



The crowd of about 4 000 besieged the police in the school grounds after they arrested about 100 teachers, pupils and parents who had entered the school.

Policemen cut through the fence at the back of the school to allow the besieged police out. The clash began when pupils and parents decided on an unofficial back-to-school movement, defying the Government closure of 464 schools in the Cape Peninsula.

The boycott we had is not a rejection of education. We realise that education can be either an instrument of capitalist domination or socialist liberation. We must turn our schools into centres of liberation. We realise that liberation does not lie in the hands of one or two leaders, but can only be achieved through long, hard struggle by the majority, led by the working class. The boycott, we know, is only one weapon and cannot on its own bring about fundamental change.

## **THE FREEDOM CHARTER - for & against.**

The Freedom Charter is a very important document in South Africa. Many people believe that the demands in the Charter can bring about a society free of oppression and exploitation. Others among the oppressed doubt this. Some people are of the opinion that the Charter does not address issues such as class exploitation and is not an adequate programme for ending all oppression and exploitation.

Unfortunately, a debate among the oppressed on the Charter is almost always conducted in an emotional, sometimes even physical manner. Some adherents of the Charter have been accused of elevating the document into gospel, where criticism is seen as sacrilege. In Action Youth, we hold that comradely debate among those involved in the struggle should be encouraged, and is both healthy and necessary.

In March this year a group of organisations issued a statement commemorating the 30th anniversary of the Charter. They said, "Nothing short of the demands in this document (the Charter) will satisfy the people". The argument put by the state in 1956 that the Charter was a communist document was overturned last year. A former Chief Justice of South Africa, Mr. Justice Rumpff, could find no truth in this argument. In dismissing the prosecution case, he said the Charter was a moderate document and that it is now legal to distribute the document.

Recently a debate was held between an executive member of UDF and an organiser from MAWU, an affiliate of FOSATU. Generally, the speaker from MAWU felt that the Charter cannot satisfy the aspirations of the majority in South Africa - the workers. We print below a part of the debate and then Action Youth's own assessment of the Charter.

### (1) What sort of document is the Charter?

Executive member of UDF: The Charter is a popular document, it keeps with democratic principles and represents the aspirations of the majority of the people. The Charter expresses both anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist sentiments as can be seen from the clause on nationalisation.

Organiser for MAWU: The Charter is a popular document but the domination of the middle class can clearly be seen. The Charter makes important demands like 'freedom of speech', but these are limited as they do not address the primary conflict in society - the conflict between capital and labour. The Charter talks for the 'people' but are there not different class interests among these 'people'? The Charter is not anti-capitalist as the clause on nationalisation does not equate socialism. Production relations are not addressed.

# THE FREEDOM CHARTER

(2) Of what relevance are the demands of the Charter to the working class?

UDF: The Charter has relevance for the working class in every respect. When the Charter was drawn up, the South African Congress of Trade Unions existed. We must understand that in South Africa, capitalism has taken on a racist form. Black people are oppressed as a nation and as a class. The clause in the Charter "The people shall govern" therefore shows that working class interests are primary. The Charter embodies working class interests, not petit-bourgeois interests because it is anti - imperialist.

MAWU: Some demands in the Charter are relevant to the working class but they are limited. Organisations like the UDF, which support the Charter are dominated by the middle class, and cannot ensure the liberation of the working people.

(3) What role has the working class to implement the demands in the Charter?

UDF: In South Africa, the working class is in the majority. The central role of the working class must be fought for. Because of repression, the Charter had to be couched in a certain manner. The Charter is representative of all the strata in South Africa.

MAWU: Bourgeois democratic rights are addressed in the Charter but not working class emancipation. Capitalism is the problem - the Charter does not address this. With the Charter, working class dominance is not guaranteed.

(4) Are class alliances in the Charter still viable?

Class alliances are important. The working class cannot hope to take the struggle up alone. We must broaden our base and include the black middle class. For example, the Western Cape Traders Association must be included in the struggle. They are denied certain opportunities by apartheid.

MAWU: Alliances are vital but the working class must establish its hegemony.

(5) Is a future society envisaged in the Charter compatible with capitalism?

UDF: Because of the nationalisation clause, the Charter is not compatible with capitalism. The Charter is not a socialist document, but neither is it a capitalist document. Society is in a state of transition and the Charter reflects this. It is adventuristic to talk of a single stage to socialism and this is not in the interest of the working class.

