

THE 23RD AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS YOUTH LEAGUE (ANCYL) CONFERENCE IN BLOEMFONTEIN: A POLOKWANE POLITICAL HANGOVER?

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Abstract

The ANCYL played a significant role in the history of the ANC, therefore the actions of its members at their 23rd conference in Bloemfontein were disturbing for the ANC. Already in the build-up it was clear that rivalries between factions were rife and before the conference started there had been disruptions. The article highlights the reasons behind the rivalry and the ANC's leadership's handling of the situation. The rivalry was not due to ideological differences but to support for personalities. The ANC leaders and ex-ANCYL leaders aired their dissatisfaction with the unruly conduct and the pursuit of political self-advancement. Many members rejected the outcome of the leadership election and the congress was adjourned. The ANC intervened and at a closed session later that month the election of the five officials and the National Executive Commission was maintained. A number of organizational, policy and leadership issues were discussed. The divisions were, however, still apparent. The conference in Bloemfontein was obviously a political hangover of the ANC's conference at Polokwane.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the history of the African National Congress (ANC) the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) has played a significant role. Founded by Oliver R Tambo, Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela and others in 1944, the ANCYL forced a change in ANC strategy.² In the late 1990s the ANCYL under Peter Mokaba was instrumental in helping Thabo Mbeki secure the deputy presidency of the ANC, which placed him in a position to take over from Mandela in 1997. With Fikile Mbalula in charge, the same ANCYL successfully campaigned to have Jacob Zuma elected as ANC President at Polokwane (Limpopo) in December 2007. Given this background of influence, it was disturbing to note the actions of some of its members at its 23rd conference in Bloemfontein in April 2008. Like many other elective conferences of the congress movement, the build-up to the Bloemfontein conference had been characterized by accusations of fraud and theft of votes. As part of the preparations for the conference,

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2 It should be noted that the dialectic between autonomy as the right to govern itself according to its laws, and independence as the freedom from any constraint, is at the heart of the relationship between the ANCYL and the ANC. This dialectic is intimately linked to the issue of the "radicalism" of militancy that forms a basis of the identity claimed by the Youth League.

youth league structures held their regional and provincial gatherings. Many of these gatherings did not escape acrimony as various camps positioned themselves to take over the ANCYL when Mbalula steps down.³ Among the members of the ANCYL in Bloemfontein there were disruptive elements which wanted to sway the presidential results of the ANCYL to favour their preferred candidates. The most disruptive spectacle occurred when a mob of ANCYL members vandalized the registration area because they were not happy with their treatment. A political explanation was that the tumult was caused by rivalries between factions of the presidential candidates, namely Saki Mofokeng and Julius Malema.⁴

This article intends to highlight the reasons behind this rivalry and the way the ANC leadership handled the situation. Some political analysts like Professor Lesiba Tefo of the University of Limpopo opined that the ANC leadership appeared to have taken sides in an attempt to resolve the leadership problems that existed during the conference; hence it was difficult to resolve the rivalry between the presidential candidates which divided the ANCYL into two camps. Tefo argued that during the ANCYL conference in Bloemfontein, the problem was mainly caused by the marginalization of some individuals within the league itself and that created tensions and militancy. It was clear that from the ANC's leadership side, there was no reprimanding the rivalry groups which represented both Mofokeng and Malema as presidential candidates during the conference.⁵

The ANC Polokwane conference entrenched the politics of populism and personality cults within the ANCYL. This conference was a watershed in ushering in a grassroots democracy and its influence was evident in the ANCYL conference four months thereafter. In this the ANC Limpopoity of Limpopo article the author intends to show that both the ANC conference in Polokwane and the ANCYL conference in Bloemfontein were marked by a culture of intolerance of divergent opinions and the desire to demonise and purge rivals. The spectacle of league members refusing to engage in political and policy discussions as long as their preferred candidate was not elected leader of the organization deeply embarrassed older members of the ANC.

Research for this article was carried out in different stages, which included collecting and analyzing the newspaper clippings on the topic. Archival information

3 *City Press*, 16 March 2008.

