

Three presidents for 'coalition of the people'

THE United Democratic Front — a political coalition of 400 labour, political, civic, church, women's and students' organisations opposed to the government's constitutional proposals — was launched near Cape Town yesterday.

A multiracial crowd of about 5 000 from all parts of the country gathered in Mitchell's Plain for a mass rally last night while 700 delegates and 800 observers met in closed session and elected three presidents.

After the closed session, the UDF said in a statement it would "strive for the unity of all our people through united action against the evils of apartheid, economic and all other forms of exploitation".

The three presidents are Mr Oscar Mpetha, who is in hospital recovering from a leg amputation, Mrs Albertina Sisulu, who is in custody awaiting trial, and Mr Archie Gumede, a Durban lawyer and community leader.

Among 14 patrons elected were jailed ANC leaders Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu, and Denis Goldberg, the Rivonia trialist who is serving life imprisonment.

Also elected were sports administrator Mr Hassan Howa, Mrs Helen Joseph (who received a standing ovation when she entered the hall), Mrs Monty Naicker, widow of the former president of the SA Indian Congress, the banned Rev C F Beyers Naude, Sheik Nazeer Mohammed, president of the Muslim Judicial Council and Dr Alan Boesak, president of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Dr Boesak said the UDF represented "the broadest and most significant coalition of groups and organisations struggling against apartheid, racism and injustice since the early 1950s.

"I believe we are standing at the birth of what could become the greatest and most significant people's movements in more than a quarter of a century."



S. Exp.
21 Aug. 1983
● Mr Mpetha — hospitalised, but elected a president.

By STEVE GRBIC

He said the formation of the UDF highlighted and symbolised the crisis apartheid and its supporters had created for themselves.

"After more than 20 years of apartheid education they expected to see totally brainwashed, perfect little 'hotnotjies and kaffirtjies' who knew their place.

"Instead they find the most politically conscious generation of young people determined to struggle for a better future," he said.

Earlier, delegates alleged

that attempts had been made to disrupt their gathering and some heading for Cape Town were harassed.

A new wave of bogus pamphlets and posters allegedly designed to spread "disinformation" about the UDF launch also appeared.

Sapa reports that two men were temporarily held by police at the rally.

Police said Mr Dmitri Lennert and Mr Bruce Irvine allegedly contravened a municipal regulation and were summonsed to appear in court.