

Trasco calls for joint campaigns



STUDENTS 86

THE TRANSVAAL Student Congress (TRASCO) says it agrees in principle with the resolutions passed at the conference of the National Education Crisis Committee in Natal last month.

"We see schools boycotts in many parts of the country not as deliberate actions undermining the spirit of the NECC conference, but as continued action against a government who refuses to adequately meet our demands. The conference took place with these demands still not met, many schools were boycotting already at the time.

"We understand why many students are frustrated at the seemingly 'soft' approach the conference took. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fundamental problems that continue to exist in our townships and schools.

"We shall continue to engage the authorities in the way we collectively agreed at Wits last year — organising in the schools and working towards people's education", says a TRASCO spokesperson.

Trasco covers the entire Transvaal, comprising of local student congresses and their SRC affiliates. The Trasco Executive Committee is still functioning as an interim structure. Full elections are planned in the near future.

At a Trasco conference in Soweto on March 23, 24 and 25 delegates from 42 Trasco branches made the following resolutions:

- On People's Education: On commemorative days such as June 16, Mayday, June 26, and August 9, courses would be run on the peoples' history of resistance, and the road ahead. Other days during the school week should also be set aside for alternative education programmes.

PORT ELIZABETH students have renamed their schools after prominent people in the liberation struggle.

But it is not only the names that have changed in PE schools.

Since the return to classes students and the PE Crisis in Education committee (CEC) have made significant gains in the schools.

"The situation in our schools is more than dual power. We have toppled the scale onto the side of the people", said the CEC.

The CEC represents 28 organisations including students and other UDF affiliates, Cosatu, church, sports and other bodies.

After report backs on the December education conference, the CEC tabled demands with the DET. The DET refused to accept the democratic SRC constitution.

But students are implementing them anyway.

The DET agreed to supply stationary, would consider supplying set-work books and said they would start renovating schools. But two weeks after the agreement, the DET had done nothing.



Teachers could assist with these.

The Education Charter Campaign is seen as a vehicle to ensure the implementation of our choice of education.

Trasco is presently collecting various publications on alternative forms of education and will distribute these for workshops.

● On Mass Action:

When the situation demands stay aways and consumer boycotts, broad and thorough consultation shall be made, involving civics, youth, parent and other progressive organisations.

A campaign for the unbanning of Cosas and the ANC shall be backed by such actions.

"The existing democratic parents crisis committees, SRCs, parent teacher student associations will also form part of structures for peoples' education. The programme must not be confined to

classrooms."

"Structural links with Cosatu and many other community organisations are being established. People's education is not established. Peoples' education is not only important to students".

Students will also help organise the unemployed into unemployed worker unions.

"Students will attend Cosatu shop-stewards Council meetings and visit union offices to help with office work to learn the practical working of a union".

Because students in the bantustans face heavy repression, Trasco has resolved to support their struggles. One way is by organising campaigns against bantustan policies, especially against industries operating there. Research into boycott action against these industries and their products must be made.

"All organisations must take up



"We cannot ignore the problems that continue to exist in schools" - Trasco.

people's education, discuss and implement it. This is not the duty of students alone, but all of ours."

"We have already seen puppet community councils give way to progressive democratic civics, democratic unions replace sweetheart company unions and the reactionary tribal authorities increasingly challenged by the people," said Trasco.

"SRC's should be formed in all schools and play their proper democratic role. No major problems have arisen in establishing these, but progressive organisations must help students fight for their formation.

● On class suspension and the dismissal of teachers and students:

"We must insist on our right to education — people's education," Trasco resolved. "When DET closes down schools, students and all other sectors of the community must demand they be re-opened. Schools must be occupied if this demand is not met, and the opportunity used to teach people's education.

"If teachers have been transferred,

their reinstatement must be demanded or students must boycott classes until this demand has been met. Stayaway action, consumer and other boycotts must be used to force the state to bend to these demands".

● On repression, the SADF in the townships and the nature of vigilante groups:

To campaign for the withdrawal of troops from the townships and educate students and the community about the role of the armed forces.

"We view the role of the state as a defender and protector of the interests of the wealthy. So we see the occupation of our townships and schools as a means to ensure the perpetuation of capitalist and apartheid education".

Students will also organise their parents around this issue, raise their awareness of being members of the working class. Trasco also resolved to take action against vigilantes. These resolutions have been nationally circulated and are to be compared with the 28 and 29 NECC ones to enable joint campaigns and implementation.

CEC in PE controls schools their way: the democratic way

The CEC visited the 60 schools in PE townships. They worked out how many classrooms could be used and what renovations were needed.

Along with students and parents they defied the way the DET wanted to organise the schools. They went ahead and implemented their own plans on:

- the allocation of students to different classrooms and schools.
- appointments, dismissals and allocation of teachers.

● alternative education programmes.

While demanding that the DET renovate schools, they made sure that every student could be

accommodated in the existing classrooms.

The platoon system was implemented some students go to school in the morning and others go in the afternoon.

The CEC said ideally there should be 25 students in each class. But because of the shortage of classrooms, there were 60 students in each class.

But this overcrowding meant the failure rate would be very high. This was unacceptable as far as normal education was concerned, said a CEC spokesperson.

So it was only worthwhile for stu-

dents to go back to classes if there were political discussions and awareness programmes in addition to formal tuition.

When the DET did nothing to renovate the schools, the CEC took it into their own hands. Along with students and principals they worked out which classrooms should be renovated first.

School funds and contributions from parents were used to fix two classrooms at one school. The CEC resources subcommittee was mandated to look into raising funds.

The PE Chamber of Commerce and Industries said they would pay half the money needed to renovate the

schools and provide stationary. They said they would lend the government the rest of the money.

United action from students, parents and the CEC also forced the DET to:

- back down on retrenchments and transfer of teachers and accept a Science teacher chosen by the CEC and students.
- agree to suspend an SADF teacher in one school.
- reopen schools which were closed down.

The CEC said the DET had totally failed to administer the schools. They said PTSA's and the community should take over the running of the schools and be responsible for education policy.

A draft constitution for PTSA's has been drawn up. These will later take over the role of the CEC. PTSA's are to work closely with street and area committees in the townships. Here people will be given questionnaires for the people's Education Charter Campaign to say what type of education they want.

The principals should no be longer accountable to the DET, but to the PTSA's and the community. And school buildings and facilities must be belong to the community, said the CEC.