4 The *Mail and Guardian* established that the ANCYL spent over R17 million on the Bloemfontein conference. It was claimed that the money had come from the donors including the ANC and businessmen like Tokyo Sexwale and Patrice Motsepe. Although it was not clear as to how much each contributed, there were suspicions that Sexwale paid transport and accommodation costs for all 4 000 delegates who attended the conference. Other costs of the conference included a sound system, decorations, printing, fleet, printing of organizational documents, T-shirts and general administration. For more information see *Mail and Guardian*, 11-17 April 2008.

5 Radio interview with Professor L Tefo of the University of Limpopo by Motsweding FM, 8 June 2008.

was gathered about the relaunching of the ANCYL which had a bearing on the future activities of the organization, including the holding of the conferences. A number of secondary sources formed the basis of the article. Some of the works used deal with the ANCYL at the turn of the 1990s. Most references to the ANCYL after 1990 consist of extracts and are often journalistic.⁶ From the sources consulted, no actual study focused on the ANCYL conferences since its formation in 1944. The absence of major sources dealing with the ANCYL conferences reinforced the idea that it was both useful and relevant to deal with in order to reach a better perception of its impact on the evolution of the ANCYL. In order to fully understand the ANCYL and its subsequent conferences after 1990 and the April 2008 conference, the background history of the organization is important.

2. THE BACKGROUND OF THE ANCYL AFTER 1990

The provisional ANCYL was officially re-established on 27 October 1990 at Orlando stadium. In its relaunching, the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO)⁷ and the ANCYL which operated in exile came together. This coming together was not easy to achieve. The two organs of the ANCYL, namely the so-called “inziles”, referring to members who emerged through the ranks of the youth formations within the country during apartheid under the leadership of SAYCO, and the so-called “exiles” whose members emerged through the ranks of the youth section in exile, were responsible for the new culture of contestation for leadership. The political situation and operations within the confines of legality also introduced new dynamics and a new type of member to the ANCYL, the so-called “yuppie generation”, referring to

6 For more information see T Lodge, “The ANC and the development of party politics in modern South Africa”, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 42(2), June 2004, pp. 189-219. This article offers useful insight into the new ANCYL. See also J Seekings, *Heroes or villains? Youth politics in the 1980s* (Johannesburg, 1993), pp. 86-101. See also B Magubane, “Introduction: The political context”, in B Magubane (ed.), *The road to democracy in South Africa 1: 1960-1970* (Cape Town, 2004), pp. 30-32. See also ME Moemi, *The African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) in South Africa: An assessment of the political strategies and approaches within the Mass Democratic Movement (1944-2006)*, unpublished MA Dissertation, University of the Free State, May 2007. See also K Naidoo, “The politics of youth resistance in the 1980s: The dilemmas of a differentiated Durban”, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18(1), pp. 143-165.

7 SAYCO was not officially dissolved until 9 December 1991. The coexistence of both organisations proved to be precious as the ANCYL could rely directly on SAYCO’s structure. To some people this constituted a weakness as it fostered some confusion. In 1992, the Executive Committee of the ANCYL decided to set up branches at university campuses, where SASCO had until then represented the student supporters of the ANC. With this move, the ANCYL broke the agreement it had initially concluded with the South African National Students’ Congress - SANSCO (that became the South African National Students’ Congress – SASCO – in 1991). For more information on SAYCO see William Cullen Archives, University of the Witwatersrand, AL 2425: SAYCO records.

the youth who mainly came from wealthy families and had an academic background. They also contributed to the new culture of contestation for leadership.⁸

The Provisional National Youth Committee (PNYC) and the National Youth Secretariat were established to spearhead the rebuilding of the ANCYL. Their main functions included receiving reports from the Head Office of the ANCYL and addressing developments related to the building of the league. The preamble of the newly established ANCYL focused on the objectives of the ANC: a democratic regime in a non-racial and non-sexist society. In order to contribute to this aim, the ANCYL was to become a mass-based youth movement. It would serve the interest of the ANC, but also those of the South African youth. These two functions were to be known as the “twin tasks” of the ANCYL.⁹

In April 1991, an extended meeting of the Provincial Executive Committee of the ANCYL noted that since the 2nd of February 1990, the ANC had entered in a phase of negotiations that compromised certain pillars of the struggle, such as underground operation and armed struggle. It added that the ANC was obviously losing its power of initiative and that it should rely on and consult the broad mass of its members and followers in order to regain the initiative. It was suggested that the ANC should not adopt a reformist approach as opposed to its past revolutionary position. The ANCYL Provincial Executive Committee argued that the process leading to democracy should itself be democratic and that internal democracy should be a major concern.¹⁰ During the same period, the Provisional Secretariat of the ANCYL complained in a memorandum addressed to the Provisional Secretariat of the ANC, that the ANC could intentionally restrain the rise of the ANCYL as an active political actor. Restraining orders included matters such as setting up the ANCYL’s regional offices as well as the delay of its inaugural conference due to a lack of funding.¹¹