MAWU: The Charter can be accommodated by capitalism. At best it is social democratic, but not socialist. Nationalisation clause does not equate socialism. In Britain, for example, key sectors of the economy are nationalised but one cannot say Britain is socialist.

After these questions a general discussion followed, the better part of which focused on Poland and Solidarity - the workers movement there. The UDF spokesperson referred to Solidarity as 'undermining elements' that have to be 'dealt with'. In answer to this, we refer readers to a speech delivered by FOSATU General Secretary, Joe Foster, to the FOSATU Congress in April 1982. He said, "Solidarity was not struggling to restore capitalism in Poland; its struggle was to establish more democratic worker control...".

## a critique.

The first problem we have with the Freedom Charter is its ambiguity - that is, it can be interpreted differently by different people. For instance, the clause "The people shall govern" and the clause dealing with the nationalisation of banks, mines and the land has been taken to mean that the society envisaged by the Charter is anti - capitalist. But as the comrade from MAWU pointed out, nationalisation or state control of sections of the economy does not equal socialism. Many countries have nationalised key aspects of their economies but the sufferings of the workers continue. Workers still don't have control over decisions. The position of workers in Britain and Poland shows that even though the state in these countries control much of the economy, the

workers still lead miserable lives. A respected leader who supports the Charter, stated the following when writing about those clauses : "It is true that in demanding the nationalisation of the banks , the gold mines and the land , the Charter strikes a fatal blow at the financial and gold mining monopolies and farming interests. The breaking up and democratisation of these monopolies will open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous Non-European bourgeois class. For the first time in the history of this country the Non - European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own in their own name and right mines and factories, and trade and private enterprise will boom flourish as never before".

So what we see here is a denial that that the Charter implies the overthrow of capitalism. In fact , it is positively interpreted as a programme of reforming capitalism.

The second major problem with the Charter is that it accepts the government - imposed criteria of 'national groups' and 'races'. The supporters of the Charter agree that there are four 'nations' or 'races' in South Africa - so-called "Coloureds", "Africans", "Indians" and "Whites". We believe this is dangerous for many reasons. Firstly , this kind of thinking plays into the hands of the government and collaborators like Hendrickse , Buthelezi and Rajbansi. These sellouts claim to represent different 'nations' and we are giving them an opportunity to do this. It is true that many ordinary people see themselves as 'indian', 'zulu', etc. and it is easier to organise people in this manner because of geographical separation. But divisions have been forced onto our people for a reason : in order for the state to maintain easy control. It might be more difficult to organise across colour boundaries, but it is necessary. We must fight divisions in the process of struggle and not wait for after the revolution. We have to build a single nation under the leadership of the working class. Failure to realise this will result in a situation where opportunistic 'leaders' like Gatsha Buthelezi manipulate 'ethnic symbols' for their own reason. What happened in Inanda where so-called 'Zulu' workers were pitted against so-called 'Indian' workers for the benefit of Gatsha and Rajbansi, teaches us the danger of the concepts 'national groups' and 'races'. It is difficult to see any difference between the 'national groups' envisaged in the Charter and the 'national groups' of today's apartheid structures. Certainly the development of "own languages, folk cultures and customs" (Charter clause) ties in neatly with what the National Party has implemented.

Thirdly, there is no attempt in the Charter to explain how working-class leadership of the struggle is compatible with the idea of several 'nations' each consisting of antagonistic classes. Among the so - called "Indian national group" for instance , there are different classes. A minority in this group are businessmen, even big businessmen, but the vast majority are working people. The interests of these working people are more in line with the interests of so - called "African" and "Coloured" working people, and not with the businessmen in question. The Charter does not explain this.

Some people who support the Charter call themselves socialists but believe that we must first unite people against apartheid (the first stage) , and then fight for socialism (the second stage). We in Action Youth oppose attempts to separate the struggle for democracy and the struggle for workers power. A great deal has been written and said concerning the 'democratic' way the Charter was adopted. Yet none other than Chief Albert Luthuli , then president of the ANC, mentioned in his autobiography that the Charter was never circulated for amendments to affiliates of the Congress Alliance. The man who chaired the meeting which adopted the document, Dr. Wilson Conco , actually said that he saw the document for the first time at Kliptown (where the Charter was adopted). The various congresses which made up the Congress Alliance had exactly the same vote. In other words, the miniscule white Congress of Democrats had the same vote as the ANC. This is not our idea of democracy!

