

AQUARIUS

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TO  
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1972.

ASSESSMENT, AIMS, PLANS & RESOURCES

AQUARIUS

## AIMS, PLANS AND RESOURCES

This section of my report outlines what I see as the aims and resources of Aquarius and suggests some plans in very general terms - these are examined in more detail in the last section of the report. I shall attempt to be as concise as possible.

Aquarius has two main functions:

- 1) to encourage creative expression
- 2) to promote youth (and in particular, student) "togetherness" ("culture" is not really the word, I don't think)

These two functions are, very broadly speaking, those enunciated in the constitution and in resolutions taken at the last Congress.

In fulfilling the first function, I see Aquarius promoting the examination of accepted mores and values, instigating experimentation with new ideas, promoting the participation of others in this examination and experimentation, and providing an outlet for self-expression and creative activities. This examination of the values of the society is something which is occurring continuously and need not, in most cases, be activated by an organisation - the function of Aquarius should primarily be one of providing outlets, for getting people together, and for the further dissemination of these ideas.

In the second function, I see the need for some unifying factor amongst students in particular and the youth in general. The total lack of a common identification of any "togetherness" of students with students, and of students with youth *generally was evidenced remarkably during the June protests*. The force of the student unity rested solely in the words of student politicians on the platform, while the non-involvement of non-student youth was even more distressing. The student mass was seen to be an "organisation" rather than a "movement".

It will become increasingly important over the next year to convert this "organisation" into a "movement". The reasons for this should be obvious to all - whether it can be done is another matter. It will also be increasingly important to go further than the students and include the youth of the communities in the various centres. If these goals are to be achieved, which I believe they must, then Aquarius is the body best able to do it within the present sphere of operation of the National Union. It has been shown on many occasions that the use of music, song, dance and poetry is one of the best methods of providing this unifying link between groups of individuals. Aquarius can do this through the relevant use of these media.

Narrowing down the activities of Aquarius a little more, one can identify three distinct directions of operation:

### 1) Campus Level

Aquarius on the campus must act as a local creative organisation, providing an outlet for and encouraging new ideas, experimentation and self-expression. This would include workshops, cultural seminars, publications, concerts and performances. This local action must not be confined to the campus but must include the youth of the community - "community centres" should be started where possible.

### 2) Inter - campus Level

In order to encourage the dissemination of ideas on a national level, and provide for links in a national student movement, Aquarius must promote tours of off-beat drama groups, bands and music groups, poets and intellectuals. Aquarius national must also co-ordinate the local projects of (1) and organise functions on a national level which come out of the work already done on a local level.

### 3) National Level

This would include the work coming out of Head Office and would involve the activation and co-ordination of national campaigns such as conscientious

objection, environment, international cultural boycotts etc. It would also include the production of national publications, dissemination of posters etc.

These three directions do, of course, overlap in a number of areas - the divisions should not be seen as separate but as interacting and complementary. It should also be noted that they are arranged in what might be called a decreasing order of importance i.e. the success of the projects depends on the campuses which must be able to operate without Head Office if this becomes necessary.

Aquarius is fortunate in that it does not depend on a Head Office in order to fulfill its main functions. We must plan for success in our projects without relying on a Head Office, in such a way that central coordination by full-time officers will only enhance the success of projects. Such planning will allow for most contingencies which could arise from external interference.

\* On a local campus level, past projects have included:

- workshops: drama, music and poetry
- concerts and performances
- publications
- campaign action groups (ecology and censorship)
- focus weeks

The success of these different projects has varied from campus to campus. In general, -the workshops have been relatively successful - they have not expanded very much beyond their initial membership (and in some cases have folded up). It cannot be expected, however, that a project of a workshop nature should expand very much as it is strictly a creative experience which only attracts a certain group of individuals. It is important though that the openings for such work be retained. These workshops can become increasingly important if they are used as the campus base for inter-campus functions such as the Drama Festival, Arts Festival, etc.

-the concerts and performances have been successful on all the campuses in that they have drawn people together, provided outlets for artists, been a source of major fundraising. They can, however, be criticised in many cases for lack of direction. Due to the large audiences that they attract, they are an ideal medium for comment on the society - they should not be simply a commercial enterprise, but should be put to an educative purpose. More use should be made of performances of this kind in situations other than the "evening entertainment." Here I am thinking particularly of student body meetings, focus weeks, campaigns, etc., where such performances by selected individuals could be integrated into the normal series of lectures, and speeches which are arranged for such occasions.

