

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE REPORT

SECTION I

This report addresses the political role of NUSAS which is only one of NUSAS's roles as an organisation involved in the non-racial democratic movement for change. There are a number of different aspects of NUSAS's political role.

1. To expose amongst students the rôle of the apartheid government and the nature of our society.
2. To develop an understanding of progressive change which is often seen in a negative light by students coming out of 12 years of Christian National Education (CNE)
3. To draw as many students, actively or passively, into supporting the national democratic movement.
4. To build organisation in which individual students can develop both technical skills and a life long commitment to progressive change.
5. NUSAS has both a symbolic and a substantive role to play in helping to ensure the non-racial character of the progressive movement.
6. As a student organisation NUSAS must challenge the education we receive and ensure that it does not serve to reproduce the status quo.

THE NATURE OF OUR CONSTITUENCY

Students at our Universities have come through 12 years of CNE and possible 2 years of army which encourages passivity and conformity. Despite this the liberal University does provide a context in which alternatives can be possitted as students are encouraged to question things around them. It is also true that most students at NUSAS campuses have a fundamental abhorrence of the most oppressive aspects of apartheid. It is important to remember however, that different constituencies, and groupings exist amongst the student body. We must sophisticate our approach to campus identifying different groups and address them directly and appropriately. (Addendum I) Constituencies will always overlap and usually won't be politically homogenous although we can make general points about constituencies eg Residence students tend to be more conservative.

It is possible to identify definite issues to which white students respond most actively. There are three broad categories:

1. Where the issue is a very big one, close to home, students are jolted out of their passivity
2. When the operation of apartheid affects them directly eg conscription
3. Students are outraged and galvinised into action when repression is harsh and blatant eg detentions and Magope.

POLITICISING, MOBILIZING AND ORGANISING

We have spoken in very broad terms about the political gains we hope to make on campus, but what strategies do we use? The concept of politicising, mobilising and organising (PMO) has been found useful as a description of the processes we must go through if we are to achieve the gains we hope to make. Briefly our organisations and activities must raise a range of questions in the minds of students that relate

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to apartheid and alternatives to it. This is politicisation. Once we have achieved this, we have achieved a basis for students to act - pick up a pamphlet, attend a meeting, stand in a picket etc. This is mobilisation. Once students are acting we are able to draw them into our organisations and reproduce our structures and thus continue our activities on campus. This is organisation.

Clearly these things are not separable or ordered but when we assess our general activity we must ask: Have we raised political questions in students minds? Have we got students to act? Have we reproduced ourselves and our organisations?

### POLITICISATION, MOBILISATION AND ORGANISATION

This section of the report will assess our activity in 1984, under the specific headings of PMO. It is important to note that we use this framework here for the purposes of assessment but that in practice they are interrelated and cannot be a rigid procedure.

See Addendum 2 for some of the issues/campaigns in 84.

#### 1. Politicisation

The main trend was to expose apartheid and its continuation in the form of state initiatives and particularly the implementation of tricameral parliament. Campaigns such as Education Crises and End Conscription were taken up with various degrees on the different campuses, within this overall strategy.

The posing of extra-parliamentary opposition and the popularising of UDF formed the major alternative to the new constitution. Generally clarity was given however there was a lack of relating different issues together and campaigns appeared to become singled out and lost their context.

While much clarity on Extra Parliamentary opposition and the UDF was given, assumptions of first years understanding led to initial confusion around this. In this regard, while students were certainly non-antagonistic, there was no overall understanding.

By failing to draw on the different issues, such as current big news in the press and linking these to campaigns the issues and campaigns were not drawn together in an overall politicisation of the nature of apartheid.

While politicisation generally gave rise to greater militancy on campuses e. pickets going into communities and the protests, it was often the inability to reach different ways to mobilise the student base generally on these issues. This may further be attributed to factors such as lack of clarity, alienation and no ground work being done prior to these events and no follow up afterward.

