussion and the main points for report back.

We are walking a long road. And every step that we take, is a step towards the end of that road. The end of that road is a better life for our people

What is that life? What do we want it to be?

We use many ways to get us to the end of that road. One of the most important ways is through unity and organisation. These are our weapons. Without it, our people will be powerless, voiceless and disunited in the face of the enemy (the bosses and the state).

Without organisations our struggle will end in spontaneous activities which will surface at different times. Think of Soweto 1976, what lessons can we draw from that experience? It is only through organisation that we can go forward.

How can our organisations take us a step forward on that great road that we are walking?

APPENDIX A2 - Extracts to guide group discussion

Note: Read the following carefully and discuss the questions. Deepen your understanding of why we organise in our communities.

Allocate the last 10 min. of group discussion to summarising the discussion and the main points for report back.

WHY DO WE ORGANISE IN OUR COMMUNITIES.

People often say that we must organise our people where ever they are. On the factory floor where we work and in the communities where we live.

They say that Mr Mbotwe who works at OK Bazaars Warehouse, is the same Mr Mbotwe who lives in Orlando East. That his struggle for higher wages and better working conditions cannot rest at OK Bazaars Warehouse. Mr Mbotwe also faces high rents in the township. He has to travell 4 hours per day to Johannesburg. And, when the busfares go up, it must come out of his pocket.

Mr Mbotwe's house leaks, the garbage stands for days outside before it is collected. There are no street lights. His wife and children are sick. The list of problems are endless.

Mr and Mrs Mbotwe sit alone in their house with their problems. There is a knock at the door. An organiser walks in from Orlando East Civic branch and asks to talk to them about the civic

Instructions

Discuss the statement carefully. Try to deepen your understanding of why we need to organise in our communities. Also work out how you will approach the Mbotwes. You need to convince them that it is important to organise in our communities. And, that they must become active members of the civic. How will you do this?

You can even role play it.

IS OUR CIVIC WORK POLITICAL?

A civic activist told this story:

We were organising in a small section of the community. Our civic association was campaigning to have the due date on which we pay our electricity, changed from the 22nd of the month to the 7th.

The council charged interest fro every day that the residents were overdue with their payments. We knew that many people could not pay by the 22nd of the month. We also knew that most people were paid weekly, but especially monthly. And so, the 22nd of the month was inconvenient. We did a survey and found that the council made R400,000,00 per month on late payments.

And so we set out to organise. We talked to residents door-to-door explaining what the issue was. We took newsletters with us demanding that the due date be changed. We also took a petition around. And, we invited the people to a housemeeting on that street.

In the housemeeting, the residents talked freely about their problems, not only about the electricity. Half way through, one of the women said: "we aren't here for politics hey? We are here because we want the electricity due date changed."

Questions

Do you agree or disagree with this resident? Explain why.

If you were the activist, how would you respond?

Housing and services in Soweto

Soweto is administered by the Soweto Council. In terms of the Black Local Authorities Act (1983), the council has the power to administer the township, to allocate houses, to collect rents, to increase rents, to evict tenants who do not pay rent, to administer services like water, sewerage and refuse removal, electricity, road maintenance, dog licences, parks, recreation facilities to allocate trading licences and to control trading sites.

The Soweto Council

The Soweto Council was elected in November 1983. Only one out of every ten people voted in the election. Most of the people did not vote because they did not believe the council has the power to improve conditions in Soweto.

Mr Ephraim Tshabalala won the council elections. In his election pamphlet he promised rents would go down to five rand a month, that the shebeens could stay and that he would build houses for everyone.

What has Tshabalala done since his election?

Rents have not gone down

He has not built houses for everyone. The new houses in Diepkloof, Chiawelo and Dube are too expensive for people to afford

There are still 50 000 families without homes in Soweto

One out of every three people is still unemployed

The council says it will put up a toll gate at the entrance to Soweto and charge every car that comes in and out of Soweto 5c, 15c for vans, 20c for combi's, 30c for trucks, 40c for big trucks, 45c for buses, and 50c for large trucks.

20 people get murdered in the township every weekend

Mr Tshabalala spent R50 000 on a feast when he won the election

Can the Council do anything it likes?

There are two things that stop the council from doing anything it likes

1. It has very little money

2. The Black Local Authorities Act says that the Minister of Co-operation and Development has the power to force the council to make a decision, dismiss the council if it refuses to make a decision, take control

(2)

of the council's money, call for the election of a new council, and if no one stands for the election, he can appoint councillors.

Where does the Soweto Council get its money?

