

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

WESTERN CAPE REGION

The Secretary's Report

September 1991

As the history of our country forcefully unfolds our organisation has from day to day, forced many challenges that have attempted to undermine its existence and tempered with its successes. Our organisation has had to soberly assess its past activities and correctly chart its path that will lead our people to victory, peace and freedom. Our region, as an integral part of our country, has been duly attacked by these challenges and charges.

The September 1990 Western Cape Regional Conference of the ANC was the first open Conference following the February 1990 unbanning of our organisation. This was a pioneer Conference. It was a pioneer Conference in the sense that there are no recent historical instances to refer to. The Conference had to open new paths to grapple with new situations and conditions. It had to discuss and formulate programmes and pass resolutions that were not a continuation of the previous conferences. The 1990 Conference had to adopt, with enthusiasm, resolutions and programmes that might for a variety of reasons prove to be impossible or difficult to implement or fulfill.

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Last year, the ANC Regional Conference decided on a Regional Executive of 14 members. This number of the REC members looked enough at the time. Within a very short time, as the organisation expanded both in numbers of members and branches and the demands of the numerous conflict situations on the one hand and the departmental demands on the other, this number proved to be very inadequate.

One of the 14 members resigned as his employment commitments could not allow him to perform his REC duties. Again two other members who were staying far away from Cape Town were unable to attend to the REC daily or weekly meetings due to the distances involved. Furthermore two other members were assigned more demanding tasks by the Constitutional Committee of the ANC. This caused the REC to be left with a skeleton of eight members who were available on a daily basis. The demands on the REC became massive, and the decrease in numbers of the REC members caused a lot of short-comings. This had an effect on the growth and the development of the organisation as a whole. Despite the lack of experience of some REC members, the 30 years of the banning of the ANC, the many demands and the fact that we were a new team, the REC members gave their best. The conference has to look into the REC structure and address the short-comings.

For a long time the administrative office had a staff of two members: a receptionist and an administrator. The two staff members had to attend to telephones, typing, correspondence, draft letters, contact branches, the Head Office and the other organisations. They also had to attend to people coming to the office. Under these circumstances the administration office could not be systematic or efficient.

The office appealed to volunteers from branches, especially those with office skills. This was not forthcoming. The two comrades were capable but they were overloaded. Later we were joined by a bookkeeper. In the last five months we were joined by five comrades, two

officially employed and three volunteers. We are considering employing them.

The office is starting to take shape. The REC members in the office also attend receiving visitors such as Foreign Diplomats and visitors, people from other organisations. The REC members also attend to the many crisis situations that have occurred in our region. Some of our branches are not stable and they need daily attention. The administration in our office can be solved only by increasing our staff and ensuring their competence.

We are discussing the issue with the Head Office, as the staff employment is controlled there. We have three zonal organisers. The office has to give them back up support give them the necessary assistance to enable them to recruit members, set up and consolidate branches. The organiser's report is going to deal with this item.

The Regional Office space has been a problem. Our first Regional Office was at George Street in Athlone. There were four offices, and the rent was too expensive. We then moved to the Birdwood Superama Building. The office is big but it is an empty room\hall that has no separate offices. Partitioning the hall will be too expensive. It leaks on rainy days. Lightening and ventilation are a serious problem. The leaking roof is forcing us to look for another office between Salt River and Woodstock. It is cheaper and has more offices. It has two floors. The Women's League and the Youth League intend moving with us to the new office. We will be occupying these new offices as from 15 October 1991, and all departments will be allocated offices at the new place.

The Head Office advised the REC to look at the possibility of purchasing the building. The office equipment in terms of computers, photocopies and other such items are still short or not sufficient. The office stationery needed in order to meet the monthly demands is becoming a problem.

By September 1990 the ANC in the Western Cape had 72 launched branches and a membership of 27000 members. This was as a result of concerted effort by the interim Committee and the activists on the one hand, and the progressive organisations like Civics, COSATU and the UDF and in some cases individuals who never belonged to any organisation but were inspired by the quest for freedom. They recruited members into the ANC and set up new branches in their areas. Today at the September 1991 Conference the ANC membership of our region stands at 55 000. There are 108 launched branches in the areas and 42 unlaunched branches. The membership has grown by almost 100% and the branches have grown by 52%. When you relate this growth to our regions population, this is still very low, much more work must still be done.

