

AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS

Western Cape Region MCH 911-28-3-7



PO Box 13123, Sir Lowry Rd, 7900

1st Floor, Locarno House,
228 Victoria Road, Woodstock

Tel: 021 - 448 5651

Fax: 021 - 448 5646

PRESS STATEMENT

9 December 1991

re: ANC rural conference

The long awaited ANC rural conference finally took place over the past weekend at the Songhe College of Education in Worcester.

The conference had a two fold focus:

- * to look at ways of strengthening our organisation in the rural areas, and
- * to examine the important development problems facing the rural areas.

The ANC hails the conference as a great success. It was attended by 356 delegates from 64 rural areas, as well as representatives from Regional and National executives, the Peninsula branches, and the Womens and Youth Leagues.

A particular feature of the conference was that it was attended by many organisations and institutions who are active in the rural areas, but who are not directly linked to the ANC. We hope that their participation will be the beginning of an ongoing process of cooperation to address the very real issues and problems confronting the rural areas.

The ANC has repeatedly stressed the importance of the rural areas, not only in building our organisation, but also in rebuilding our society after the havoc caused by the massive social engineering of the National Party. This conference a vital step in making our commitment a reality.

The many delegates left the conference convinced that it was only the ANC that had the policies and the commitment to rebuild and develop the rural areas to ensure that the effects of apartheid are removed.

The resolutions of the conference are not formal ANC policy as yet, as it was not a formal structure of the ANC. The resolutions will be submitted to our next Regional General Council for formal ratification.

Land

The land issue was one of those highest on the agenda. The conference was particularly concerned about the way in which the government is attempting to implement a new dispensation in land ownership while national negotiations are still underway.

The People Shall Govern !

Conference called for a land claims court as a forum where the grievances of dispossessed communities can be addressed, and for legal aid to be made available to such communities to regain their land.

Immediate efforts should be made to acquire already vacant land to assist those communities with a land shortage, and conference called on communities to consider occupying such vacant land to highlight their plight. We should also investigate ways of limiting the amount of farms that one person can own to allow a wider spread of ownership of land.

Conference called also for a moratorium on large land deals until a new land dispensation can be negotiated at a national level.

A further proposal was that the government should call in the debt of unproductive farmers to allow the land to be distributed to productive, disadvantaged communities. We should also investigate ways in which farm labourers can be empowered to become land owners.

The ANC should set up a permanent land commission to assist rural communities involved in land struggles, as well as a development committee.

Local government

In relation to local government, the conference once again confirmed the rejection of the present local authority structures, and in particular, the management committees which have caused so much hardship to our people. Conference resolved that where possible communities will refuse to enter into negotiations with such puppet structures which are at best an anachronism in the present situation.

Building the ANC

Conference adopted a number of resolutions to strengthen the work of the ANC in the rural areas, calling inter alia for sub regions and rural offices to be set up to improve communications in the vast rural areas.

Freedom of assembly

A further point of concern raised was the lack of freedom to organise in the rural areas. ANC branches were often refused access to the only available local venues. The position of farm workers are of particular concern as they are often under the total control of farmers who refuse them permission to attend meetings, or even to join political parties.

Conference felt that issues such as these must be addressed at CODESA or else there will be little chance of free and fair elections in the rural areas.

Issued by: **Willie Hofmeyr (assistant secretary) 25 3844 code 6564**
Mziwonke Jacobs (publicity secretary) 25 3844 code 6470