From the people of Soweto

R7 out of every R10 that the council has comes from service charges that the residents pay. That is from what the residents pay for water, sewerage removal, electricity, rubbish removal.

R3 out of every ten rand that the council has comes from site rent, profits on beer, trading licences, dog licences, levies, eg the electricity levy, and fines for not paying rent and dog licences.

Traffic fines go to the Johannesburg City Council

Influx control fines go to the West Rand Administration Board

Where does the Johannesburg City Council get its money?

R9 out of every R10 that the Johannesburg City Council gets comes from rates and taxes paid by businesses, and factories in Johannesburg. The businesses pay these rates and taxes from profits, made by workers who live in Soweto.

What are rents for ?

Rent on a house in Mabletsane

Site rental

Township administration	R 5,43
Lighting maintenance	R 0,46
Road maintenance	R 0,74
School levy fund	R 0,38
Water pipes	R 0,12
Clinic Service	R 1,50
Planning fee	R 0,30
Total	<u>R 8,93</u>

Service charges

Unmetered water supply	R10,50
Street cleaning and refuse removal	R 4,00
Sewerage maintenance/removal	R 7,93
Electricity (if available)	-
Total	<u>R22,43</u>

House rent

Maintenance	R 3,79
Insurance	R 0,60
House rent	R 3,25
Total	<u>R 7,64</u>

Levies

Electricity levy	R17,00
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Total Site rent	R 8,93
Service charges	R22,43
House rent	R 7,64
Levy	<u>R17,00</u>
	<u>R56,00</u>

Some important points

1. When you buy a house the only part of the rent you no longer pay is the "house rent"
2. The electricity levy is due to go up to R29 in the next few years, everyone in Soweto has to pay this except pensioners who do not have electricity. Other people who do not have electricity still pay the levy.
3. The insurance you pay is not for you it is for the council if the house gets burned down.

Electricity

Soweto's electricity does not come from Orlando power station. It comes from Escom.

So far 104 000 houses in Soweto have been wired for electricity. Only 30 000 have been switched on. Another 70 000 are due to be switched on in August this year.

Every resident in Soweto has to pay R17 a month availability levy to the council. This is to pay back the R250 000 loan that the council took to electrify Soweto.

Over and above this levy residents have to pay for the electricity they use. Electricity in Soweto is more expensive than in Johannesburg because the Johannesburg municipality charges R5,14c a unit for electricity (some of it made at Orlando power station) and Escom charges Soweto residents R6-8c a unit for electricity depending on where they live.

What are the powers of the West Rand Administration Board

The West Rand Administration Board is responsible for developing and planning Soweto. They get money to buy land and put in services like water and sewerage from the National Housing Fund of the Department of Community Development. The Department of Community Development no longer gives the boards or the councils money to build houses. The government says people who do not have houses must get a plot of land and build their own houses. This means they must either borrow money from their employers, the bank or they must build the house themselves at night or over weekends.

APPENDIX C - FIELD EXERCISE

You will have the next 4 weeks to work on this assignment. You are expected to write (in point form) up this assignment so that it can be presented for discussion at the July workshop. We will build on the findings of this exercise and work out a strategy for organising. In the second workshop we will also learn some of the basic skills of organising.

A. Purpose of assignment

- . to come to an understanding of the conditions in the different areas where the civic is organising
- . to give civic activists an idea of how we come to make such an assessment.

B. Return to your area. If you can, try to get a small core group together of civic members. If you cannot get such a group together, work with your fellow participants on the assignment.

C. Study the area where you are organising. You are now going to look at your community in a totally different way. Ask yourself the following questions and write a report on your findings.

Questions

- * What is the history or tradition of organisation in this area?
- * who are the people who live here?
- * what are the conditions under which they live in this particular area in Soweto?
- * what are the most pressing problems in this area?
- * what are the smaller day-to-day problems that the people are faced with?
- * which organisations exist in the community? Who are the contact people? Can we form alliances with them?
- * now, make an assessment of what is a likely issue around which the civic can organise in this area. It must be feasible to take up this issue. There must be a reasonable chance to demonstrating a positive outcome .

D. You will have to speak to many people over the next four weeks to gather this information. More important, you will have to speak to the people themselves.

Select * 20 homes in a section of the area where you are organising. Speak to the people. Learn to listen and observe. Try to look at your neighbourhood in a different way. Find out what their problems/issues are. Assess their readiness to become involved in the issue/problem.

APPENDIX D - TO BE READ WITH FIELD ASSIGNMENT.