#### 2. Mobilisation

In planning campaigns we need to identify certain areas:

1. Exactly what are our short term aims?
2. How does the campaign fit into our overall campus objectives?
3. What forms of mobilisation are possible?
4. What constituencies could be mobilise?
5. What forms of mob. would strengthen our organisations?

### Assessment of Years Mobilisation

Some campuses felt that this year mobilisation around mainly high profile campaigns had been particularly good. It was identified that the intense national political climate and rigorous constituency work had contributed to this success. Other campuses felt that mobilisation of a broad base of students had not been achieved and that was possibly as a result of certain important political issues not relating directly to students. More generally campuses felt that not enough groundwork had been laid on the activities that were tackled and mobilisation was not maximised as a result.

### Potential forms of Mobilisation

There are differing forms of mobilisation, including mass meetings, pickets, petition, posters, t shirts and badges, cultural events, media, contact with profile campus figures, displays, recruitments, informal campus contact

### Constituency Work

In mobilising - we need to take into account the effectivity of various forms of mobilisation and their differential impact or identified constituencies.

Over the past year, when careful constituency work has been done it has been effective. (An example of this was work done in the residence around the anti-tricamerals or going into lectures to explain issues). However targeting of constituencies should be integrated into our approach to political action to a far greater extent. Also imaginative thinking needs to be done to identify groups who might have a special interest in an issue.

(For example, when troops move into the townships we need not only look at the potential mass mobilisation around this issue. We could also approach the faculty of architecture for example to look at the design of townships etc and how this facilitates troop movement).

### 3. Organisation

There has been the failure in 84 to prioritise campaigns and issues and thus a failure to clearly envisage what we wanted to achieve. This would have allowed us to for example:

- strengthen organisation
- locate our broad role on campus
- increase publicity which would reach the broader white community

The lack of clarity may tend to decrease consolidation in our organisations. The high level of activity, however had a politicising effect on organisations, strengthening individuals and developing commitment (in some instances the intensity may have had negative effects).

The intensity gave high profile and legitimacy to NUSAS, but the problem arose of not always explicitly stating that these were NUSAS campaigns. A guideline is thus to be clear on who gets profile at any particular moment.

In looking at the organisational forms, it was necessary to identify the nature of campaigns, which were often necessitated by broader political issues, leading to the failure of not taking the campus base into account. There is therefore the need to identify appropriate organisational forms which will most adequately overcome this. While these differ from campus to campus, four different forms, and their strengths and weaknesses (in terms of this year's experience) are drawn on.

Ad Hoc

These are positive in terms of direct recruitment, but may drain organisations. A long term strategy must be clear, in order to channel members once the project is complete.

Broad Front

There is the ability to draw in a range of different constituencies, but that our own organisation/s may become subsumed and may be drained in terms of person power. Contact and communication can be built up.

Individual Organisation

Depending on the nature of the issue, the role of an organisation to consolidate in taking up an issue as well as increase its profile are important aspects. Scope, however, is limited, and there may be a lack of person power.

NUSAS Organisations

There is an overall consolidating effect while there may be a detraction of the coherency on individual organisations.

The most important aspect which has been noted previously as a weakness of the year has been to clearly identify PMO in organisational forms and to attempt to build the link between issues, to draw together common elements and to PLAN. In organisational forms the question must be posed as to WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

General Strengths

- \* Posing of Extra parliamentary opposition (EPO) and popularising of UDF
- \* by reaching some constituencies a fair amount of mobilisation occurred (to various degrees from campus to campus)
- \* high intensity was politicising for organisations and there was increased commitment in membership
- \* high intensity gave NUSAS a high profile

Weaknesses

- \* lack of relating issues together, campaigns not linked and became contextless
- \* assumption that 1st years had an understanding of EPO and UDF
- \* failed to draw on current issues/mass media and relate/link to campaigns and not enough groundwork done
- \* did not reach different constituencies by not targeting what issues would affect them and how
- \* lack of planning and clarity failed to consolidate organisations
- \* nature of campaigns meant that campus base was not always adequately informed

1985

There are a range of issues/campaigns confronting the democratic movement as a whole next year that will need to be taken by NUSAS. We can expect there to be a general climate of National political mobilisation into which NUSAS will have to insert itself.