3. THE ANCYL CONFERENCE, APRIL 2008

During its national conference in Bloemfontein in 2001, the ANCYL was faced with the challenge of the so-called “student movement takeover”. This was led by, among others, David Makhura, a member of the ANCYL’s National Executive Committee (NEC), having earlier served as President of SASCO.¹² At its 2004 national conference which was held at Nasrec, Johannesburg, the ANCYL had to ward off a

8 Moemi, pp. 50-51.

9 R Botiveau, *The ANCYL or the invention of a South African youth political organization* (Johannesburg, 2007), p. 21.

10 *Ibid.*

11 ANCYL, *Memorandum to the ANC National Executive Committee* from the ANCYL Provisional National Youth Secretariat, 26 February 1991.

12 Moemi, p. 51.

takeover by members aligned to the Young Communist League (YCL), a youth body of the South African Communist Party (SACP).¹³

This was also evident in the ANCYL's national conference in Bloemfontein held between 2 and 6 April 2008 where a new leadership had to be elected. A total of 4 000 voting delegates were expected at the conference.¹⁴ Before the conference, the three presidential hopefuls were the Limpopo Secretary, Julius Malema, and the national executive members, Saki Mofokeng and Songezi Mjongile. Malema was mainly backed by the Eastern Cape and Limpopo provinces.¹⁵ He also had support in Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and the Free State. Mofokeng, who hailed from the Free State, had the backing of KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and the Free State provinces. Mjongile's support base was in the Western Cape.¹⁶ Supporters of Malema and Mofokeng felt that Mjongile would likely marshal his forces behind Mofokeng in the hope of getting something in return. Party insiders viewed the youthful Malema, aged 27, as a radical who could easily fill the shoes of outgoing President Fikile Mbalula, while Mofokeng, aged 34, was seen as an experienced leader and a moderate. While Malema was criticized for lacking experience, Mofokeng, on the other hand, was just one year short of 35 years, the age limit for ANCYL leaders.¹⁷ These candidates all had one thing in common: they were known Jacob Zuma campaigners. Not much separated these candidates. There were no ideological issues to set them apart, only personalities. Although Malema and Mofokeng were depicted by lobbyists as "radical and militant" leaders, the election of either would signal a departure from the league's current leadership, which was seen as leftist in character.¹⁸ With the ANCYL having been instrumental in Zuma's ascendancy to the helm of the ruling party, and departing Youth League President Mbalula's recent rise to the top brass

13 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

14 At the ANCYL national conference it was expected that the provinces would have the following numbers of voting delegates: Limpopo 727; Eastern Cape 700; KwaZulu-Natal 680; Mpumalanga 400; North-West about 300; Free State 291; Western Cape 237; Gauteng about 350; and about 200 from the Northern Cape.

15 It should be noted that during the preparations for the April 2008 conference, Limpopo delegates were pushing for a motion for the ANCYL to disqualify any future league president who would turn 36 in the next three years while still in office. The ANCYL constitution stipulated that no one over 35 years could stand for office. This motion was to help Malema to be the only candidate for the ANCYL presidency.

16 *Daily Dispatch*, 5 April 2008.

17 *Business Day*, 7 April 2008.

18 *The Weekender*, 5 April 2008.

of the ANC, the race was on to win the hearts and minds of the new ANC leadership which was chosen during the Limpopo conference in December 2007.¹⁹

There were reports before the conference that the outgoing Mbalula preferred Malema for the presidency of the ANCYL. Although such rumours circulated, the branches through their delegates in the conference would have the last say. Without doubt, behind the scenes there had been intense political maneuvering to position Malema as Mbalula's successor. There were also cries that both Mofokeng and Mjongile were too old to assume office. On this ground, therefore, Malema would be left as the only possible candidate for presidency. The ANCYL spokesperson, Zizi Kodwa, stated:

“The biggest challenge facing the ANCYL is to fight the problems facing the youth. These include issues like poverty, hunger, unemployment, joblessness and the ill- treatment of black people on the basis of race. Free tertiary education also needed to be looked into as well as raising the age requirements for child support grants.”²⁰

As they went into the conference, the organization also faced criticisms for being pre-occupied with their internal succession race at the expense of the above-mentioned issues affecting the youth. There were fears that the policy documents due for discussion in the conference could well take a back seat to issues around the leadership contest.