GETTING TO KNOW THE AREA/PEOPLE WHERE WE ARE ORGANISING

Why is it so important to get to know that area and the people where we are organising?

- . we come to know what the problems and issues are for the people
- . we get a feel for the experiences of the people so that we can meet them where they are at
- . it helps us to make contacts. To establish our presence in the area
- . it helps us to build up knowledge of the area including facts and figures
- . we get to know what type of tactics are acceptable to the people
- . lastly, it helps us to make an assessment of the situation in the community. Secondly, it guides us in working out how we should go forward. And, thirdly, it gives us the chance to assess the willingness of the people to become active in civic affairs.

Exercise - self-teaching exercise

think about the following and write down your answer

- . In which area do you organise for the civic?
- . Who are the people who live in this area?
- . List 3 of the most burning issues to the people in that area
- . How do you think will the people rank it from 1 - 3?
- . If you should try to organise the people in this area around any of the three issues? What do you think their response will be?

Some of the questions we can ask ourselves in getting to know the community

- . What is the history of this community?

Where do the people come from? Under what circumstances did they move to Soweto?

How are the problems in this community linked to the past problems in this area?

What is the people's tradition of organisation and involvement? What impact has 1976 and 1980 had upon the people?

If the civic is taking up an issue eg. maintenance of the township, what is the history of this issue/ How long has it been a problem? Were there promises made in the past?

Think of other relevant questions?

- . What are the conditions under which the people live in this area?

Housing, street lights, township maintenance, garbage collection, electricity services and facilities. Complete the list.

Which local authority is responsible? Who pays for it or rather, how are the above paid for and by whom? eg. service charges are included in the rent payments. So, if residents want to demand better maintenance, then it makes a strong case if we can say: We pay x amount each month for service charges, we demand better township maintenance.

Who are the people who live here?

How many people live here; are they young or old; tenants, home owners; working class or middle class; are there many working women; unemployment. Do the people have urban "rights"; what languages do they speak. Where do they work; how do they travel; what could they earn? What do they think of the community in which they live? What are their attitudes about major social issues? Their values, views about politics ..

Which organisations exist in this community?

welfare; religious; recreational; sporting; youth; students; women; burial societies; stokvel etc.
How do people spend their leisure time? Bioscopes, shebeens, beer halls etc. Organisations in a community can be powerful and influential. Get to know these organisations. You may need their support and influence at some point. eg. venues or their contact with people.
Also identify the sympathetic people in these organisations. They will lead you to many new contacts.

Who controls this township?

We need a sound knowledge of how the Administration Boards work. Who is responsible for what; where does the money come from?
All this is very important. If the civic takes up the issue of leaking roofs - we must know who is responsible; is maintenance included in our rent?
Who are the puppets or supporters of the Administration Boards, the Community Councillors in this area?
What about the police?
Who are the natural leaders on the side of the people?
Who are the influential people in the area?

What are the major problems around which people could be organised and mobilised? Will there be the chance to show some results?
Getting to know your community must help you answer this question.

APPENDIX E .

WORKSHOP PROGRAM - SESSION I 8 - 10 JUNE 1984

FRIDAY NIGHT: Welcome and introduction
to the program

Getting to know each other
Setting goals, clarifying expectations

Video on the new constitution

SATURDAY :

8.30 - 9.15	<u>Program of the Soweto Civic Association</u>
9.15 - 9.30	Questions
9.30 - 9.45	TEA BREAK
9.45 - 11.00	Group discussion
11.00 - 12.00	Report back and plenary discussion
12.00 - 1.30	LUNCH BREAK
1.30 - 2.15	<u>Community Organization in the 1980's</u>
2.15 - 2.45	Display of community action programs locally and nationally
2.45 - 3.00	TEA
3.00 - 4.00	Group discussion
4.00 - 5.00	Report back and summary and answering the question: <u>WHAT IS THE ROLE OF A CIVIC ORGANIZATION.</u>

SATURDAY EVENING

Relevant videos and films. Discussion

SUNDAY

Getting to know your community

8.30 - 9.30

Case study of Soweto (input)

9.30 - 10.00

Getting to know the area where you are
organising. (input)

10.00 - 10.15

TEA

10.15 - 11.00

Getting to know a selected area
in Soweto. Group discussion

11.00 - 12.00

Report back. Identifying issues/ needs
and problems in the selected areas in
Soweto.

12.00 - 1.30

LUNCH

1.30 - 2.30

Preparation for field exercise

2.30 - 3.30

Summary and assessment

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