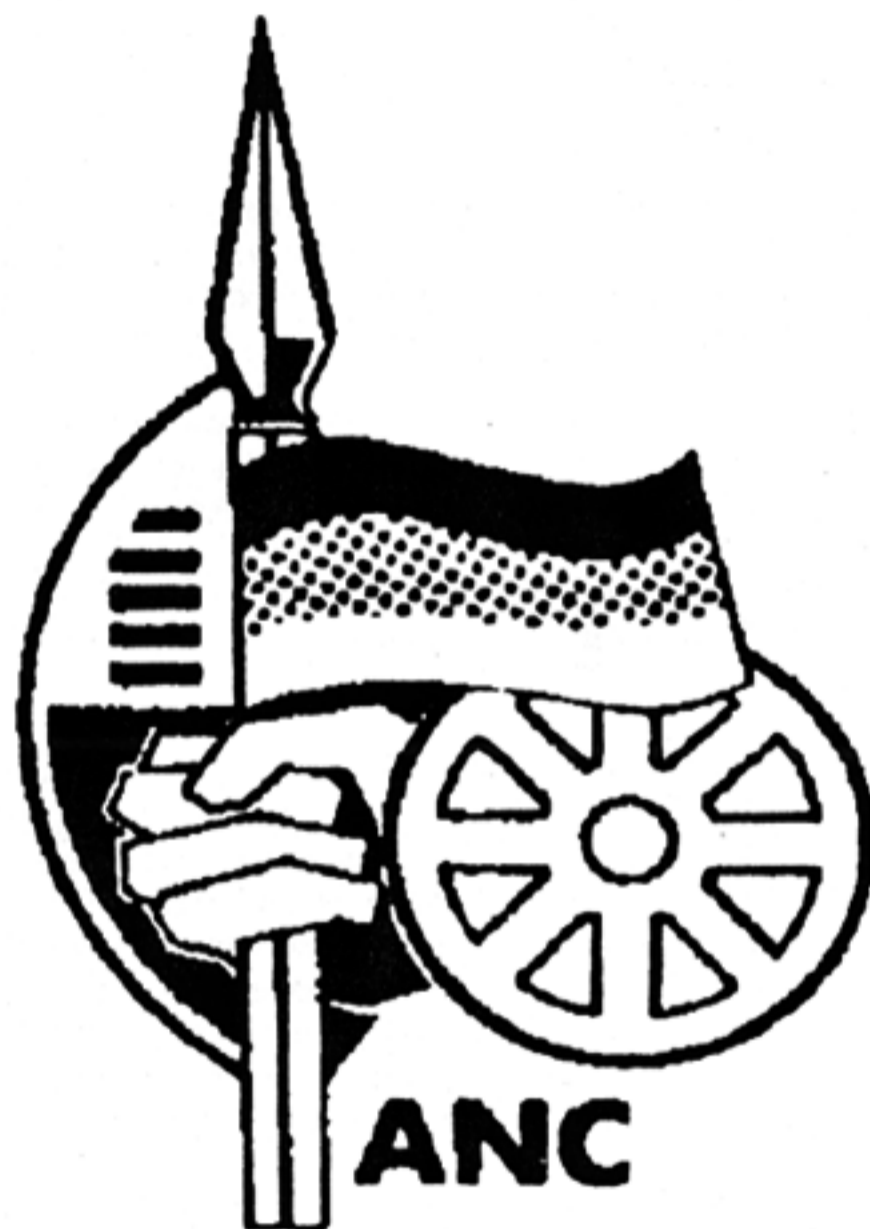


# **ANC NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**July 1991 Durban**



**Commission on Building Organisation**

## **Building the ANC**

**National Organising  
Committee Report**

# **BUILDING THE ANC**

## **NATIONAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE REPORT**

### **Introduction**

This report is going to cover the period from the National Consultative Conference in December 1990 up to the present. It shall focus, in the main, on what we have done in the area of building the ANC and maximising support behind our positions.

