

## Challenges

Apart from NADECO, the opposition is not active, because threats hang over peoples' heads. The general public accepts Abacha's stated plan and are ready to participate in local and state elections: this is one reason for holding the presidential election on the same day. Pro-democracy groups need to offer concrete alternatives and they need real support for their political activities. They were able to attend CMAG because governments were willing to provide financial support.

### **III(a) Support for Democratic Groups at the International Level**

#### **Dr. Usman Akano**

(Dr. Akano's paper was read by Dr. Patricia Williams.)

Thanks were given to the international community for allowing Nigerian "dissidents" to move freely in their countries and organize conferences; for support for Radio Kudirat, for granting asylum to Nigerians who are victims of Abacha's regime, and for limited sanctions on Nigeria. In the US, a Nigeria Democracy Act is working its way up through Congress. Local citizens groups have persuaded municipal governments to stop doing business with companies involved in Nigeria. Similar efforts will be introduced in Canada and the United Kingdom. Canadian efforts to change the attitude of the world community are commendable. Canada has tried, through its NGOs, to strengthen Nigerian civil society and through its business community to support a code of conduct that will benefit the Nigerian democracy movement. All of these achievements have been the work of many groups based in Canada. Assistance from other organizations such as Greenpeace and MOSOP have also been invaluable. The democracy movement asks for continuing support for Radio Kudirat and for democracy education, particularly in rural settings. At CHOGM, Canada should commit itself to expelling Nigeria from the Commonwealth and should press for full implementation of the sanctions agreed to by CMAG.

Finally, the Commonwealth must help with the retraining of soldiers and police to respect democracy. This might provide a guarantee against further military coups.

### **III(b) Support for Democratic Groups at the National Level**

#### **Ayo Obe**

##### Human rights education

When Babangida was put out of power it was felt that much had been achieved, but the democracy movement had not put its roots down deep enough in Nigerian society. Political naivety allowed the politicians to hand over power to the military. There needs to be widespread support for education of people in all regions of Nigeria - not just the southwest where the focus traditionally has been.

Groups such as the CLO are not as close to the ground as local groups. The CLO does have programs through churches and unions and also an Islamic program - recognizing that Abacha plays the religious card to divide and discredit opposition forces.

Education at the local level should focus on paralegals who could educate people about their rights, who should protect them, what demands they can make on the state and how they can claim their rights. Only an informed people can effectively counter government propaganda.

##### Political struggle

The CLO supports the political struggle, often at the expense of being able to pay staff salaries. The real work must be done within Nigeria. There is propaganda on the television every night, which the government uses to separate the people outside Nigeria from those inside by depicting exiles as trouble makers. The people inside Nigeria need to be able to say: "we are ready for this