

UDF PRESS CONFERENCE

1 AUGUST 1983

KHOTSO HOUSE, JOHANNESBURG

WHAT IS THE UDF?

The UDF is an organisation that unites all freedom-loving people who reject apartheid. We must show our strength through the creation of a broad front of all sections of our people.

All political groupings and people who have different approaches to the struggle have a place in the United Democratic Front. It is the historical task of all of us to build this powerful and representative unity.

A united front in which all organisations will keep their identity and independence but co-operate in opposing the PC, the new parliament and Koornhof's plans.

HOW DID THE IDEA OF A UDF ARISE?

It was Allan Boesak's dramatic call for unity and joint action against the government's new divide-and-rule tactics that planted the seed that is now growing into a massive national United Democratic Front of all People's organisations.

The call was made at the Anti-South African Indian Council (Anti-SAIC) conference on January 23 this year and echoed there by the president of SAAWU, Thozamile Gqwetha.

Nationwide enthusiasm greeted the call. The need for unity and joint action against the government's plans was widely recognised.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

The idea of building the United Democratic Front has been discussed

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countrywide. Regional UDF structures have already been formed.

Natal was the first region to launch a United Democratic Front. More than 40 organisations met and elected an executive committee in May. At its head is Mr Archie Gumede, chairperson of the Release Mandela Committee. Other leading members include Dr Jerry Coovadia of the NIC.

Soon after this, nearly 40 community, worker, student and other organisations committed themselves to forming the Transvaal United Democratic Front. The election of officials is on August 6. On the consultative committee at present are Dr R A M Salojee of the Transvaal Indian Council, Amos Masondo of the Soweto Civic Association and Piroshaw Camay of CUSA.

And, on July 24, Western Cape organisations launched their regional United Democratic Front with veteran worker and community leader Oscar Mpetha as its president. After his unanimous election Oscar Mpetha warned the government that "the past was theirs but the future is ours".

The meeting also nominated 10 patrons amongst whom were Nelson Mandela, Allan Boesak, Christmas Tinto and Johnny Issel.

The people of the Eastern Cape continue their work to build a regional UDF.

Many more organisations are joining the UDF as its rallying call echoes throughout the land.

WHAT ARE THE TASKS AHEAD?

The task now is to launch a national United Democratic Front. Preparations are underway in each province for this launching in Cape Town on August 20 and 21.

The national United Democratic Front will unite all the regional UDFs and the organisations in them.

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HAS THIS HAPPENED BEFORE?

Yes.

In 1963, over 400 delegates from a wide range of organisations met in Bloemfontein to condemn the 'Hertzog Bills'. These Bills planned to take away the vote from all Africans. They also set aside only 13% of South Africa for the majority of our people. This gathering became known as the All African Convention.

The legendary Congress of the People was held on 26 June 1955 in Kliptown. It united different sections of our people and their organisations against apartheid. The Congress drew up the historic Freedom Charter which expressed the hopes and aspirations of all our people.

The Congress Alliance formed at this meeting was the most powerful front in our history. This Alliance led the oppressed masses in their struggle against the pass laws, poor housing, low wages and bad working conditions.

HOW AND WHY THE UDF WILL WORK

The UDF will co-ordinate and unite the efforts of all individuals and organisations in the fight for freedom. It will bring together all freedom-loving people who reject the Bills. The delegates to the national conference will elect the UDF national leaders.

Organisations in each province are joining the regional committees. Within each region, a number of area committees are being organised. These area committees will be in direct contact with the grassroots. The structure of the UDF will make it possible to mobilise every section of our people.

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