There was not much in terms of guidelines that the NCC provided and as a result we had to depend very much on our own resources and what other help we could secure from other departments and commissions.

It is our view that notwithstanding the host of problems that we have encountered in terms of our own structural set up as the Organising Committee, and problems that were encountered in the regions, also in terms of our relations with other organisations and even our relations inside the alliance, we have made tremendous progress in rooting the ANC amongst our people.

The task of building the ANC does not just involve increasing our numerical strength and building strong structures. It also involves the constant raising of the political profile of the movement so that everywhere the masses feel that we are addressing the needs of the people and presenting viable alternatives to the present order of things. The leadership role of the ANC must be felt and earned in actual struggle.

An article appearing in the STAR of the 5th of April 1991 comments as follows with regard to the impact we are making on the South African population: "The African National Congress – with a little help from its political allies – commands the allegiance of three out of every four black urban residents, but might be pressed to win a simple majority in a national election.

The South African results of the internationally conducted WORLD SOCIAL VALUE STUDY indicate that the ANC has the support of 44% of South Africans – of all races – in the city, countryside and within and without the homelands".

Given the huge rallies that we address across the face of the country and the general enthusiasm that we generate in all the regions, there can be little doubt as to the capacity of the movement to command that degree of massive support. But it would be blatantly naive of us to become complacent and act as if under no circumstances whatsoever can the ANC be threatened or even removed from the leadership pedestal it now occupies. The statistics cited above do not negate the fact that there are forces on the ground which are inspired by those very statistics to do their damndest to rid our country of an organisation that is the sole repository of the best aspirations of the oppressed and democratic people of South Africa. Already the regime is not just merely toying with the idea of mounting a frontal assault on the ANC and the alliance. They are in fact adopting and implementing strategies that are aimed at bringing forward their so-called day of reckoning.

In the circumstances, conference will be required to look closely at this scenario, determine coolly what has to be formulated by way of an approach that will place us permanently on high moral ground. Presently our sense tells us that control and cohesion practically at all levels of the movement, is beginning to slip between our fingers. The sort of aura and respect that we commanded as a clandestine vanguard is receding at an alarming pace. This situation needs to be addressed frontally with a kind of seriousness that falls completely outside the realm of sloganeering.

### **Who builds the ANC?**

One other way that could help salvage the situation and boost our recruitment and support drive would be the shedding of the misconception that building is the exclusive preserve of the National Organising Committee. We would like to think that if all of us in leadership positions, the various departments and commissions were to carry out their respective undertakings with a bias on building and polishing our image, the work of the National Organising Committee would be enhanced. In addition to that, the ANC leadership and the entire membership must seriously look at the question: are we leading just the membership or the country as a

whole? The viewpoint we wish to put across is that our task as a liberation movement is much bigger than just signing up members. It is also striving to maximise support behind our policy positions. This is a critical area which we are not exploring with the vigour it deserves precisely because we lack enterprise, creativity and initiative. We appear very happy to remain pigeon holed within the confines of populist rhetoric and cliches. We dare not reconnoitre new terrain and boldly evolve strategic and tactical manoeuvres that accord with the new objective reality.

### **FW's strategy to counter the Constituent Assembly:**

In the meantime, de Klerk and his henchmen are devising, on a daily basis, ways and means of defeating the ANC even in elections to the Constituent Assembly that we are calling for. The planned launch of the so-called Christian Democratic Alliance is one example of a multi-pronged strategy to keep us out of power. But still there are people within our ranks who would nurture the idea that the support that we command within the black communities, specifically the African, would take us through to a Constituent Assembly comfortably.

We urge conference, and in particular this commission, to probe the matter deeper.

## **2. State of Organisation**

### **Membership**

We provide in this report statistical data which shows our numerical strength in terms of signed up members and the number of branches that have been set up. Because of logistical problems in the fourteen regions, the data are not an accurate reflection of what indeed we have on the ground. The numbers are certainly more than what the statistics say.

