

# Civics and the ANC



**Dennis Thokozani Nkosi, a Durban-based activist, responds to "Civics are part of the National Democratic Revolution" by Blade Nzimande and Mpume Skhosana which appeared in the June issue of MAYIBUYE.**

**T**he article on civics argues that since community and political issues cannot be separated why should civics be separated from the liberation movement.

The demand for houses, security and comfort has become one of the central demands the civic movement has to address with the unresolved land question. This raises the tactical question posed by Cdes Nzimande and Skhosana: if the civic issues are political as well what do the branches do if there are civics?

To answer this let us remind ourselves of the following: we organise with the objective of winning people to our side. This we do by addressing issues that affect our people directly.

ThUs, for example, we manage to convince workers that:

- they have to join trade unions so that they can challenge the bosses together;
- they need to join the ANC to fight national oppression;
- they need to join the Party since it is the main political mouthpiece of the working class.

## CREATIVITY

We have never raised the question as to what the Party branch should do in a factory where there is a trade union. The Party does not take up issues of collective bargaining or the representation of workers since these fall within the ambit of the trade union. Some of the issues overlap and this calls for creativity from the organiser.

The above example shows that

branches can work closely with civics where they exist. ANC branches are there not to compete but to work in close cooperation with civics or anyone else committed to the solution of the problems faced by our people. In this way we will be building a democratic tradition and culture from the grassroots.

Civics make things easier. Imagine the PAC, Azapo, Wosa, the ANC and Inkatha all going to make representation to the same local authority. Each one of them would get a different commitment and they would be played against each other.

## NON-SECTARIAN

A politically progressive but non-sectarian civic can address this issue by bringing all together to work out a strategy. Non-sectarian should not be equated to politically neutral as some people are suggesting. It means that politically you are against the deprivation of our people's basic and fundamental rights but you do not push the view of one organisation but the dominant themes agreed upon at the meetings of that civic.

It becomes the task of the ANC branch to campaign for the endorsement of the ANC's position. This makes the branch lively and alert. It sharpens the theoretical understanding of the general policies of our organisation.

In response to the authors reference to experiences of the Soviet Union two points need to be made: firstly, that our ethic should be the empowerment of our people, not just parties or political groups; and secondly, that the civic strengthens civil society and ensures that the voice of the people is heard.

Though these lessons have been acknowledged in the article they have not been taken into full consideration for the relationship between civics and ANC branches. ♦