

MINUTES OF CONFERENCE OF THE 'SAVE THE PRESS CAMPAIGN', HELD IN THE DOROTHY SUSSKIND AUDITORIUM, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, AT 3 P.M. ON MONDAY 29 JANUARY 1990.

PRESENT:

As per attendance register.

INTRODUCTION:

The chairman, Mr John Matisonn, welcomed delegates to the conference and thanked them for giving up their time to attend. He outlined the history of the campaign, saying that it was founded when a number of groups came together to discuss the government's emergency regulations and the restrictions of the media.

The Save the Press committee successfully campaigned against the state's plan to impose further censorship controls by means of a registration procedure for journalists.

We know that the government is contemplating reconstructing the emergency regulations with regard to the media. At present there are over a hundred laws on the ordinary statutory books that inhibit dispersal of information and freedom of expression.

It is essential that the media itself communicate to the public the very real difficulties and restrictions under which it operates, radio and television should also be freed from government control.

This meeting has been called to adopt a constitution and a new name for the association and a fresh agenda for a vigorous anti-censorship campaign.

APOLOGIES AND MESSAGES OF SUPPORT:

Apologies and messages of support were received from Colleen Ryan, Helen Suzman, Liesel Naude on behalf of the Johannesburg IDASA Regional Office, Mark Orkin on behalf of CASE, Barbara Buntman, and Nigel Bruce of Business Day.

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS:

The chairman introduced Mr Raymond Louw, interim Chairman of the organisation
Speech available for perusal.

Mr Gabu Tugwana, Acting Editor of the 'New Nation', then addressed the conference.
Speech available.

The third speaker was Mr Azhar Cachalia, National Treasurer of the UDF. Speech
available.

The Chairman thanked the speakers warmly for their contributions.

CONSTITUTION:

The draft constitution was read out to the meeting and comments and suggestions
were called for from members. After a full discussion it was agreed that the draft
constitution be adopted, with the following amendments:

1. Item 3.1.2: The words 'and all laws that impinge on the freedom of
information and expression' be inserted after the words 'the repeal of all
censorship laws'.
2. Item 3.1.3: The words 'Which can be reasonably considered to have been' be
inserted after the word 'actions' and the word 'duties' replace the word 'work'.
3. Item 3.1.5: A comma to be added after the word 'official'.
4. Item 5.1.1: The word 'interpret' to replace the word 'define'.

RESOLUTION:

A draft resolution was discussed and it was agreed that this resolution be adopted in
the following form:

'RECOGNISING THAT:

1. The Paper Printing Wood and Allied Workers Union ('PPWAWU') is recognised
as one of the founding organisations involved in the 'Save the Press Campaign'.
2. PPWAWU has not had an opportunity to get a mandate from its membership to

participate as one of the founding organisations in the 'Save the Press Campaign'.

IT IS RESOLVED THAT:

In the event that the PPWAWU gets such a mandate from its membership, paragraph 4.2 of the Constitution shall be automatically amended to include PPWAWU as one of the founding organisations and that accordingly this general meeting will be required to elect four and not five members of the Executive Committee.

This amendment to the Constitution will be made at this general meeting.'

NEW NAME:

The reason a new name was sought for the organisation was that 'Save the Press' sounds a little bit defensive. It is necessary that this organisation not become moribund. We should not accept that the government is coming up with something new to get excited about - now is the time if ever we are to get rid of government control of radio and television, to devise methods of freeing the media.

Suggestions were put forward of possible new names, as follows:

Free the Press
Free the Media
Let the People Know
Bless the Press
Campaign for Open Media
Coalition for Open Media

A vote was taken and the majority of those present opted for the name for 'Campaign for Open Media'. This was adopted as the name for future use by the organisation.

CAMPAIGN IDEAS:

Various suggestions were proposed as follows:

1. Generate public interest through amplified telephone connections with prominent people like Thabo Mbeki, Joe Slovo, Pallo Jordan.....

2. Work with other organisations to campaign against censorship.. eg. The Independent Publishers Association and Cosaw for videoed interviews followed by telephone linkups with writers like Arthur Miller and Chinua Achebe.
3. Consult with Fawo and arrange a screening of 'Cry Freedom' followed by a link up with Donald Woods. Likewise screen 'A Dry White Season' and follow with Marlon Brando.
4. Address the isolation of Southern Africa; invite the ex editor of the Bulawayo Chronicle to talk about his own experience of censorship. Also, invite journalists and writers from Nigeria and Kenya.
5. Consider illiterate people and their lack of knowledge regarding censorship. Work with theatre groups to illustrate the point.
6. Consult with organisations and unions represented at the conference. Have them put censorship on their agendas and disseminate material on the subject to their members, especially where censorship affects their daily working lives.
7. Invite a delegation of editors & journalists, prominent people who have some stature in international communities, to visit South Africa to look at the question of the media and censorship.
8. Invite a delegation of lesser known journalists from South African countries who have had experience of harassment and censorship.
9. Objection was raised to inviting overseas journalists due to the high costs involved. Organisations could be invited such as the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), the International Organisation of Journalists (IOJ) the Committee to Protect Journalists, etc.
10. Arrange access to UNESCO.
11. For a fortnight censor the sports and entertainment section of all newspapers so that the public at large can be made aware of what they are missing.
12. Create a board game around censorship ... the obstacles being land mines which represent repressive censorship laws.
13. An active campaign of defiance against censorship laws is needed. Follow the example of the MDM and its open hospitals campaign. The media should defiantly challenge censorship laws by publishing information and issuing a

statement that it is doing so in defiance of a particular act.

14. As part of the defiance campaign hold a public exhibition of press photographs never published with a description of the censorship law which caused the visual material to be withheld.
15. The prime objective of COM should be to increase pressure on government. Right now it is primarily a Transvaal organisation. Look as a matter of urgency toward the establishment of a single national body.
16. 'Day of the Press' - a symbolic day - could be October 19.

The chairman wound up the discussion by saying that all these suggestions would be looked at positively. He felt that this campaign should be inclusive of all sections of the media. He thanked members for their input.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

The following members were proposed and seconded for appointment to the Executive Committee:

Ameen Akhalwaya
John Matisonn
Charlene Smith
Anton Harber
Harvey Tyson
Pat Schwartz
Arthur Goldstuck
Zwelakhe Sisulu - if he is available and if he is allowed to attend meetings

Votes were cast and the following four people were appointed:

Ameen Akhalwaya
John Matisonn
Zwelakhe Sisulu
Anton Harber

The meeting closed at 6 p.m.