-publications have appeared from time to time on the different campuses: Carrot at UND, Aquarian at Rhodes, Torque at UCT. The publications have all differed in themselves - some informative, news, etc., some focussing on particular campus issues, some serious artistic magazines. Their content really depends on the needs of the different campuses. Nowhere has a successful underground publication been started (although attempts were made to do this at Wits). The most serious criticism of this project is the lack of communication between campuses where one campus does not know what is being produced on others - this should be rectified.

-campaign action groups have had limited success on the campuses. Enviroac has been the only successful ecology action group on any of the campuses, although groups are starting on Durban, Wits and UCT. The biggest problem of such groups is direction. Enviroac acted mainly as an information agency, and it would appear that this would be the most relevant line to adopt (we cannot hope to solve the problems ourselves as we are not the people who make the decisions). I would therefore see the student groups acting as information agencies and study groups, with vigilant groups on the action side. The censorship campaign has never really got off the ground in any of the centres - mainly due to the very limited scope of operation. It is difficult to suggest any other possibilities which have not already been suggested or tried. On the national level of this campaign, suggestions are made later in this report.

-focus weeks have had variable success.

It proved impossible earlier this year to coordinate these weeks on a national level due to the different priorities which each campus had, and due to different "stages of development" amongst the local committees. These weeks can serve a very useful purpose on the campus (Wits has had a "Liberation Week", UND had a week on "Women in Society," UCT has had an "Asia Week"). It will have to be left up to each campus to decide on when, where and how it wants such weeks.

Local activities must be expanded to include a far wider spectrum of the youth. We must involve schools, and we must involve the working youth. These interest groups should be brought onto the campus, and the campus should go out to them. This need was identified at the last Congress - "Congress noted the failure over the past year to get across to the public youth. It was decided to focus functions and projects so that they might easily include schools and other youth. This may be achieved through Drama workshops, poetry, music evenings, etc." It is suggested that local committees establish "community centres" where people can gather to experiment, pass on ideas, and interact with different sections of the community. There are numbers of halls in the cities which could be put to such a use. (The UND Aquarius Local Committee has this idea for the campus alone, where it is hoping to establish a campus "centre" where people can get together. The Space Club in Cape Town has also fulfilled this role to a certain extent by proving a centre for experimentation *In the Arts, where people can regularly get together, where off-beat drama and music groups can promote and present their ideas and where the normal apartheid provisions governing the Arts do not apply*).

\*On the intercampus level, we have so far had the student editors' conference, the winterschool, and the drama festival.

These functions have served their primary purpose of getting students together from all over the country for the promotion and exchange of ideas. Their main downfall has rested on the lack of sufficient foundation on the campus. These projects must come out of work already done on the campus level - they should not act as media for dissemination of ideas from the top downwards, but from the bottom up. The failure on this level in the past has necessitated the use of many "outside" people in the programmes whereas we should be concentrating on the things generated by our own groups.

Plans for next year's Arts Festival and Winterschool are proposed in detail later.

A proposed innovation on the inter-campus level is the promotion by Aquarius of national tours of drama and music groups (what might be called a non-commercial *empresario*). There are numbers of small groups experimenting with new ideas in different parts of the country. We have the facilities on all the campuses to assist them in putting their ideas across. These groups include small drama groups (black and white and non-racial), music groups and musicians, poets and intellectuals. Financially, this proposition has an area of risk (as all *empresario* ventures do), but with efficient organisation, such a project could, in fact, become a major fundraising programme). Paddy Lee Thorpe is very keen on the idea, and he has been asked to look into the proposal further for report to Congress.

\*Campaigns operating from Head Office. These campaigns are those which are essentially the "one-man" type and do not depend on mass action - eg. censorship, conscientious objection, cultural boycotts, and to a certain extent, environment. The function of the Secretary-General simply be to keep up pressure on those bodies which can effect change in the areas of concern, either through direct approaches to these bodies or through the build-up of public pressure.

While these campaigns for the active promotion of the values to which we subscribe should be continued, we must recognise that this method of trying to persuade others to change their values is very difficult and not likely of success - the most we can hope to do is to keep the issue in the public eye. We have, however, learnt from the activities in the sporting sphere that in order to focus public attention on South African policies, and promote change,

we must threaten the things which affect the day-to-day lives of the ordinary white South African (who will only change when he has to). For a number of years now we have voiced our approval of international cultural boycotts of South Africa - this, again, has had very little effect as it has applied mainly to performers visiting South Africa. As a major Aquarius campaign for next year, it is proposed that the scope of this boycott be increased to include movies. Actors and actresses must be approached and asked to refuse to allow their movies into South Africa if:

- 1) The movie is mutilated by the Publications Control Board
- 2) The movie shows to segregated audiences.