The opening day of the ANCYL's conference mirrored the disorderly conduct of the party's national conference in Polokwane. There were delays with registration. By the evening of the 4th of April 2008, the conference proceedings had not started as the ANCYL's NEC was locked in a crisis management meeting trying to resolve an impasse over the delegates' credentials. Kodwa confirmed that they had identified problems with “bogus” delegates who had found their way into the conference. He indicated:

“Our main problem was that the number of people captured did not tally with the number of delegates we have. We seem to have more people in the conference with tags than the number that we have in the system. Already that would create serious problems of manipulation and rigging. Credentials must be very clear and there should be no doubt about them.”²¹

Instead of continuing with the proceedings of the conference, the leadership was trying to resolve the problem of the “bogus” delegates as well as that of ill-discipline and “anarchy” among delegates. This admission came after the outgoing NEC's decision to withdraw its National Organizer, Saki Mofokeng, and Vuyiswa Tulelo,

19 For more information on the ANC Limpopo conference in December 2007, see C Twala, “An historical overview of the 52nd conference of the African National Congress (ANC) in Limpopo”, *Journal for Contemporary History* 33(3), December 2008, pp. 156-176. See also S Fikeni, “The Polokwane moment and South Africa's democracy at the crossroads”, in P Kagwanja and K Kondlo (eds), *State of the Nation South Africa 2008* (Cape Town, 2009), pp. 3-34.

20 *Daily Dispatch*, 5 April 2008.

21 *Sunday Independent*, 6 April 2008.

the Deputy Secretary, from heading the registration and credentials committee. Mofokeng was replaced by outgoing Treasurer General Phumezo Mqingwana and Secretary General Sihle Zikalala. The two were contenders for different positions in the fierce leadership contest which had divided the ANCYL into factions. A group of disgruntled “bogus” members who had been refused accreditation stormed the league’s registration centre and vandalized property. A total of 3 643 branch delegates were to have cast their votes by 6 April 2008. The squabble over credentials threatened to derail the conference. The camps of Malema and Mofokeng accused each other of bringing the “bogus” delegates to influence the outcomes of the leadership race.²²

In the Callie Human hall of the University of the Free State where the main proceedings of the conference were held, delegates disrupted proceedings with loud chanting and refused to obey directives against campaigning for their “presidential” candidates. They also interrupted speakers, including ANC President Zuma. The first day was marred by long delays and chaotic campaigning by supporters of candidates Malema and Mofokeng. Organizers battled to maintain order inside the hall as rival groups tried to out-sing each other and chanted slogans in favour of their preferred candidates. In trying to normalize the situation, the conference chairperson, Thandi Tobias, called for Malema’s supporters to remove campaign posters from the Callie Human hall but that was not heeded to. War chants in their candidate’s name often turned into verbal battles on the conference floor.²³

The above situation was described as “abnormal” by the ANC leaders who attended the conference. These leaders were visibly distressed by the ill-discipline on the conference floor of a group that claimed the party’s “king maker” mantle. It was clear through the level of intolerance in this conference that the culture of the ANCYL was changing. Mofokeng’s supporters pointed the finger at outgoing President Mbalula saying that his failure to control the ill-discipline of the delegates at conference showed his support for Malema.²⁴ To many observers, this conference resembled the ANC Limpopo conference of December 2007 where the delegates had been uncontrollable. The ANCYL conference was therefore a political hangover of the Limpopo conference. This was due to the fact that the leadership battle dominated all the proceedings of the conference.

In a graphic display of loyalties Malema’s supporters created a mock coffin draped in the South African flag bearing Mofokeng’s name and with the words: “Rest in peace Saki”. In retaliation Mofokeng’s supporters “baptized” one of their own on the conference floor, saying that he had “seen the light”. It was also questionable as to how the mock coffin had found its way into the conference venue despite the heavy security in and around the hall. There were also placards flying high from

22 *Cape Times*, 7 April 2008.