Instead of the Freedom Charter, we stand by a socialist programme which reflects the class struggle and will act as a guide in our fight to end both class exploitation and national oppression.

# CONSUMER BOYCOTT

The consumer boycott has been applied with great success at the height of the struggle in the Eastern Cape. The consumer boycott was coupled to the demand for the withdrawal of the army from the townships.

The Eastern Cape's success proved that the consumer boycott **CAN** be a powerful weapon in the hands of the oppressed and exploited although it does not necessarily follow that any successful action can be transplanted from one area to another without giving thought to the kind of conditions which prevail in other areas.

## HOW CAN THE CONSUMER BOYCOTT BECOME AN EFFECTIVE WEAPON?

**What should the aims of such a boycott be?**

It is an **ECONOMIC** boycott, therefore to be successful:

★ The **FIRST AIM SHOULD BE TO MOBILIZE PEOPLE** in every home to become part of the struggle. That means **UNITY** is essential. We cannot achieve **UNITY** if students or other groups have to be used to 'police' such a boycott. We cannot condone coercing housewives or forcing a mother of a poor and starving family to drink up the bottle of cooking oil she can barely afford. The oppressed themselves must be prepared to be part of the boycott.

If we are **SERIOUS ABOUT UNITY** then we must think of the many ways to **CREATE** that unity, not destroy it.

**HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES:**

**EXAMPLE:**

The **CIVICS** could become dynamic co-operative centres of the community if they could organize to buy food or other basic articles at wholesale prices and sell it at prices everyone can afford. The smaller shopkeepers who eke out a living could be drawn into the scheme.

Which housewife would oppose such an idea?

**EXAMPLE:**

The **SPORTING MOVEMENT (SACOS)** could mobilize its sportspersons by focussing the boycott on those firms who give millions of Rand each year for multinational, racial sport, as well as boycott those who refuse to sponsor SACOS codes or who give token sums compared to the thousands they offer racist sport. That should knock them for a six!!

**EXAMPLE:**

**COLLABORATORS** should be boycotted. Not only those who serve in the tricameral parliamentary structures and who have business interests, but also those who have been living off the misery of the poor, with their liquor outlets and shops in 'own affairs' group areas. Exploiters, after all, come in all colours. **CAPITALISM** is colour-blind when it suits the rulers' purpose.

**EXAMPLE:**

**MULTINATIONALS** - Let our students do the research work to find out how much of the economy is controlled by overseas Imperialist Multinationals and which of them can be effectively boycotted.

**EXAMPLE:**

**TRADE UNIONS** could inform us of the firms which do not allow representative worker bodies or independent trade unions; which shops treat their workers with contempt and are particularly racist or exploitative. The campaign could then be linked with the trade union demand for a **LIVING WAGE**.

These firms and their products could be concrete targets, linked to specific aims which are realistic in the short term. In this way we link the consumer boycott to the worker's struggle and the contradiction between **CAPITAL** and **LABOUR** can be sharpened. Workers are not just consumers. They are in the first instance producers of wealth and the wholesale robbery of workers of the value of their labour must be brought to the fore.

★ **THE SECOND AIM:**

Forging **UNITY** will enable us to work in **ORGANIZED, DEMOCRATIC, PERMANENT** structures created either well before the boycott or which are formed during the struggle.

In these structures **COLLECTIVE** decisions must be taken to ensure disciplined collective action and **COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP** under the banner of the **WORKING CLASS** so that the workers can take control of every aspect of their lives.

The boycott cannot continue indefinitely. The fruit must be the permanent structures, defended by those who built them during the struggle and which are there to survive the boycott to carry the struggle **FORWARD!!!**

★ **THE THIRD AIM** is to make us aware of the **ENORMOUS POWER** we have as workers. We produce in the factories thousands of dresses or in the bakeries - millions of loaves of bread, and they pay us **LOW WAGES** in order to make **HUGE PROFITS** for the rich. Then we have to buy back the dresses and loaves at **HIGHER PRICES**. We are thus **DOUBLY EXPLOITED** - as workers and as consumers!