

Report on

Southern Africa Conference

Loughborough - July 1977

The first annual NUS/AAM Student Conference on Southern Africa was held shortly after NUS National Conference adopted policy on Southern Africa in 1972, at Plaw Hatch Trade Union centre. It was attended by 48 delegates from 27 Student Unions and other organisations. Since then the conference has become firmly established in the NUS calendar of events and is central to NUS's Southern Africa campaign.

This year's conference was held at Loughborough University from July 1st to 3rd and was attended by 98 delegates from 45 Student Unions. The year prior to the conference had begun with the uprising in Soweto, the intensification of the guerilla war in Zimbabwe and Namibia and an increased isolation of the regimes in Southern Africa. Activity against the racist regimes had intensified throughout the academic year. However, student activity in this country had, in general, failed to meet the need of increasing support for the people in the battlegrounds. The only exception to this, which involved thousands of students as a whole, was the demonstration on June 18th commemorating the Soweto uprisings called by NUS. At a local level, successes had been won in the disinvestment campaign at Bath, Loughborough and Wolfeson College and campaigns have been maintained in several other centres. Several COs were active in promoting the Barclays campaign and fundraising activities and on issues of emigration and other forms of collaboration. However, in general, participants in the conference agreed that a great deal of activity had to be fostered during the coming year in order to heighten the various aspects of the campaign. This was reflected in the final document produced by the conference, and hopefully work will be at a much higher level as a result of the discussions.

We were very fortunate at the conference in having a number of prominent speakers from Southern Africa including Albie Sachs, Joyce Sikakane, Joan Brickhill and other representatives from the African National Congress (South Africa), Patriotic Front (Zimbabwe) and the South West Africa People's Organisation.

Conference decisions

A whole series of problems have faced activists during 1976/77 in building the solidarity campaign with the liberation struggles of the Southern Africa people. This has happened at a time of upsurge in the liberation struggle following the defeat of Portuguese colonialism. In particular, the rapid growth of the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, the clashes between the racist Smith regime and Mozambique and the largest movement of the oppressed masses of South Africa in the Republic's history, show the determination of the Southern African people to achieve their own liberation.

The weakness of the campaign in 1976/77 can be remedied in 1977/78 and a new and firm organisational and political basis for solidarity established.

Campaign 1977/78

Our priorities for 1977/78 are determined by three factors:-

- a) The evolution of the struggle in Southern Africa and the needs of the liberation movements.
- b) The role of the British Government and Western collaboration generally with the racist regimes.
- c) The need to overcome last year's deficiencies and forge a stronger and broader solidarity with the liberation movements - linked with the solidarity work of the labour and progressive movements.

Our priorities 1977/78 should be:-

AID TO THE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

The liberation movements require many forms of material aid. In raising financial,

medical and education aid for the movements of Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, a variety of interest groups amongst students with varying degrees of commitment can become involved. In raising material aid we should continually try to explain the role of the armed struggle in the overall fight for liberation, whilst of course not making this a condition for any action in support of the liberation struggle. To facilitate this, use should be made of the liberation movements' publications.

In addition, material aid should not be regarded as a charitable pursuit involving collections for the sake of it, rather, it should be a systematic response to the stated needs of the liberation movements. It should always be an integral part of political work.

Whilst the liberation movements require aid on all fronts, specific projects for which aid should be raised are:-

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| Zimbabwe | a. Funds for camps and refugees - through Mozambique Solidarity Bank
b. Medical Aid |
| Namibia | Funds to buy medical kits - details from Namibia Support Committee |
| South Africa | a. Funds for the freedom school in Tanzania
b. Funds for refugee camps and medical aid |

All funds should first be channelled through the NUS Liberation Fund.

Solidarity against Repression

In response to the growing resistance of the people, the racist regimes are intensifying their campaign against the people of Southern Africa. Thousands have been jailed and exiled and we must campaign to highlight this repression. The focus of this campaign should be the trial of the 'Pretoria 12'.

In addition the case of political prisoners and detainees can be raised in Student Unions by the adoption of individuals as honorary members of the Union etc. ie. the SASO 9 and to campaign for their release.

Campaign against Collaboration

The racist regimes of Southern Africa receive many forms of aid from Britain and other countries. Most important is the collaboration of the present government - in economic and covert military aid to the regimes. Our campaign must be a broad one against all forms of economic, political, cultural, educational and sporting links with the racist regimes and in particular the collaboration of the Government. The NUS Executive should contact their counterparts in other countries to co-ordinate opposition to collaboration with the racist regimes of Southern Africa.