Early in the course of the year the OC worked a quota allocation for all regions in an attempt to stimulate our recruitment drive to get the target of a million members by the time this Conference convenes. This is how the allocation was prepared and how they were met:

*\* regions that have achieved target figure by June 1991*

<b>REGION</b>	<b>Membership at Feb 1991</b>	<b>Target figures by April 1991</b>	<b>Membership at June 1991</b>	<b>Number of branches</b>
PWV	62 202	186 000	77 429	89
N Tvl *	5 736	15 000	22 160	56
E Tvl *	42 164	60 000	65 000	126
W Tvl *	3 750	10 000	11 262	25
N Cape	2 138	10 000	15 260	56
E Cape	24 633	80 000	57 854	53
W Cape	30 000	80 000	53 000	111
Border	35 689	80 000	65 228	116
Transkei	18 031	40 000	36 937	63
N Natal	no stats	5 000	2 500	3
Natal Midlands	20 051	40 000	26 401	57
S Natal	27 720	75 000	50 596	96
N OFS	5 507	15 000	20 554	24
S OFS	11 699	40 000	15 000	61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>289 320</b>	<b>776 000</b>	<b>521 181</b>	<b>936</b>



The fact that only 4 regions eventually reached the target does not mean that the rest stagnated. Since December 1990 our membership has more than doubled. Practically all regions, including the embattled PWV and Natal regions, registered growth and continue to do so even to this day. To reinforce the regional efforts, the National Organising Committee deployed a few comrades from abroad in some regions and urged all regions to integrate in all their structures all those members who returned from outside and prison.

### ***Volunteer organisers***

We also made approaches to the Treasury to subsidise a project to set up volunteer organisers who would be working either full or part time in all regions in addition to Treasury's allocation of 4 full time regional organisers for each region. The Treasury was attracted to the idea, but unfortunately the OC did not receive the cooperation of the regions in terms of providing lists of personnel who are ready to serve in that capacity. Be that as it may, we are still convinced that the idea of setting up these volunteer core groups in all regions deserves far more serious consideration.

Our own experience before we were banned and the experience of political parties like the National Party before 1948 confirm the relevance of the idea.

### ***Common problems facing the branches***

Our branches are our basic unit of organisation. In our visits to the regions we have come across much the same kind of problems countrywide. The major ones facing the branches are:

- lack of proper communication lines with the RECs resulting in lack of leadership and guidance from the RECs to the branches
- no systematic visits by the RECs or the organisers to the branches so branches feel "leaderless"
- many branch executives not functioning properly and therefore there is no clear branch activity where members know and understand what they are meeting for and what they are supposed to do in the meetings.
- poor administration by the RECs leads to neglect of branches

The Organising Committee is attempting to address these problems in the following ways:

- We are in the process of producing a number of simple booklets dealing with "how to chair a meeting"; "the role of a branch"; "how to plan a meeting"; "how to take minutes" etc. These will be printed in all languages so that they are accessible to all our people.
- We will be running training courses for all the regional organisers
- We will be assessing the work of the organisers to ensure that they work according to a plan and in a systematic way
- Lines of communication between the branches and the regions, and the regions and Head Office must be clarified in the new ANC constitution to ensure that the branch needs are addressed by the REC and Head Office if necessary

### ***Growth in the rural areas***

It is interesting to note that our growth in the rural areas of the Eastern Transvaal, the Northern Transvaal, the Transkei, Border and Western Cape has been quite phenomenal. We certainly broke new ground and made inroads even in the hitherto politically untouched enclaves across the face of the country. In this regard, all three Natal regions have been outstanding, not necessarily in terms of numbers, but undoubtedly in terms of courage and commitment to build in the face of formidable odds. We need to emulate their dedication and redouble our efforts in those regions where state orchestrated violence is not as intense as it is in Natal and the PWV.