23 *Business Day*, 7 April 2008.

24 *Ibid.*

the supporters of both leaders. Some of the placards had derogatory messages such as: “Even with all the money flying around Saki will still win”; “RIP Julius try after getting matric”. Without doubt the poorly disciplined conference also stained Mbalula’s record as the President of the ANCYL because this happened during his presidency. The ill-discipline and disorganization during the conference shocked observers who wondered whether the crisis was a symbolic representation of the future of the ANC. In an attempt to arrest the situation, the police had to be called in to bring about peace in what organizers called a “volatile” situation.²⁵

Kodwa tried to make sense of the chaos stating that the delays for the start of the conference had been unavoidable. He said that because of the leadership contest, it was important that voting delegates had to be properly authenticated to ensure the legitimacy of the ballot. He spoke strongly against the organization being used for self-enrichment. He said some branches had suddenly sprung up in order to strengthen candidates’ positions.²⁶

When addressing the conference Zuma found it necessary to spend some time addressing the issue of ill-discipline. He said:

“The leadership contest is a healthy democratic process. What is problematic is when lobbying and pushing our preferences become so entrenched...it begins to be misconstrued as ideological differences. I am worried that we might adopt some culture that is not our own. Let me implore all delegates to put the organization first, regardless of leadership preferences.”²⁷

Not only Zuma slammed the ANCYL’s “state of disorder”. The ANC Deputy President, Kgalema Motlanthe, lamented and criticized the outgoing leadership of the ANCYL for having failed to sort out problems that had preceded the conference. Motlanthe was the main speaker at the conference on 6 April 2008. He told the delegates that some among them had acted in a manner that was not in line with the ANC culture. Motlanthe further urged the youth to get their priorities right and make education their number one concern. He even suggested a rearrangement of the youth league’s logo to place the book ahead of the hammer and the spear. Motlanthe said: “The logo of the youth said fight, produce and learn...this congress, in an endeavour to identify your priorities, should bring the book in front so that you start by saying learn, produce and defend the gains of the revolution.”²⁸ In response to that, outgoing youth league President Mbalula apologized to the people of South Africa and the ANC at large for the “uncouth and unrepentant” conduct by some unruly elements within the ANCYL. He stated:

25 *Ibid.*

26 *The Weekender*, 5 April 2008.

27 *Ibid.*

28 *Cape Times*, 7 April 2008; *The Star*, 7 April 2008.

“We all have a common commitment on behalf of the ANC to make sure this conference does not fail. Unruly elements have tried and failed to derail the conference. We have been interrupted but we will have a leadership elected... The prophets of doom have failed.”²⁹

The organization and proceedings of the Bloemfontein conference were also criticized by former ANCYL members like Thabang Makwetla, Rapu Molekane and Thabo Masebe. Molekane who was the ANCYL Secretary between 1991 and 1994 lambasted the delegates who drank alcohol, disrupted speeches and disturbed the conference. Echoing Molekane’s disenchantment was Makwetla, a member of the league’s NEC from its relaunch in South Africa in 1991 until 1994. Masebe, a three-time NEC member elected National Treasurer in 1994, stated: “This is a reflection of the problems of the ANC more generally over the past few years, resulting from an exclusive focus on the ANC leadership issue.”³⁰ All three former leaders lamented the decay of the ethics of service in the ANCYL and its replacement by the pursuit of business and political self-advancement.

From the above incidents it is clear that the ANCYL is not a homogenous entity and that there are diverse views about issues, including its leadership. This indicates that it has become characteristic of the ANCYL leadership to be contested by various groupings since its relaunch in 1991 at the KwaNdebele conference, with the situation continuing to prevail even into the April 2008 Bloemfontein conference. Moemi argued that despite all the above leadership struggles, the ANCYL has always sought to maintain the unity of the organization against such leadership contests.³¹

4. THE OUTCOME OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference ended on 7 April 2008 and the militant Malema was elected the new President of the ANCYL, but the results were immediately contested. According to Ayanda Dlodlo, an electoral commission member, the election was disputed after seven provincial representatives on the electoral commission had insisted that the voting had not been free and fair and had questioned the process. Only two provincial representatives believed that the elections had been free and fair. Before announcing the results, the electoral commission had told delegates that the commission was divided on whether the election of the league’s top-five leaders had been free and fair. Complaints from some of the representatives were that some of their delegates had not been allowed to vote, amid claims of intimidation.³²

Despite the complaints, the commission nevertheless announced the results, telling the delegates that Malema had defeated Mofokeng by 188 votes, mustering a total of 1 883 votes against 1 695. When Malema’s election was announced, his

29 *Ibid.*

30 *Mail and Guardian*, 11-17 April 2008.