Looking at this growth from the zonal level, the South Cape and the Overberg have had a large membership growth. Namaqualand grew from 200 members in a zone to about 2000, this was partly due to initiatives of the comrades at the grassroots level, and good efforts of our organisation in the zone. In the Namaqualand zone there are no experienced activists, organisational skills or any previous political education, but the desire to do more and the determination of the comrades, has given the organisation a big membership. The Southern Cape has grown from 800 to more than 3000 members. Comrades in George and Mossel Bay have held workshops on problems they experienced in recruiting their members. They identified the causes of their problems, corrected their mistakes and adjusted their shortcomings. They then went on a serious recruitment drive with great success. Their membership has grown. In the Overberg zone the situation is very encouraging. But not in the Hermanus branch where the Askaris and the rightwingers are present. They have intimidated and harassed our people. Besides maintaining its own development it has set up

five branches in the surrounding areas like Caledon, Gaansbaai, Boeriver and even Rivier Sonderend. Still much more work must be done in the coloured community. These areas have not yet been touched.

Both Karoo East and West have seen very little developments. The branch which is Central and pivotal, Beaufort West, has experienced many problems within its structure. The REC has visited the branch several times to address the problems in the branch and other branches within the zone. But the developments in the area have been very slow or sometimes non-existence for quite some time. It is only these few last weeks that Beaufort West seems to be showing signs of progress, but the membership in the zone needs some attention.

The Langeberg with Robertson, Ashton, Montague, McGregor, Bonnievale, Villiersdorp and other surrounding areas have had little growth in its membership. Despite that, the zone is taking a serious step to set up a zonal structure in the area. Such a structure would serve a very important purpose in terms of communication and the sharing of problems, together with experiences. The rightwing is active in the community and area. Zonal meetings and workshops have been held within the zone, and the zone needs to be looked at more attentively. The defence units within the zone mentioned above is a burning issue.

MITCHELLS PLAIN ZONE:

Mitchells Plain is largest "coloured" township in the Western Cape, and last year it had only 6 branches, but the branches in the zone became very weak. The membership has not grown and has not reached 1000 yet. Rallies, workshops and door to door campaigns for signatures and recruitment have taken place. Structural problems have retarded growth and development. At this stage the branches in the zone are holding some discussion meetings and are trying to set up a zonal structure. More organisation and political work must be done.

NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN SUBURBS:

There has been a slow growth in terms of membership. Most branches in the zone had not reached two hundred with the exception of Ravensmead which has more than 400 members. Elsie's River had a good start but later growth slowed down. Structural and organisational problems have retarded the progress at some branches.

In branches outside Cape Town, for instance Hout Bay, Noordhoek and Milnerton areas, violence caused by the state and within the communities have done damage to organisational growth. A team of comrades set up by the REC is trying to address the problems. The two zones need more attention to pull them through. At this moment we do not have zonal organisers in the areas, yet in some of these branches more political work in the form of workshops and visits, discussions have taken place.

BOLAND ZONE:

In both zones development has varied from very good to very bad. In some branches like Mbekweni growth in numerical terms has been very good. Paarl East has been stable in growth. In areas like De Doorns and Laingsberg there has been progress chiefly initiated by the comrades in those areas. Comrades in these areas are even organising those who are living in farms. Wellington has not yet moved out of its structural problems. The REC has not done very much to address the Wellington problem or pay more attention to the area. The two zones have a good membership and development. There is more enthusiasm that needs to be channelled and properly utilised to the benefit of the organisation.

THE REST OF THE TOWNSHIPS:

There has been slow development at branch level in this zone, with the exception of Langa whose membership is approaching 2000 members. At the last AGM in August this year; they targeted a membership of 15000 by their next AGM. Other branches in the zone like Mannenberg and Bonteheuwel have not been given much attention. This zone needs an organiser that devote much of his time in this zone. Some Branches have had no rallies or national visits. The zone should receive priority attention from the new regional Executive.

GUGULETHU ZONE:

Progress in the zone has been relatively good, Section 2 Guguletu has gone over 2000 or more but the branch needs more political consolidation. Most of the branches in this zone have a good potential in terms of political skill, but these have not been fully utilised. Nyanga and squatter branches have also reached a membership of 2000 but the present violence in the area emanating from the taxis, the security forces and within the community have made the situation volatile and tense. More attention is paid in preventing violence rather than the development of the ANC. It seems that the system is aiming at undermining the organisation's development in the zone. If the political situation is not properly analysed in the area the community may find itself at each other's throats rather than confronting the real enemy.

