

Some notes on political education requirements inside

Introduction. Obviously the major feature of the last five years at home has been the enormous growth of the mass democratic movement, and of rudimentary organs of people's power. Literally millions of South Africans have been drawn into UDF and COSATU affiliates. The ANC and the Freedom Charter now enjoy an overwhelming popular support. However this support is often not very deeply grounded in ideological terms, and, in the difficult and complex period ahead, this lack of real depth is a potentially serious weakness.

In particular in the last year, both UDF and COSATU have recognised that political education is a major, perhaps THE major challenge confronting them. They see the need ^{for} ~~of~~ transforming their dramatic quantitative growth qualitatively., transforming members into activists, & activists into reliable cadres. Political education is the key, but resources are desperately lacking .

The very rapid growth in membership has also, of course, been accompanied by the usual teething problems - factionalism, regionalism, leadership problems, etc. Again, nationally uniform educational programs and organisational practices are of paramount importance.

The general recognition of the importance of political education and training (ET) is not just confined to the national leadership of UDF and COSATU. My own day-to-day experience as an ET officer suggests that there is an enormous hunger for relevant, politically authoritative resources - at every level, and even in the smallest platteland townships. Our people are demanding politics.

^{Against this background}
~~Generally speaking,~~ current ANC publications ^{need} ~~can~~, in my view, to be improved and they also need quite a bit of supplementing. I don't think enough thought is going into the education and training aspect of our publications. Nor are we thinking clearly about the different levels of ET that are required. As a result our publications often fall between various stools - there is a tendency for them to be simplistic ~~isn't~~ instead of simple, or to offer individual opinions when an authoritative collective line is required, or, at another level, dogmatic when greater theoretical rigour would be appropriate.

Different levels at which Political Education inputs are required

Schematically, there are three distinct levels requiring attention.

A. Basic

This is the level of greatest need, and also the level most poorly served. In approaching this level of political training we must remember that some 50% of SAn adults are illiterate (HSRC figures), and of the other 50% ^{many} may read and write only, or mainly, in their respective mother-tongues. It is difficult to generalise ~~about~~ about the target audience for basic political education materials - in fact, it includes a fair range, spanning (to use concrete examples) :

- a. migrant workers living in hostels and speaking only their mother-tongues with virtually no literacy ;
- b. older ^{urbanised} working people drawn recently into unions, or UDF affiliate or street committee structures, not very literate but understanding basic English ;
- c. young workers, students and youth, fairly articulate and literate, but only recently drawn into any mass democratic structures.

For all these groups there is a need for accessible material on the basics of

- i. understanding society (in effect, the basics of historical materialism) - early societies, class divisions, colonialism, capitalism, imperialism, etc.
- ii. the history of our national liberation struggle.
- iii. the main features, principles and aims of our struggle - The Freedom Charter, non-racialism, the strategy of national democratic struggle, etc.
- iv. basic organisational issues - security, discipline, democracy.

International development of the anti-imperialist struggle. Vi SAC's 11/24/1981
The resources for this material should not necessarily be printed material. In fact, for groups a. and b. above, video cassettes, audio cassettes, the use of mother tongue languages, visual displays, etc. are more or less imperative.

In Cape Town we had access to several ANC/Idaf videos , and the SACP video, and our experience with these in the townships and hostels was very positive, even though most of them were in fact targetted at an international solidarity audience. Obviously the medium has a lot of potential for mass education work. People in townships now generally seem to have ways and means

for getting hold of video machines, and a few hot (politically hot !) cassettes seem to be quite quickly reproduced and circulated.

I'm not sure if audio cassettes have ever been tried by us (Khomeini certainly had success with them), but we should definitely make use of this medium. They are easy to conceal or disguise (as opposed to the floppy records previously used).

Both video and audio cassettes can make use of different languages, they encourage collective learning and they are much more impactful with low literacy audiences, and indeed with others too.

Short lectures on cassette, interspersed with rousing song would be greatly valued. Audio cassette; on basic political training could be provided also to Radio Freedom stations, and in turn they could place on cassette key interviews, keynote speeches by leadership etc. (Radio Freedom is not being ~~xxx~~ received in many parts of the country - so it makes sense to complement it in this way).

Obviously expense is a factor in these alternate media, but a 40 well placed cassettes fed into key networks would go a long way and would be reproduced quickly.

Insofar as written material is used for this basic level of education, the example of the journal Learn & Teach should be followed - in terms of language level, style, large format, use of illustrations and graphics, etc.

