

THE CONFERENCE FOR A DEMOCRATIC FUTURE

The defiant mass struggles of the past months have now created even more favourable conditions for building the broadest anti-apartheid coalition. The Conference for a Democratic Future (CDF) in December must mark another important step forward in this process.

But there have been debates and even tensions at times about whom to include in the coalition. These problems have often been caused by a failure to understand the nature of a broad anti-apartheid coalition. Such a broad coalition of necessity includes many different forces. Many will have their own separate agendas. **But what is essential is that they should all be united, not just in words, but actively in practice on a common anti-apartheid platform.**

The fundamental objective of the anti-apartheid coalition is to strengthen the democratic forces and to weaken the enemy to the maximum. This is done by:

- Mobilising the widest range of oppressed and democratic South Africans.
- Winning over from the regime a sizeable section of its own mass base.
- Deepening the divisions within the ruling class.

To realise these objectives, the front needs to be as broad as possible. Non-participation in government structures is an important but not decisive criterion. After all, we cannot ignore what has been happening before our very eyes in the last period.

White town councillors, mayors and parliamentarians have participated actively in legal and even illegal mass defiance campaigns and marches. Some bantustan leaders are now taking far-reaching practical steps to express their solidarity with the liberation movement. At such a time, the abstract likes and dislikes of certain small activist circles cannot be the basis for deciding which forces should be included in or excluded from the Conference for a Democratic Future. At the same time we, of course, have to draw a line when it comes to those demagogues who have no track record in the liberation struggle and who merely want to jump on to the band wagon for per-

sonal power gains.

A conference like the CDF can be an important focus and motivation for a broad coalition. But the anti-apartheid coalition is not a one-off event. It is a **process**. And, as a process, it may also have different characteristics at different times and in different places.

The building of a broad anti-apartheid front at a local level is often misunderstood. There is sometimes a tendency simply to copy what happened nationally. This does not mean that the only broad-front anti-apartheid task within a particular township or black campus is to echo the national arrangement. For instance, a formal alliance between a Sansco branch and half a dozen black consciousness student activists does not, in itself, make a very significant campus-level anti-apartheid coalition. A much more meaningful campus coalition should embrace Sansco, campus workers, teaching and administrative staff, sporting and cultural groups, and — yes — also the local BC activists.

Finally, it is essential that the CDF has a **mass character**. To be successful, it cannot simply be an agreement at the top between national executives. And here those formations with a real mass base (Cosatu and UDF affiliates in particular) have a special responsibility. They must act as a real leading force within the coalition. They must not just advance the specific interests of their members, but also act resolutely for the achievement of the common aims.

Above all, Cosatu and UDF affiliates must ensure that the objectives of the Conference for a Democratic Future are democratically debated and actively implemented right down through their ranks, to the smallest branch on the ground.

CDF'S SEVEN UNIFYING PERSPECTIVES

- One person, one vote in a united democratic country.
- The lifting of the State of Emergency.
- Unconditional release of all political prisoners.
- Unbanning of all political organisations.
- Freedom of association and expression.
- Press freedom.
- Living wage for all.