KHAYELITSHA:

At the moment progress in the zone has been luke warm. It is the strongest zone in terms of membership figures. It needs political consolidation. The zone has more than 10 000 members and has 15 branches. The zone has been inflicted by all forms of violence. Earlier in the year the SAMWU strike followed by the violence unleashed by the councilors resulted into a loss of many lives. The present scenario where the taxi organisations are fighting, damaging each other's property, and killing people. Problems between the Civics and WECUSA have also been another painful spot. All these have caused a lot of disorganisation and frustration within our branches. The forced removals have disorganised some of our branches. The state, in a form of police, has also caused the situation to worsen. Many meetings have been held with the police to try and resolve the situation but to no avail. The zone is tense and unstable, the tension is badly affecting ANC work. People are even afraid to go out at night.

THE REGION:

The region has, as from the conference, held four interbranch meetings and one regional Council meeting. These have been very difficult to organise from the financial point of view. Though these interbranch meetings have provided a forum for the comrades from various branches to come together and get a briefing from the REC and the NEC, attendance is not yet good enough. These meetings are however essential and useful, even though too urban centred. To facilitate the effectiveness of the interbranch activity the REC saw wisdom in organising more zonal workshops and seminars. These are more efficient in the sense that they are less expensive and afford more people from the zones to have an opportunity to participate in these workshops. This is better than just two delegates coming to Cape Town for Regional Workshops at great expense.

For administrative purposes two branch secretarial meetings were held. Though attendance was poor, such meetings are still in their initial stages. They need to be perfected. The branch secretaries meeting followed the inter-regional meeting of the secretaries which was held in Johannesburg in July 1991. The REC has visited and consulted with most of the branches. These visits have created a better understanding between the REC and the

branches. The REC through these visits has been able to assess the situation at the branch level.

Welfare, economic, health, media, political and treasury workshops have been held at a regional and zonal levels. Some branches have initiated campaigns, marches and workshop. Door to door membership recruitment and fund raising campaigns have been more common. Political education at branch level has varied between the two extremes, there are other good political discussions taking place in the branch or there is no political life at all.

RURAL AREAS:

The conference last year resolved to concentrate more energies to the rural areas. There was to be a rural conference that would assist the rural branches in development and self sufficiency. This has not been achieved and as a result more tension arose between some rural areas and the REC. We hope that at this conference the matter will be addressed and plans will be formulated for the carrying out of those resolutions.

Early this year our head office warned that violence may overflow into our region in various forms. It may not take the Transvaal and Natal forms, but definitely the enemy was making plans to unleash violence into our region. We did not make adequate preparations other than passing this warning to our branches. Violence has come, it has come in different forms. More precious lives of our comrades and property have been lost. A commission consisting of comrades from the Regional office and the region is investigating the violence, its causes and forms. The first reports from the commission showed that the situation is more complex and deeper than we thought it to be.

THE ALLIANCE:

The last years conference resolved to activate and consolidate the ANC-SACP-COSATU alliance, from the top to the bottom. The members of the Alliance met early this year to formalise their relations and establish a mode of working together. They had to define their relations, co-ordinate their programs and campaigns. A structure of implementing these was jointly set up. A secretariat with three secretaries of the parties to the Alliance was set up. This structure meets fortnightly or at any time that is necessary. A seven a side structure was also formed to consolidate and formulate the working relations of the parties in the Alliance. This structure meets once a month. Also the executives of the three parties meet whenever necessary to compliment the two above mentions structures. Some of these meetings could not take place due to workloads of the members of the REC. These arrangements are not strong yet.

The Alliance has held joint campaigns and rallies. The signature campaign and the violence in the region are the main activities that have seen the Alliance at work.

Regrettably the Alliance still remains at the top. It has not gone down to the branch level. The conference must look into structures that will transform the Alliance into action at all levels.

The ANC in the region has not made good contact with the Civics, student organisations, the Churches and other formations. This has been clearly visible through these days of violence and tension.

We have also made contact with non-MDM structures such as AZAPO and PAC. We have held joint meetings as from February 2nd. We have also worked together on the taxi violence.