A mechanical distribution of resources has meant that the rural areas have been neglected. When we distribute we need to look at the size of an area, its needs, the level of organisation already existing there and the availability of infrastructure. Shortage of transport could then be properly understood and attended to.

### ***Who are we recruiting?***

The biggest portion of this membership growth is drawn from the African sector, as would be expected historically and demographically speaking. We are not making much progress in respect of the Coloured, Indian and white populations. We have had a series of discussions with some regions and even direct talks with members from the affected communities. A number of observations were made in these deliberations as to what could be contributory factors to our low impact:

- The ANC is perceived as an African organisation. Its leadership structures, from the national right down to the region, reflect this. This attitude instills fears about a future dispensation in the hands of Africans.
- A misconception on the part of the ANC that non-racialism is a given, and not an ideal that has to be striven for.
- Alliance with the Party causing problems within those communities that have strong religious views. ANC failing to explain the nature and character of the alliance adequately against a background of a concerted effort by the regime to play up the so called "communist" orientation of the ANC.
- Violence
- ANC's alienation of itself from these communities and not vice-versa. The language we use is inaccessible particularly to the rank and file in the Coloured Community to whom the ANC is a new concept
- Failure to engage the church, sports and professional organisations.
- Reliance on the same sort of campaigns which only draw the activist component.
- Ignorance and complacency
- ANC image is not very impressive.

There are, of course, other observations that we have come across in the course of our visits to the regions. This is a pertinent area for Conference to survey in a calm collected mood. Suffice to say that we have started a process of specifically recruiting in the Coloured areas of the Western Cape and hope that our special initiative will bear fruit.

### ***Leading the nation?***

We think it also needs noting that we have not really broken 'new ground' in our recruitment drive. We need to stress the importance of pursuing a systematic approach in building the ANC to ensure that we relate to all sectors of our people and not just the activists.

### ***Problems hampering growth***

Besides these generalised observations, there are many other factors that have slowed down our growth and even halted it for some time in a number of regions. Here we shall concentrate almost entirely on subjective problems:

- Factionalism and cliquism. This illness has paralysed a number of regions. The situation becomes even more disastrous when these cliques emerge within the leadership structures themselves making it utterly difficult for the organisation to work.
- Lack of local initiative and creativity. It might well be the case that the national leadership at Head Office is partly responsible, particularly in relation to the PWV region where most of the national leadership are situated. Major political activity evolves around NEC members at the expense of the local leadership. In turn, this ramifies to the branch leadership which in most instances and in all regions cannot initiate any idea. Consequently branch activity ceases, frustration among the membership sets in, leading to a shedding of membership or even total collapse of a branch.
- Relegation of recruitment to specialised committees, a clear refusal to accept and act according to the understanding that all members of the ANC, from the NEC downwards are recruiters, organisers and builders of this organisations.
- Total dependence on logistical assistance from Head Office
- A sense of complacency that nothing is at stake, ANC's ascendancy to power is already assured.
- Lack of political education to equip organisers and members adequately for their day to day work.
- The apparent state of confusion at Head Office and the bureaucracy that accompanies it.
- The fading image of the ANC in the eyes of many people, partly because of what we ourselves do and say in public, at times about ourselves. Press coverage at this conference is a case in point. We are being watched and perhaps it would do us a great deal of good if we knew that what we say and do in public educates the public about us, either positively or negatively.
- Lack of a collective, inter-departmental thrust to build at Head Office. We remain parallel: "everyone for oneself and God for us all".
- Insufficient resources for the regions in spite of an NEC decision that priority be given to organising.
- Lack of an accommodative approach to the national question.

The list is endless.