Government collaboration:

Local groups and Unions should:

- a. Take up the cancellation of the RTZ contract - details from CANUC
- b. Pressurise the Government to support and implement a mandatory arms embargo
- c. Urge the Government to support mandatory sanctions against South Africa at the UN Security Council.
- d. Urge the Government to grant full refugee status to opponents of the racist regimes including those seeking to avoid the draft in South Africa
- e. Campaign against the Government to halt the recruitment of mercenaries
- f. NUS should produce a leaflet outlining Labour Party manifesto proposals and contrasting it with reality.
- g. To take up these issues directly with MPs at constituency level
- h. Urge the Government to recognise the legitimacy of the liberation movements as the representative of the people of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Namibia

Economic Collaboration

- a. Barclays and disinvestment campaigns have played an important role in developing consciousness and work on Southern Africa. Those involved in disinvestment and Barclays campaigns must be given every assistance from NUS/AAM and other COs.
- b. Energy and resources should be given to developing the consumer boycott as it is an effective form of action primarily in the non-university sector.
 - i. Comprehensive list of South African products should be produced by NUS and AAM
 - ii. NUS to send out a briefing in sectoral mailings
- c. To lend support (eg. research facilities) to trade unionists campaigning in solidarity with the struggles of the people of Southern Africa

Academic Boycott

- a. Campaign with campus staff against the exchange of academics between educational institutions in Britain and those of the racist regimes in Southern Africa.
- b. NUS to organise national meetings with careers advisory services to discuss stopping recruitment to South Africa from colleges and the infiltration of South African propaganda material into Careers offices and libraries.
- c. To urge academic bodies to offer honorary posts and places to imprisoned academic staff and students and to organise solidarity.
- d. NUS/AAM to investigate ways of monitoring the academic links of all colleges and universities and to use this information to co-ordinate its campaign on the severing of academic links
- e. To use the companies' recruitment campaign to highlight the role of these companies within Southern Africa

Cultural and Sporting Collaboration

- a. NUS to produce in liaison with appropriate TUs blacklists of groups, bands etc who have toured Southern Africa and these to be circulated.
- b. NUS and AAM to offer a positive focus to Student Unions by putting them in contact with Southern African cultural groups eg. Mayibuye and Jabula
- c. NUS to organise a national Southern Africa cultural event in Easter 1978
- d. NUS to consider a tour of areas by a theatre company specialising in material dealing with the situation in Southern Africa

Women

- a. NUS to send a letter to womens groups in colleges regarding women under apartheid, their relationship to National and Social Liberation and the Southern Africa campaign
- b. NUS to arrange meeting on Southern Africa with womens committee of NUS
- c. NUS to approach national womens organisations, in co-operation with AAM about the question of Southern Africa
- d. NUS/AAM to approach womens journals etc. re articles on Southern Africa

Front-line states

- a. NUS to send out information on the situation in Mozambique and Angola and to give further information on the work of MAGIC
- b. Defence of the independence and territorial integrity of all front-line states especially those acting as rear bases for the liberation movements
- c. Support should be given for the construction of new societies in Mozambique and Angola in particular through Mozambique Solidarity Action campaign.

Scholarships

Students Unions should positively promote the idea of developing scholarships and scholarship funds. Details of potential students should be obtained from the liberation movements.

In line with NUS policy, Conference to reaffirm support for the liberation movements of Southern Africa - ANC (SA), SWAPO and the Patriotic Front.

Organising the Organisers

National and local organisation has suffered from lack of co-ordinations and adequate co-operation. We must make every effort to consolidate local AA groups and to strengthen the national network by trying to build up the national network meetings. Network meetings must be seen above all as national planning meetings which map out our work for two to three months at a time. To facilitate national co-ordination we should consider setting up a national co-ordinating group to meet fairly regularly. In addition we should consider trying to develop the activists mailing into a more informative and discussion-based bulletin lastly to facilitate wider participation and co-ordination we should consider a series of regional one-day conferences of both an educational and organisational nature. On an ongoing basis, groups and student unions should be urged to join the Anti-Apartheid Movement and to take bulk orders of Anti-Apartheid News.

Conclusion

1977/78 promises to be a year of increased struggle in Southern Africa. We can and must redouble our efforts to aid this struggle. We owe it to those who have fallen in battle to step up our work this year.

The Conference was attended by 98 delegates and guest from ANC (SA), SWAPO of Namibia, Patriotic Front (ZAPU and ZANU), IDAF, MAGIC, NOLS, AAM, Executive Committee and International Dept. of NUS, NUS Wales and Scotland, LSO, Cardiff Area.

The Universities of Birmingham, Keele, Bristol, Surrey, Bath, Stirling, LSE, Architectural

Association, Oxford, St. Catherines Oxford, Sheffield, Warwick, Reading, ULU, Bradford, Hull, UEA, Goldsmiths, Imperial, Institute of Education, Salford, UCL, Aston, Exeter, Dundee, Loughborough, Sussex, Leeds, Essex, Swansea and Manchester.

The Polytechnics of Lanchester, Trent, NLP, Middlesex, Leeds, City, Teeside.

The Colleges of Ripon & York St. John, Coventry CE, Worcester CFE, South Warwickshire CFE, Edge Hill CE, Ruskin College, Weymouth College.