The issues/campaigns we know will be facing us, sometimes overlap and sometimes have independent elements specific to them. A major fault with our planning for 1984 was taking up 3 separate campaigns and often allocating our time in an over structured way. Campuses soemtimes failed to respond to issues as they arose.

5.

It is important that we take a flexible approach and that our structures are able to be mobilised at very short notice.

There are 4 major areas we will have to focus on: IYY, End CC, EdCC, Freedom Charter. Within these we will have to expose the states attempt to restructure itself and popularise those forces working for change.

The specifics of these campaigns will have to be worked out by the different campuses and made appropriate for the different local conditions but some general comments/ ideas about them can be made:

1. The Freedom Charter Campaign should be given a high profile and could link any or all of the campaigns. We also need to take up the Freedom Charter as itself - possibly around the 30th Anniversary.
2. Education Charter should be used to expose conditions in Black Schools and campuses. Also draw out the history and processes around the Freedom Charter.
3. International Year of the Youth. Both Education Charter and ECC could relate to this campaign. Some aspects stand on their own (eg International solidarity, the states IYY campaign etc)
4. End Conscription Campaign could be related to IYY (by focussing on the exclusion of conscription to other SA Youth and on the fact that it is the youth of this country who bore the brunt of the conflict) The campaign also relates to the Peace and Friendship clause in the Freedom Charter. We should also argue that the Freedom Charter provides the only basis for peace in SA.

In this committee we were asked to assess the issues we are raising this coming year in the same terms as we assessed this year. The following points about planning and forms of organisation emerged:

- \* It is important to plan and strategise activity very carefully. When we sit down to plan our first question should be: what are we trying to do generally on campus? and then we should examine how the different campaigns and issues of the day will help us achieve these ends.
- \* when planning we must isolate different constituencies, examine the specific way in which they may respond to issues and work out appropriate approaches
- \* many of the issues facing us this year will also be of concern to other organisations in the democratic movement (especially AZASO). This fact, combined with the expected heightening of national mass mobilisations means that the question of a more militant response from black students (and other areas) will raise itself as even more of a problem than before. Our relationship with AZASO on campus must be clearly strategised and we must ensure that the FORM of our activity on campus remains appropriate to a broad base of white students.
- \* the organisational forms we use must take account of the need to extend our base into new areas. Possibilities for a broad front approached exist for both IYY and the Education Charter Campaign
- \* we shouldn't try and do too much. We should rather do as much as you can and still remain effective. Remember that a failed campaign or meeting doesn't necessarily just leave us stationary it could set us back in terms of our campus credibility and organisation strength!

6.

\* we shouldn't overuse ad hoc structures at the expense of our existing organisations. Where possible our organisations should use the issues facing us to consolidate themselves

\* We shouldn't just communicate with students from platforms and through pamphlets. Every opportunity should be used to speak directly to students. The Education Charter campaign may be useful in this regard.

ADDENDUMS 1 & 2

DIFF CONSTITUTENCIES can be sympathetic, antagonistic or both,

- counter culture
- women
- Christian groupings
- Non-NUSAS organisationally based
- lost cause, conservative students
- residences
- PFP
- 'ethnic' groups
- faculties
- RAG
- Conscriptees
- apathetic students
- academics
- SAUJS
- satellite campuses
- post grads
- clubs and societies
- refugees
- sports people
- campus workers
- black students

Some issues and campaigns in 84 - ADDENDUM "

- UDF
- Tricameral elections
- Million Signature Campaign
- Koornhof Bills
- repression
- Education Charter
- GST
- Rising costs
- Unemployment
- Labour issues
- Campus workers
- International Issues
- Education Crises
- Academic Freedom
- Admission and Subsidy
- Stayaway
- ECC
- Namibia
- Feminism
- Boycott
- Unrest
- Nkomati
- Forced Removals ; - Detentions and so on and so on and....