

Chapter Thirteen

YOUTH AND STUDENT ORGANISATIONS

High School Youth and Student Organisations

Natal Youth Organisation (NYO)

On the 19 and 20 August, 1972, a youth leadership conference was held at the Edendale Lay Ecumenical Centre in Pietermaritzburg, sponsored by the Black Community Programmes. At this conference there were youth clubs mainly from Durban and Pietermaritzburg. After general and group discussions, it was felt that there was a need for the unity of youth clubs in Natal.

Their constitution spells their aims and objects as follows:

to promote contact and unity among all the youth of Natal;

to heighten the sense of awareness and involvement of the youth in the political, social and economic development of their community;

to project positively the African culture through literature, art, music, poetry, drama etc.;

to represent the youth on all issues that affect them in their community.

Transvaal Youth Organisation (TRYO)

This organisation was formed on the 7 and 8 October, 1972, at a conference held at St. Ansgar's in Roodepoort. It was organised in accordance with the wishes of the youth groups and also in pursuit of SASO and Black Community Programmes' plans regarding the field of youth. The purpose of this conference was to bring together the leadership from the various youth groups operating on the Reef. At the end of this conference a need was felt to unite and co-ordinate all youth activities, hence the formation of TRYO.

South African Student Movement (SASM)

SASM was founded by students of the Soweto high schools. It was first named the African Student Movement but was later changed with the aim of making it an all-black high schools' students' movement. The main aim of SASM is to co-ordinate activities of high school students.

Their other main areas of operation are their informative programmes concerning injustice in society and in schools and their campaign to preach black consciousness. SASM is an affiliate of TRYO.

Black Youth Cultural Association (BYCA)

BYCA was formed early in 1972. The main aim of this association is to combine all youth movements into a union. So far BYCA has done little towards the implementation of its aims. It is also one of the founder-members of TRYO. It has succeeded in contacting some cultural associations on the Reef.

League of African Youth (LAY)

This organisation was formed in July 1972 at Umtata. It is open to all African youth and is intended to be a National Youth Movement. From the 8 to the 10 December, 1972, LAY had a successful conference at St. Bede's College at Umtata, where their first executive was chosen.

Their constitution lists their objectives as follows:

to spell out the most essential elements in an African education and to prepare and guide the youth to this goal;

to create a spirit of fraternity among the African youth and to establish an extensive co-operation between the youth and the rest of the community;

to combat illiteracy and undertake projects on community development.

Junior African Students' Congress (JASCO)

This congress was formed at Inanda Seminary during May and June 1971.

Its aims were inter alia:

to inculcate Black Consciousness into the students;

to encourage students to learn more even in the face of obstacles and to be more aware of current events.

Before this congress was introduced to other High Schools, it was banned by the principal, Mr R. Aylard, thus breaking the initiative of black students in their efforts to relate positively to the broader community. Some students unsuccessfully tried to revive the broken morale at Inanda over this issue, but were thwarted by the overbearing fear of expulsion amongst students.

Society for African Development (SAD)

SAD was also founded by high school students in Soweto. Unlike SASM, SAD concerns itself with the development of social awareness among the African youth and the spreading of the message of black consciousness. This they do by means of organising symposia, group discussions and 'conscientisation' picnics.

SAD is also a founder-member of TRYO.

Local Students Associations

Pretoria Students' Association

This Association was formed in mid-1972 by Pretoria students (university and high school). It could only take ground after the approval of their constitution by the Pretoria City Council, which in turn provides accommodation, facilities and funds. The paramount aim of the association is to promote togetherness and to co-ordinate students' activities and also organise debates, symposia etc.

Springs Students' Association

This was also formed by local university and high school students. Their constitution had to be approved by the Springs City Council for the provision of funds, accommodation and facilities by the said council. The major aim here too is to organise local students into a unit. Their other undertakings are group discussions, indoor-games, picnics, symposia etc.

Sharpeville Students' Association (S.S.A.)

This Association was formed late in 1972 by local students. Its membership is open to all Sharpeville students, and other persons who identify themselves with the aims and objectives of the association.

