

# OD democracy

can we tell whether  
organisation is  
truly democratic or  
not?

There are many  
organisations in  
society claiming to  
represent the people's  
interests and it is  
often difficult to tell  
whether they are truly  
democratic. Below are a  
number of pointers  
which can be used to  
judge whether an  
organisation is truly  
democratic or not.

A truly democratic  
organisation:

- \* allows people to  
freely choose which  
organisation they  
feel will best  
represent their  
interests (freedom of  
association)
- \* allows the people to  
elect their own  
leaders (freedom to  
stand for office)
- \* allows the people to  
freely discuss their  
problems and give  
their leaders  
instructions or  
mandates on what to  
do (freedom of speech  
and mandates)
- \* makes sure that  
people get full  
reports from their  
leaders so that the  
members can check  
whether their  
mandates have been  
carried out  
(accountability of  
representatives)
- \* makes sure that  
people get full  
reports from their  
leaders so that the  
members can then  
decide on the correct  
course of action for  
the organisation  
(factual report  
backs)

- \* encourages people to  
be actively involved  
in matters affecting  
them so that they  
develop a clear  
understanding of all  
aspects of the  
struggle.  
This ensures an  
ongoing commitment to  
the struggle for  
justice and equality  
(participatory  
democracy)
- \* enables the people to  
judge for themselves  
which groupings and  
organisations in  
society are reaction-  
ary and divisive and  
do not further the  
struggle for  
liberation from  
oppression and  
exploitation.

## UNITY

All black workers and  
students in South  
Africa are oppressed  
and exploited. Some of  
these workers and  
students are actively  
involved in the  
liberation struggle.  
They belong to  
different  
organisations. The  
situation therefore  
demands maximum unity  
in action. This does  
not mean that differing  
ideas should not be  
tolerated. The slogan  
"march separately but  
strike together" is an  
important principle on  
which this unity should  
be based. By this we  
mean that the body  
which co-ordinates the  
different organisations  
should tolerate various  
political ideologies,  
but when a particular  
form of action is  
decided upon by the  
majority, everyone  
should carry it out.

## NON SECTARIANISM

The minority, however,  
should have the right  
to continue to raise  
its point of view, or  
to propagate its  
position. Everyone  
should have the right  
to criticise the  
various strategies,  
tactics and political  
viewpoints  
constructively. This  
democratic way of  
operating is called  
non-sectarianism, where  
organisations advance  
in a principled and  
unified way.

## DEBATE

Convincing others of  
your ideas is an  
integral and vital  
component of the  
struggle for  
liberation. Debating  
issues on a course of  
action should always be  
allowed. Where unified  
action needs to be  
decided upon, it is the  
duty of every serious  
activist to convince  
the minority or  
majority of his or her  
views in a principled  
manner. Those who  
disagree should not be  
shouted down, beaten up  
or forced by the  
majority persuasion to  
agree. However, after  
discussion has been  
allowed, the minority  
should abide by the  
decisions of the  
majority. Without this,  
unity in action is  
impossible. Without  
unity in action, we are  
destined for defeat.