## **Problems facing the RECs**

### ***Demarcation***

The RECs are facing a host of problems not least the size of their areas. The question of demarcation is problematic. In many cases it has contributed to our low performance precisely because of the vast distances that organisers and leadership have to traverse from regional offices. Many regions are citing this as the central problem that is hampering organisation and there are sections of regions which are requesting to be hived off and created into new regions. After much thought and deliberation the Organising Committee agree with the Internal Leadership Core that it is not feasible to have more than 14 regions. We can address the problem better by dividing regions into sub-regions. This is already happening in some areas. Sub-regions would be composed of different zones - a zone being a number of branches. This kind of zonal structure will facilitate communication and organisation. We are not averse to addressing this problem in our new constitution.

## **Relations with other organisations**

### ***a) civics***

Relations between ourselves and the civics in many areas are becoming strained. We need to remember that civics were created by the ANC at a time when there were few other legal formations. The fact that the ANC has been unbanned does not make the Civics redundant. They have a crucial role in uniting the masses of our people across the political spectrum in campaigns against the regime, for the Constituent Assembly and Interim Government. Now there are tensions between the two and we need to provoke discussion around the role of ANC members in civic structures in order to see that the civics are part of the broader democratic movement - otherwise they can and will be used by other forces against the interests of the people. This debate can extend to residents associations in rural communities.

### ***b) unions***

Our relationship with union structures at grass roots level is not what it should be. We had asked the RECs to formalise contact with their regional union counterparts in order to map out the way forward especially in terms of mass action. While in many instances this has been done, the quality of that relationship needs to be upgraded.

### ***c) chiefs***

Our approach to traditional institutions has not always been clear. Contralesa can provide an avenue for us to meet with the chiefs and discuss a whole range of issues. One of these would be their sharp hostility to civic associations which they see (together with our structures) as bent on encroaching on their powers as hereditary rulers and challenge their undemocratic and corrupt practices. This needs to be balanced with an understanding of the place of these traditional structures in rural communities and the respect they command, especially amongst the elderly. In areas where there has been consultation with the chiefs it has emerged quite clearly that there are many areas of agreement between most of them and the ANC. The main and crucial area being the land question.

### ***d) women's league and youth league***

In all the regions a lot of discussion has been generated on the relations between these two leagues and the mother body. Most of the issues arose from practical experience on the ground. At both the branch and regional level, co-ordination is being regularised and joint strategy and planning is taking place. For example joint executive committee meetings are held regularly.

## **The role of the Organising Committee (OC)**

The strategic goal of the ANC is the transfer of power and the OC whose task it is to unite and mobilise all the democratic forces must play a pivotal role. The Committee that was originally set up by the NEC was composed of the following comrades: Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Steve Tshwete, Popo Molefe, Ronnie Kasrils, Chris Hani, Jacob Zuma, Mac Maharaj, Wilton Mkwayi, Elias Motsaoleli, Siphwe Nyanda, Ivan Pillay and cdes from DIP, DPE, Treasurer General's Office, women, youth and trade unions. Looking through this list it becomes clear why this committee never functioned. But our experience over this period

tells us that we cannot build and organise the ANC from Head Office.

Whilst there does need to be a strategising committee at Head Office and a small staff, the Organising Committee itself should be composed of cdes from the 14 regions who would meet once in 3 months. This would facilitate the work of the "strategising" part of the committee in getting input from the regions, and in turn facilitate the work of the regions directly receiving leadership and guidance from National Head Office. There was a recommendation in this regard from the Consultative Conference in December, but since it was not translated into a resolution, it has not been regularised.

We would also recommend that one person on each REC be responsible for the full time organisers and that rather than mechanically saying that each region should have four organisers, we would suggest that there is a full time paid organiser for each sub-region. So that in a region that has 6 sub-regions we would have 6 full time paid organisers with specific responsibilities.

### **Conclusion:**

We have delineated in this report positive and negative aspects in our building process. Conference must now reflect on the issues and provide the requisite framework to guide the National Organising Committee without at all losing sight of the demand of the moment: Polish that image. "Victory will go to the Party with the clearest perception of the next step".