

TOWARDS A CAMPAIGNING AND MASS BASED ANC

When we discuss a program of action (POA) for the ANC in the Western Cape our first question must be what are our aims, what are we trying to achieve? The policy of the ANC is very clear on this question: Our aim is the transfer of power to the people, and in the present situation we believe that the possibility exists for a peaceful, or relatively peaceful, transfer of power based on the mass struggles of the people.

This is our broad and general goal. The aim of a POA is to work out a path from where we are now to this longer term goal. We need to break the longer term goal down into the immediate steps, issues and problems that we can tackle. These are the problems that a POA must help us to solve.

A POA we must address these issues in two areas. Firstly, there are internal issues which are holding back our organisation and growth. These are questions of the way in which we are structured and the way in which our organisation operates. The way in which we implement a POA must help us to overcome these problems. Then there are, secondly, the issues that face the people and which we hope to organise them in struggle around. A POA must set out a way of combining the many issues and struggles of our people into a process of mass campaigns and actions. A POA must link the issues facing the people to our strategic objective - the transfer of power. A POA must present a way of overcoming both these kinds of questions.

**THE INTERNAL QUESTIONS**

Mass action to be effective demands an ANC which operates in a certain way, which has a certain outlook. Mass struggle is not something which can be switched on and off when the leadership or a group of politically aware and advanced cadres decides. We need to see mass organisation and struggle as an on-going process to which we commit the full resources of our organisation. To allow the ANC to be controlled by the people, to build an ANC which is the expression of their needs and desires and the leader of their struggles, the ANC needs to be:

1. Democratic and based on the participation of and responsible to its membership and its mass base.
2. A political centre of struggle which is able to draw the people into struggle.
3. Have a leadership which is able to act as a political centre and can analyze the situation which we are in; and from that analysis develop long and short term ways of changing the situation. The leadership needs to make political recommendations to the branches and the membership and allow the branches to comment on and change these recommendations. But the main focus of the leadership must be to provide the lead and direction on key political issues.
4. Based on the activities of the branches. While there have been problems with the way in which the leadership has worked, there are also problems with the way in which our branches have worked and been structured. Many of our branches have large memberships, but we have not found ways of keeping these members involved in the movement. People come to branch meetings expecting to discuss and find ways of solving the problems facing them, only to find themselves sitting through hours of bureaucratic reports and discussions about the internal functioning of the movement. For instance our branch meetings often discuss reports on other meetings, or letters that were sent by the branch executive and so on. These things are important. But they don't solve the

peoples problems. It is for this reason that our mass membership starts drifting away. Then the branches are left as small cores of committed activists without an organised base. The solution to these problems lies in the way in which we are working. The advanced core of the membership - the branch executives and those who hold the organisation together need to move away from bureaucracy in branch meetings and provide leadership and guidance to the membership and people in our areas.

5. That builds unity amongst the membership and branches. Many branches do not participate in regional forums. When there are regional activities to be organised the responsibility seems to always fall on the same small group of individuals and branches. This means that our regional activities are often not really regional, but focused on a few isolated areas and don't involve our membership, let alone the masses in any real way. This leads to problems such as the lack of unity in our organisation and the tensions that have emerged with the non-racialism of the movement. While there are certain objective reasons for this lack of regional participation - lack of time, transport, skills, resources, etc we need to address these in order to overcome them.

These are the internal problems that a program of action must address if we are going to move forward as an organisation based on mass action.

### STRUCTURING A PROGRAM OF ACTION

Our program of action must coordinate the activities of our organisation at all levels. It must give an overall view of how different struggles link together in the struggle for the transfer of power. To this a POA must be structured so that it allows us to:

1. To build the activities of the branches and allow them to take up issues at a local level. The aim of our program of action is to build our organisation and in the end this means building the branches. The activities of the branches must show to the masses that their problems can be solved through struggle.
2. Incorporate events of national importance into the struggles of the branches at a local level.
3. Bring the activities of the branches together in regional events and struggles around issues of regional and national importance.
4. Mix different forms of struggle together into a process which builds the mass pressure and power of the ANC. We need a creative mix of meetings, media, pickets, marches and other forms of struggle which allow us to draw more and more people into our activities.
5. Solve immediate problems affecting our region, such as the violence, so that our organisation is able to grow and tackle the longer term questions.

A program of action is a tool for uniting people in struggle. Our people face many problems. The program of action we adopt at the regional conference must chart path us a path to solve these problems and lead us to the transfer of power to the people.