Movie stars must be approached directly and urged to have such conditions written into their contracts with film companies. Numbers of actors and actresses have identified themselves strongly with the youth movement overseas and should be willing to start the ball rolling. A campaign of this nature will have far more effect on the average John Smith or Willem van der Merwe who would never have gone to see Dame Margot in any case.

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#### SOME DETAILED PLANS FOR NATIONAL FUNCTIONS 1973

*The plans outlined above are of necessity of a general nature. The plans presented here are a little more detailed in view of the fact that the Congress discussed and ratified the proposals in broad terms in July.*

#### ARTS FESTIVAL

The following very broad outlines were laid by July Congress:

The Arts Festival is to be held during the April vacation in Cape Town. The theme will be "Change in the Arts", and the Festival will operate on two levels:

##### A) Lectures, Theory, Seminars etc.

The idea of the Arts Festival will be to try to ascertain what constitutes an artistic revolution, and what the relationship is between this and the society from which it is born. We will focus on Western art during the 19th and 20th centuries with reference to earlier periods and different cultures where this is deemed necessary. Comparative analysis will be applied to periods of radical change exhibited in a particular art form. We will try to articulate an anatomy of an artistic revolution in its socio-political context and examine the relation between the two. Our object is to provide a theoretical base for experimentation in arts forms in South Africa and an understanding of the social implications of this.

##### B) Practical Experimentation and Exhibition

The Arts Festival will be divided into five sections, with project directors for each. Garth Verdal was appointed coordinator of the Festival, with the help of the Secretary-General and Chris Spicer. The other five directors appointed were:

- |                |                                   |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Drama       | Philippe le Roux                  |
| 2. Music       | Kally Forrest                     |
| 3. Movies      | Sue Unterhalter                   |
| 4. Literature  | Patti Corazza                     |
| 5. Static Arts | (left for appointment by Sec-Gen) |

A multi-media programme will be constructed using the above art forms, with emphasis on student contributions to run concurrently with the discussions so that the theories may be applied to what we are doing.

The proposed plans below have expanded on the broad guide given at Congress.

Lectures, etc.

Due to the great amount of practical exhibition and experimentation which will be provided by the above five sections of the Festival, the lecture/seminar programme will have to be kept fairly limited. It is proposed that the programme kick off with a very general sociological survey of culture as a basis for the rest of the lectures. This paper would be backed up by a series of lectures on specific spheres of the Arts and their relationships to society. Finally, a series of persons in each of the above five fields can examine in detail the changes in the different art forms which have taken place.

The following programme is therefore proposed:

- 1) An introductory paper on Culture and Society (a sociological survey of culture). This would also touch on the specific art forms, whether they reinforce the society or not, etc. The object of this paper would be to examine very broadly Art and its relation to a society, the relationships between Art and Ideology. It is suggested that Mr. Michael Nupen (UND Politics Department) be approached to present this paper.
- 2) A series of 3 lectures by an individual on specific spheres of the Arts, and the relationships between these specific spheres and the conditions in a society - i.e. how society reflects itself in the different art forms, or alternatively, how the different art forms can affect the society. The individual who could take such a series of lectures would have to have a broad knowledge of the Arts as well as a good sociological base. Suggestions are welcome.
- 3) A series of lectures on each of the five specific art forms. It is proposed that one person in each of the 5 fields give a series of approximately 3 lectures on that specific art form. This series would go into the historical background of that art form, highlighting periods of radical change in form and outlook and either backing up or repudiating the general theoretical basis founded in the first series of lectures. Discussion groups would examine these examples in comparison with existing conditions both in the Arts and in society, and so form a theoretical base for experimentation in these art forms. The activities being carried out simultaneously on the "practical" side of the Festival would form a basis for discussion and further experimentation.

Some suggested resource people in this series are:

Drama - Robert Mohr (in particular for Modern European Dramatics)  
Mavis Taylor (living theatre)  
Robin Malan (in particular for Brecht)  
Barney Simon (in particular for French existentialist art)

Static Art - Richard Wake

Literature - Prof. Gilham

Andre Brink

Nadine Gordimer (in particular on African writers)

Berkenshaw (e.g. influence of Freud on literature)

Movies - John van Zyl

Music - here the field is very open. It will probably be necessary to have someone on Classical, Pop/Folk/Rock and Electronic. Suggestions again welcome.