Their constitution spells out their aims and objectives as follows:

to promote a spirit of togetherness and brotherhood amongst students of Sharpeville;

to promote healthy co-existence and co-operation between students and parents by way of joint meetings to discuss common problems;

to broaden the students' perspective of, and outlook to life, by way of: educative tours, debates, film shows and symposia;

to organise school lessons during winter vacations;

to co-operate with Sharpeville Cultural and Health Club in their projects as outlined in their constitution;

to contact local bodies such as the U.B.C. with a view to establishing relations between such bodies and S.S.A.

Religious Youth Groups

The Light Bearers

This group was founded and is based in Soweto. This group aims at promoting Black Theology and combating excessive drinking in the black community.

Youth Alive

This group is mainly operative on the Reef. It is a strongly religious association based on scriptural principles. Its main areas of operation, inter alia, are bible discussions and preaching the teaching of scripture.

University Student Groups

South African Students' Organisation (SASO)

The history of SASO has already been given in Chapter 2. SASO is a federation of Students' Representative Councils and has branches in cities all over the country. The highest policy-making body for the organisation is the General Students' Council. It meets once a year during the winter vacation. It is composed of delegates from different centres and branches.

Apart from the General Students' Council, SASO has an executive council which is made up of the President, Vice President, Secretary-General, Permanent Organiser, Publications Director, SRC Presidents and Branch chairmen of affiliated centres (campuses) and branches.

The current executive committee, which is in charge of the day-to-day running of SASO affairs, is composed of the following: President - Leteane Modisane, a former Fort Hare student; Vice President - Henry Isaacs, a student at the University of the Western Cape; Secretary-General - Nyameko Pityana, a Unisa student; Permanent Organiser -

Ranwedzi Nengwekhulu, a Unisa student; and Publications Director - Ben J. Langa, a former Fort Hare student.

Their constitution spells their aims and objectives as follows:

to promote contact, practical co-operation, mutual understanding and unity among all black students in South Africa;

to represent the interests of students on all issues that affect them in their academic and community situation;

to heighten their sense of awareness and encourage them to become involved in the political, economic and social development of the black people;

to project at all times the black consciousness image culturally, socially and educationally;

to become a platform for expression of black opinion and represent these internationally.

Student Benefits

Apart from other activities SASO provides the following benefits to students.

Leadership Training: SASO offers regular leadership training programmes to students. These are designed to make students efficient not only in running their own committees but also for future participation in creative black community programmes.

Vacation Employment: For the winter and summer vacations provision is made for students to obtain opportunities for employment in situations that enable students to live and work amongst workers and therefore be able to study the conditions and find their relevance to the situation or to use specialised skills in relevant situations. For really needy students remunerative employment is also arranged.

Bursaries and Scholarships: SASO distributes to all centres and branches information on possible sources of bursaries and scholarships; SASO has also recommending powers to a few scholarships.

A SASO Bursary Fund has been established and will be available to students by mid-1973, depending on how much money will be raised by the executive, centres and branches.

Dialogue: SASO offers black students the opportunity to meet and share experiences and ideas. This happens at conference and seminars which are open to all black students.

University Christian Movement (UCM)

History

Although the U.C. M. was in essence a multi-racial organisation at the beginning, it has been included here because towards its dying stage it had become a predominantly black organisation and to some extent affected the trend of events on the campuses. The following information is condensed from the report given at its dissolution conference by the General Secretary, Chris Mokoditsoa.

Late in 1966 at Bishop's Court in Cape Town, Archbishop Selby-Taylor called a meeting of church leaders to found a new student movement which would fill the gap created by the demise of the multi-racial Students' Christian Association. The latter had ceased to be multi-racial and the churches' emphasis was on ecumenism and multi-racialism.

A unique type of constitution drafted by church leaders was endorsed by student representatives. It was unique in the sense that it built into its structures not only students, but also academic staff, post-graduates and founder churches (Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, Anglican and Congregational).

Although the UCM got off to a slow start on the campuses, at Rhodes it became very active. During 1967 - 1968 events unplanned-for radically affected the future of the UCM. The founding churches did not give much support on the campuses. Instead of denominational societies on campuses phasing into the UCM to bear a united, ecumenical christian witness, these societies continued unchanged. On the other hand, the SCA remained a comfortable home for the theological conservatives. At this stage NUSAS was banned on all black state-controlled campuses, thereby isolating the black student from the white student.