31 Moemi, p. 50.

32 *City Press*, 13 April 2008.

supporters led him shoulder high to the podium. In an apparent gesture of support, Mofokeng's backers stood up and clapped, while outgoing President Mbalula hugged Malema before triumphantly hoisting his hand in the air. Mofokeng also congratulated Malema.³³

It was however clear that the results would not be accepted. The Western Cape youth leader, Ndoda Ngemntu, was the first to dispute the vote, telling the conference: "We don't accept the outcome of the elections."³⁴ Ngemntu was later joined by a chorus of other delegates, leading to the session being adjourned and the steering committee moving into an emergency meeting to address the concerns of the rejection of the results. Other results were also disputed, given that the other four office-bearers contested the elections on Malema's ticket. The four were Andile Lungiswa (Deputy President), Vuyiswa Tulelo (Secretary General), Steven Ngobeni (Deputy Secretary General) and Pule Mabe (Treasurer General).³⁵

Antagonism and tension between members of the ANCYL forced the electoral steering committee and party secretaries to discuss the matter behind closed doors. The conference was therefore adjourned. Former ANCYL President, Gigaba, said there were objections raised and the conference agreed to report to the Secretary General of the ANC, Gwede Mantashe, in order to seek guidance on the way forward.³⁶ Gigaba reported the following about the adjournment of the conference:

"This does not imply that the leadership will be dissolved. It just means that the conference could not complete its business. We met the ANC's NEC members deployed here and the provincial leadership... we proposed the 23rd national congress be adjourned."³⁷

Gigaba further stated that the newly elected leaders of the ANCYL were to remain such in name only until the ANC has decided whether to call another elective conference or a national general council to choose an extra 30 national executive committee members.³⁸ The national leadership of the ANC had to make a decision on the legitimacy of the newly elected leadership. Before it adjourned, the conference also resolved that a special conference be called to elect the organization's NEC and discuss policy.³⁹

Due to the rejection of the results, outgoing ANCYL President Mbalula had to be escorted out of the conference hall as some delegates hurled chairs at him in protest at the outcome of the presidential elections. This was the result of Mofokeng's supporters being booed as they formally tried to raise their objection to the outcome

33 *The Star*, 8 April 2008.

34 *Ibid.*

35 *Ibid.*

36 *The Times*, 8 April 2008.

37 *Cape Times*, 8 April 2008.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Business Day*, 8 April 2008.

of the voting. So when Mofokeng's supporters felt that they were being suppressed, they started singing protest songs and blaming Mbalula for the mess.⁴⁰

A week after the ANCYL Bloemfontein conference, Moffet Mofokeng of the *City Press* wrote that after the announcement of the election results Mbalula came out in defence of Malema. Mbalula said people who objected to Malema's election would never succeed because they would need a two-thirds support from delegates who had attended the conference in Bloemfontein to do that. Mbalula added that he was disappointed that he had not been told beforehand that some people complained about Malema's victory. As the outgoing President, Mbalula argued that he was politically entitled to that particular briefing. The complaint was raised at the plenary meeting before and after the results of the ANCYL presidential race had been announced.⁴¹ Regarding the people who raised the complaints, Mbalula asked the following:

"How do you say seven provinces have complained when queries are raised by seven people? You cannot say seven provinces of the youth league met and agreed to contest elections. In terms of the youth league constitution you must canvass two-thirds of the delegates at plenary and at conference to dispute the results of an election. They did not have that two-thirds. They will never get it."⁴²