In addition to the above overall lecture series which will form the basis of the theoretical framework of the Festival, it is proposed that particular facets in the different sections be highlighted in order to attract and cater for specific interest groups.

eg. An African art section separate from the above. This could be a complete section in itself, with African music, drama, literature and static arts.

It is proposed that the Afrosoc at UCT, and a group of individuals from the community, be approached to organise this section.

- eg. A specific focus upon Shakespeare in the Drama Section, based on the set-works of matriculants in the Peninsula and aimed at drawing the schools into the ambit of the Festival.

The above should give an idea of a possible programme for the lecture-side of the Festival. It remains very wide open, but after discussion at Congress, it is hoped to have a final draft on which work may immediately be started. This programme is ambitious but with immediate and hard work, is completely within the capabilities of the present Aquarius structure and resources.

#### Practical Experimentation and Exhibition

It is proposed that the contributions to this section be obtained primarily from student sources, with additional contributions from public, off-beat individuals and groups, and schools. There will be a continuous exhibition of static arts, with performances in the other sections both on and off the campus throughout the entire week of the Festival. These presentations will have to be selected on the basis of the theoretical framework of the Festival, and campuses will have to begin working on their contributions immediately varsity begins next year - if not sooner.

The Directors elected at the July Congress will be responsible for gathering contributions in each section, and will report on their plans separately to Congress.

Finally, it need hardly be said that a considerable amount of fundraising by Local Committees must be carried out if we are to operate on the above scale. (On the other hand, it is only when one does operate on a scale of this sort that the project becomes financially viable!).

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#### WINTERSCHOOL

The July Congress decided that the 1973 Winterschool should focus on the topic of Ecology. It was then felt that this topic was of great concern to Aquarius and that a comprehensive programme should be adopted in bringing this subject to the attention of students and public.

This programme involved the formation of ecology action groups on all affiliated campuses, these groups to liaise with Envirac and with Head Office. These groups would then meet in July next year for an intensive Winterschool programme. This proposed programme has been outlined in the first section of this report.

Dok Kaufman was mandated by Aquarius Congress, in conjunction with the Sec-Gen, to draw up a draft programme for presentation to this Congress. As stated above, however, Dok will be unable to assist with the programme. In addition, Envirac has had a number of its own problems and is at present in an uncertain state. Lastly, the University of Natal is also planning an environment conference in Pietermaritzburg during July of next year and it would seem pointless to go into competition with them.

It has proved impossible to find anyone else to take over the responsibility for this Winterschool and although I am opposed in principle to discarding projects which have been initiated after considerable thought, I feel that we are left with little alternative. (This does mean discarding the entire ecology project - local campus action groups will still be established, the Head Office ecology report will be prepared, and students will be able to attend the PMB conference, I imagine).

I have discussed the above problems with various people, and arising from these discussions make the following proposals to this Congress:

The topic of the Winterschool should be changed to "The Role and Position of the University in Society."

This topic will be of a particular interest to students involved in the National Union and to the universities which are increasingly finding it necessary to re-examine their position within the South African structure. The topic also allows for participation by a far wider spectrum of student groups (and in particular by all of the affiliates - I would suggest that a committee from the three affiliates be appointed to run the Winterschool). It will also tie in very well with the Wits "Non-Racial Campus" plans. (Congress is to be held at Wits).

Besides the above, it is essential that the students and universities examine their role in South Africa, and if they do not do this of their own accord, they must be forced into a position where they have to do so. The Government, too, will in all likelihood be forcing the universities to examine their position very carefully, and such a Winterschool topic could be worked in well with long-term contingency plans.

I would therefore strongly recommend the adoption of this proposal.

As this is merely a proposal, detailed plans would be premature here. The following list of possible aspects of the Winterschool is given as a basis for thought:

- 1) Education for what?
  - educational methods
  - direction of education: who is the university serving?
- 2) Practices within the University
  - racial segregation of students and classes
  - black staff conditions
  - priorities within the universities in respect of courses
  - apartheid within the universities
  - university government
- 3) Are Universities conducive to change?

In order to have at least the basic framework from which we can immediately begin should this proposal be acceptable, I have asked Geoff Budlender to put forward some more concrete proposals and ideas (Geoff has recently prepared a paper entitled "Universities and Social Change" for SPROCAS2 which covers the three points above). I hope to have these proposals circulated to campuses before Congress - they are, unfortunately not available at present.

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Delegates should please give the above plans and proposals some considerable thought before Congress so that we can ensure that comprehensive final draft programmes come out of the Congress.

Thankyou

JOHN FRANKISH  
SECRETARY-GENERAL