

Key to student strength is to organise and consolidate

ORGANISING and consolidating the student movement is the main task facing Azaso in the coming year.

This was the key message of speakers and delegates at the recent Azaso (Azanian Students Organisation) congress in Hammanskraal, Pretoria, who saw the 1982 theme 'Education Towards Democracy' as a vehicle to rally active student support and mass participation.

The congress, attended by over 300 students was seen as an important landmark for Azaso as it was the first time representatives from every black university and black students from all liberal campuses had attended an Azaso congress.

Speakers pinpointed repression and reform as a means to curb student activity and to create an ill-informed and co-opted student mass. Azaso saw this as a major challenge facing students today and one that could only be met by grassroots organisation.

'For such organisation', said one speaker, 'we don't need powerful speakers as much as we need creative organisers'.

In his opening address, Azaso president Joe Phaahla, re-elected for a second term at the congress, said repression and reform are cornerstones of the state's response to democratic organisations.

Reform, he said, was an attempt to divide the people by creating forums for collaborators within the system.

While this strategy could easily be seen in the Presidents Council and local administration bodies, he said, 'whether to be part of the oppressive system or part of the oppressed majority' was also a major challenge facing black students today.

'Because those of us who reach university are a selected few out of the majority, we become the natural targets for the system's methods of privilege and ideological control', he said.

'Money is poured into the universities to make sure we come out believing we are privileged, different from the rest of our community and are thus alienated from them.'

He said students must change all privileges into instruments to strengthen the struggle for democracy.

In his talk on student involvement, former executive member Aaron Motswaledi said because demands on students of the 80's are greater than ever before, students must organise around issues that affect them directly as well as outside issues.

Motswaledi said the student of the 80's is different from the student of the 70's having gained direction from learning and experience.

'Students have realised workers and not themselves are the vanguard of the struggle and so they have taken on a more supportive role'.

'Stronger links have also been forged with the community as students now see that the education struggle cannot be separated from the broader struggle for change in society'.

He said this understanding and the emphasis on mass based organisation and democratic decision making meant students were now concerned with continuous involvement, no longer confining their activities to boycotts.

'The state has also had to find new strategies to cope with the students of the 80's, he said. 'The Verwoerd strategy that blacks be kept from the green pastures of the Europeans where they are not allowed to graze' has changed.

'Reform has become a keyword in total strategy today', he said, 'and education is now the main reform tool used to contain student activity. Reform aims to build a strong middle class as a buffer zone and to divide the community'.

He said reform on university campuses goes hand in hand with repression. 'Repression operates through academic structures with the university administration taking over the role of the security police.'

Motswaledi said some of the forms this 'academic terrorism' takes are:

- Admin imposes SRC constitutions unacceptable to students
- Students are secured from outside contact. They have to get permission to sell publications and material and to bring outside speakers onto their campus. This year, Azaso president Joe Phaahla was not allowed to address students at Medunsa because 'it would not benefit the students' and at Fort Hare speakers are only permitted if their 'christian credentials can be identified'.



'We need creative organisers'
Aaron Motswaledi

- Exams are scheduled for commemoration days so that it is difficult for students to take part.

These restrictions and intimidatory methods allowed for the creation of an ill-informed and co-opted student body, he said, and this was why students needed to organise around these immediate issues.

Reports from the various campuses covered student struggles over the past year and showed that a major issue facing the students at the black universities of Medunsa, Ngoya, Turfloop and Fort Hare was establishing student structures which were both representative and acceptable to students.

'The lack of SRC's on these campuses seriously effects student organisation', said one speaker.

A Fort Hare representative said during the recent boycott there had been an urgent need for a SRC to make communication between students easier. Instead students had had to rely on an interim committee to fill this gap.

Other speakers at the congress included Paul Davids of the Natal Indian Congress and John Lazar, president of the South African Students Press Union.

A resolution condemned the Swaziland land deal with South Africa and called on both governments to accede to the people's right to live in the land of their birth.

Other motions on education, women, forced removals and graduation ceremonies were passed at the congress.



Helen Joseph addresses meeting after her banning order expired

Another banning ends for Helen

HELEN JOSEPH, South Africa's veteran of resistance politics recently completed a two year banning order.

At 77, the expiry of her latest banning order follows a long line of detention, trials, jailings, house arrest and harassment spanning a quarter of a century.

Helen Joseph has the distinction of being the first person to be placed under house arrest in South Africa. Following her house arrest in October 1962, she was forced to lead a solitary dusk to dawn existence and deprived of visits by friends.

Even when she became critically ill with cancer in 1971, special permission had to be obtained to



Helen is garlanded at Lenasia protest meeting

allow her to go to hospital for an emergency operation.

Helen Joseph was involved in the Congress of Democrats and was

secretary of the Federation of South African Women in the 1950's. She was one of the 156 people arrested and put on trial for treason in 1957.

However charges against her were dropped and those charged were acquitted after a marathon trial.

She is also listed which means that she cannot be quoted nor can she write articles or publish.

A friend of hers said: 'Through all these years Helen has retained her firm convictions, spoken out when she could and expressed her belief in the determination of South Africa's people to struggle for a non-racial democratic country where the people will govern.'

Women come together at Wits

HELEN JOSEPH delivered her first public address since her recent unbanning to a crowd of over three hundred at the Nusas Women's Conference.

The four-day conference, the first ever of its kind, focussed on 'women's oppression and their position and role in society'.

The conference consisted of talks by academics, students and unionists; discussion groups; movies;

workshops and videos.

One of the most useful papers was on the role of women in the liberation struggles of China, Cuba, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The paper highlighted some of the gains and changes that have taken place in socialist countries as regards the position of women. It also pointed to a lack of advancement in certain aspects of women's status in these countries.

Azaso launches committee to focus on women

AN INTERIM committee to look into women's oppression and the possibility of forming an Azaso Women's Movement was elected at the recent Azanian Students Organisation Congress in Hammanskraal.

Following much discussion on organising women on campuses, the congress passed a resolution to elect the investigating committee.

A spokesperson for the committee said women face particularly harsh forms of oppression.

'On a broad level they share the oppression of the community and workers, but they are also oppressed by the sexist attitudes of our society'.

'They are brought up to believe they are inferior to men and must be passive and subordinate themselves.'

She said women also have little legal protection, are a large part of the unemployed and have difficulty in forming trade unions.

Because of these problems and the resulting general lack of women participating in organisations, Azaso students felt it necessary to look into drawing campus women

into an organisation.

The interim committee's objectives are two-fold:

- To make women understand how and why they have come into the situation they find themselves in. 'This can be achieved', said the spokesperson, 'if women forge links with progressive women's organisations and so continue the struggle for the democratic rights of women.'

- To help women define issues that they should take up both in their organisations and in other areas of the struggle.

Lone Lillian faces charges

AFTER SPENDING eight months in custody, Lillian Keagile was refused bail by a Johannesburg magistrate.

Lillian Keagile (24) was detained on November 18 last year and held under security legislation before being charged. She is alleged to have belonged to a banned organisation but there are no details of the

charges.

Her defence in requesting bail said it seemed that the police would never complete their investigations. Bail was opposed by the Attorney-General in the interests of State, security and the maintenance of law and order.

Keagile's trial was remanded to August 12.