With the above statement, for the first time Mbalula confirmed that he did indeed support Malema and that he had urged Mofokeng to work with Malema. Mbalula also indicated that he had even asked Mjongile not to stand. Instead, Mjongile stood and accused Mbalula of wanting to anoint leaders for the youth league. Before the conference started, Mjongile withdrew his comments and apologized to Mbalula.⁴³ Although there were complaints around the behaviour of ANCYL members during the Bloemfontein conference, it was ironical that Malema in an interview with Matuma Letsoalo of the *Mail and Guardian* downplayed the existence of factionalism within the ANCYL after his election as President. He called what transpired in the Bloemfontein ANCYL conference as active campaigning around issues of preference. He also denied the opinion that succession battles superseded the policy issues in that conference. He further argued that his contestation for the presidency was not because he questioned Mofokeng or Mjongile's capacity to lead, but it was more the contest of a generation which was fighting to come in at the expense of an old leadership which did not want to make such space available.⁴⁴ Perhaps Malema and his supporters were justified because the outgoing President Mbalula was deemed too old to continue whilst both Mofokeng and Mjongile were also regarded as too old to be in the leadership positions of the ANCYL.

40 *The Times*, 8 April 2008.

41 *City Press*, 13 April 2008.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

44 *Mail and Guardian*, 18-24 April 2008.

Besides the rejection of the election results, it was clear that the ANCYL had organized this conference with the glaring absence of a succession strategy to deal with changes in leadership. The refusal to allow individuals to declare their political ambition openly partly explained why the campaigning was so fierce and so inadequately regulated. Although open campaigning is contrary to the ANC's "tradition", it was clear during this conference that individuals were no longer prepared to wait and not declare their availability and willingness to serve in senior positions within the organization without being mandated to do so by their branches. Both the ANC and the ANCYL adhered to collective leadership which was viewed as an important mechanism to hold individual leaders accountable.

To correct the wrongs of the Bloemfontein conference and to attempt to unite the ANCYL leadership, a closed session was held from 27-30 June 2008 at the Nasrec Expo Centre, south of Johannesburg, where the presidential candidate Mofokeng endorsed Malema as the organization's authentic leader. Mofokeng's endorsement of Malema came after the ANC's Secretary General, Mantashe, had recommended that Malema remain the President of the youth league and that the conference continue its business from where the Mangaung conference stopped. This closed session also discussed and resolved organizational, policy and leadership issues, guided by its historic mission to champion the interests of the youth and mobilize them behind the vision for change of the ANC. In his report, Mantashe said the ANC as the ANCYL's mother body had a "constitutional duty" to ensure that the league lived up to its own constitutional obligations while at the same time respecting the autonomy of the ANCYL. In a statement issued by Kodwa, the ANCYL said it had endorsed the ANC recommendations that the top five officials elected in Bloemfontein be maintained. The ANCYL NEC was also announced.⁴⁵

Although the Nasrec session appeared to have been a smooth meeting, Mandy Rossouw and Rapule Tabane wrote the following in the *Mail and Guardian*:

"Two lists were circulated to delegates on the final day of the conference at Nasrec in Johannesburg, containing the names of key people who supported ANCYL President Julius Malema or his rival, Saki Mofokeng. Mofokeng's list was circulated on a piece of paper the size of a till slip and contained only 21 names with the slogan *United and Cohesion for Defence of the Revolution*. Malema's list was on an A4 sheet and had 30 names, half of them women to ensure gender parity."⁴⁶

These acts of division were an indication that although the ANCYL presented a united front at Nasrec, the divisions were still apparent.

45 *City Press*, 29 June 2008. See also the ANCYL 23rd National Congress Report, 2008, pp. 5-6.

46 *Mail and Guardian*, 29 June 2008.

5. CONCLUSION

It is clear from the above that although there were differences within the ANCYL in as far as the preferred leadership was concerned, these were later resolved after the intervention of the ANC. The elected leadership was therefore guaranteed support by the majority of the members within the league. After the conference the question that remained to many political analysts was whether the ANCYL had prepared itself sufficiently to hold such a conference which took place immediately after the ANC Polokwane one. With all the problems experienced in Polokwane, it was clear that the ANCYL members needed much time to organize for their conference. It was also evident from the events of the conference in Bloemfontein that little if any political education had taken place in preparing the members for the conference. It was also clear that there was no space created for debate. Malema, as the newly appointed President, was expected to unite the ANCYL and to arrest its declining membership. During the Bloemfontein conference in 2008, the ANCYL had 1 606 branches compared to 2 194 in 2004. The text above clearly shows that the Bloemfontein ANCYL conference was a political hangover of the ANC Polokwane conference because the incidents that took place in Bloemfontein resembled those in Polokwane.