It was not surprising, therefore, to find that the constituency at the 1968 UCM Conference at Stutterheim was very different from the one at Grahamstown the previous year. The majority of those who came to this Conference were those whose ties with their particular denominations

were weakening and who were therefore far less conservative theologically.

It was at this conference that a black caucus was formed out of which grew SASO, the spearhead of Black Consciousness. A confrontation between black and white students took place leading to a shift in focus from intercommunion as an issue to more social and political issues. This marked the UCM as a radical student movement. The result of this shift was that it frightened many white members and further loosened the ties with the founding churches.

At the Conference at Stanger, 1969, the sharpness of this confrontation between black and white increased and in 1970 at Roodepoort the move was in the direction of polarisation. Projects such as Black Theology and literacy were by their nature not to allow for much white involvement.

By the time of the Eston Conference in 1971 the UCM had in effect become a federation of projects. On the white students' side emerged the Women's Liberation and the White Consciousness projects, and on the black student side, Black Theology and literacy projects, all of which were independent. This required that the old executive be converted into a co-ordinating committee to inter-relate the four independent projects.

The UCM officials were raided on several occasions and the Security Branch confiscated their documents. At rapid intervals, Mr Justice Moloto, formerly President for two years and General Secretary for two months; Dr Basil Moore, Acting General Secretary and first President; and thereafter Mr Sabelo Ntwasa, who appeared on the scene for a year as Black Theology Director, were within a six months period, banned and restricted under the Suppression of Communism Act.

Another happening was the appointment of a Parliamentary Select Commission to look into the affairs of the UCM amongst other organisations.

Projects

Black Theology: This project concerned itself mainly with the implementation of the organisation's resolutions which mandated the Director to organise regional seminars and produce publications. This was done; various seminars were held and a publication *Essays on Black Theology* (since banned), was published. These were mainly due to the tireless efforts of Mr Sabelo Ntwasa who was subsequently banned after his return to the Federal Theological Seminary in Alice to complete his training.

Mr Mokgethi Motlhabi took over as acting Director and editor of the *Essays on Black Theology*. At the 1972 UCM Conference, Mokgethi was

mandated to call a national conference in November where black clergy, laity and students would hammer out the structure of Black Theology. However, this could not be held and was postponed to February, 1973.

Literacy: This project was set up at the 1970 Conference in Roodepoort. During that year, a literacy campaign was run at Zululand and lasted until mid-1971. Since then there has been intensive training of instructor/co-ordinators which revolved much around investigations, compilation of emotive words and words which have existential meaning to given communities. However, literacy classes could not be started due to the lack of accommodation and manpower. Only one motivation day was held in Springs on 9 May, 1972.

After dissolution, the UCM Committee appointed in terms of resolution 2/72 had discussions with the SASO Executive. These resulted in the project being transferred in its entirety to SASO.

Dissolution of the U.C.M.

The UCM was formally dissolved by its president in terms of Resolution 12/72, in accordance with Article XII of the UCM constitution, which requires ninety days' notice of a proposal to dissolve. The motion was drawn by the executive and sent to all members of the Council for decision at their 'Black 72' and 'Alternatives 72' Conferences which were held from the 10 to 16 July, at St. Ansgar's and Wilgerspruit respectively.

At this Conference it was unanimously resolved to dissolve UCM for the following reasons:

that the UCM itself had over the past few years advocated the need for black-white polarisation;

that the Methodist and Presbyterian churches had finally withdrawn their support from the UCM without giving their reasons fully and clearly to the UCM in spite of the avenues that have existed for that;

that the UCM has had to operate against increasing pressure from the government and power structures in the universities.

REFERENCES

1. Information condensed from several different columns of Hansard and also from the various Universities.
2. Information supplied by SASO.
3. Figures supplied by the Department of Bantu Education and also from Hansard.
4. Figures partly from SASO Newsletter Vol. 2, No. 1 and from some Universities.