B. Grassroots leadership

Here I am thinking of shop stewards, ^x branch level leadership in the mass democratic movement. The overwhelming need here is still to ground people in the same basics enumerated in A. above, but in slightly greater depth. Additional topics can also be introduced - eg. other political tendencies (black consciousness, workerism, etc.), and organisational topics like Leadership, Developing programmes of action, etc. , *as well as some international material (Cuba , Nicaragua , Ayala , etc.)* -

It makes sense to still cover the same ~~basic~~ basic ground, ^{because} apart from anything else, it is this grassroots leadership that will be taking responsibility for co-ordinating the Basic education, explaining and contextualising the video cassettes, etc.

For this level of work suggested models in terms of language, conceptual complexity, length of article both Isizwe and Umsebenzi could be considered.

As some of the Isizwe articles reflect, comrades at this level greatly appreciate guide questions for group discussion after articles, and (absent from Isizwe) additional recommended reading on the topic in question.

For this level of political education it is imperative to generally present matters in an authoritative way, to provide a uniform, national line. I feel that too often our official organs are presenting very speculative, individual opinions articles (with insufficient signposting). Back at home every word of a journal like Sechaba tends to be treated like the Holy Gospel. While this obviously reflects the very immaturity we are speaking of, it also reflects a major imperative of the present - ~~is~~ the need ~~is~~ to secure and deepen a national, uniform, basic ideological approach..

I am not saying that healthy debate and enquiry must not be encouraged, but the correct balance must be achieved for the particular situation at home.

C. Theoretical debates

Finally there is the more theoretically advanced terrain. This level includes the AC and, to some extent, Sechaba - but also the legal journals at home (and abroad) - Work in Progress, SA Labour Bulletin, Transformation, New Era, Frontline, Staffrider, Social Dynamics, etc. ; It also includes the various publishing houses - Raven, Kliptown, Skotaville, etc.

Apart from jacking up our own journals, we need to think strategically and collectively about the legal (and often politically problematic) publications at home. Although primarily targetted at a small readership, these publications are significant. Articles, or at least debates in SALB, for instance, have a habit of leaking from black campuses and Trade Union offices into youth structures and shop steward locals. This is a problem because generally these journals and publishing houses have been dominated by problematic elements. But ~~there~~ is space and opportunity^{for us} and we must use it to the maximum. Too few comrades outside have been writing for these journals inside.

Some specific resources

Apart from the general remarks above, I feel attention should be given to 2 specific resources that are urgently required :

Workers and the Freedom Charter -

The first, formal battle for the Freedom Charter has been won within COSATU. But our ability to consolidate this formal victory is impeded by lack of educational resources appropriate for the specific task. All COSATU unions have resolved, in principle, to conduct an internal education on the FC. Some have already begun doing this, others won't bother, with their workerist leaderships deliberately dragging their heels. There are also already some signs that other dissident elements will use the FC education programme to twist it in their own ultra-left directions (a recent article by Duncan Innes in WIP is the first shot in this particular line of dissent).

Anyhow, one way or another, tens of thousands of workers will be discussing the FC in their unions. Unfortunately there is no finely tuned resource to aid this process. What is required is :

- i. A very simple, largely photographic historical background to the FC and the COP - to establish the FC's lineage and historical authority (according to TUEE officials, many workers are saying - "We don't know this FC, but if as you say it was made by the ANC, then we accept it.") i.e. it is important to show this background.
 - ii. "What the Charter says" - a simple fairly graphic clause by clause exposition, with special emphasis on each section's significance to workers. (We need workers to understand the basic contents of the FC, and also we need to counter the view that the FC in its entirety is not also a workers' charter) .
- Various pedagogical techniques could be considered. Including a clause by clause discussion by 2 or 3 workers with slightly different backgrounds (a migrant, an urbanised woman worker, a Coloured worker, or whatever).
- iii. A few short articles of a more theoretical kind - eg. the FC and the monopolies (see for instance Isizwe no. 5), the Charter and the Land, Cyril Ramaphosa's excellent interview published in SALB, etc.
 - iv. The FC in all our major languages. Inside, apart from the headings we simply could not trace the FC in languages other than English and Zulu.

An activists struggle handbook

Another basic resource which is badly needed is a simple dictionary/encyclopaedia explaining major dates, events, personalities and concepts in our liberation struggle. In their reading and discussion groups, workers and youth are encountering words like 'sanctions', 'disinvestment' ' colonialism of a special type', 'NDR', 'exploitation', etc. or references to events like the Passive Resistance Campaign , or to individuals like Johannes Nkosi - and they do not have the background, or available teachers to assist them in understanding the reference. A lot of political ET is happening in small groups, in considerable isolation . A resource like this would be invaluable.