

# Don't complain – act!

## Message from the General Secretary

In an address laced with humour and wit, SACP General Secretary, Cde Blade Nzimande, told the KZN provincial council that 'the most important task of our July National Congress must be a transition from complaints to building a party that strengthens working class hegemony in all sites of power. Politics is about power – and the SACP is about power. Power is not fixed. It is not the same every day. It changes colour. It is always contested.'

'In the Alliance, power has shifted away not just from the SACP and Cosatu, but also the ANC, to the state. One of our key challenges is to restore power to the ANC and the Alliance. And we must also talk about the ANC – as the ANC is also ours!'

'The National Congress must also mark a transition in the way we work. We can't always wait to see what happens in the ANC and Cosatu and decide what we must do. We must more actively first decide what we want to do and then influence our Alliance partners accordingly. This includes our approach to the ANC Policy Conference, Cosatu Central Committee in September, and ANC National Conference. We have to do this so that the interests of the working class and poor are advanced.'

Cde Nzimande stressed the SACP's support for the public workers strike:

'We need to close the wage gap in this sector. We can't have a Chief Director being paid 8 times more than a nurse or policeman in the forefront of delivery. The government will not even give a 9% increase because they are concerned that workers in the private sector will also demand this.'

'We need to recognise the importance of public sector workers if we are going to have an effective developmental state. Buried in the strike are major questions about the nature of the public service. There are broader developmental issues

at stake. The SACP needs to lead debate on this.'

Cde Nzimande said that it was 'unprecedented' for such unity as has been seen in the strike and the 'question was how to consolidate this unity.' For Cosatu there was also another challenge: 'how to maintain the momentum created by the strike to focus on their jobs and poverty campaign and put broader issues of the type of South Africa we want. But this is not just Cosatu's responsibility. It is also ours as the SACP.'

The strike has 'shown the power of the working class', said Cde Nzimande. But there are 'also other issues about the working class we need to understand better, especially its fragmentation. Not just through casualisation and informalisation, but also regionalisation – the increasing numbers of workers from our Southern African neighboring countries being employed here, and the xenophobia that may emerge out of this.'

'Working class leadership is not an award. It is something we have to fight for! We must be there – where

the working class is.

The SACP needs to consider how to engage with workers in all spheres in which they are engaged. This includes the church. The charismatic churches in particular are growing.

There are more sales of gospel music than kwaito. What challenges does the increasing influence of religion on workers pose for us? We also need to be clear about our approach to traditional leaders, especially as they are also reaching out to us.'

**We must contest for working class power in all sites of struggle**

'We need to discuss at the Congress what we do about the highly monopolistic nature of the economy and how to speed up its transformation. We also need to ask what type of middle class and bourgeoisie we want in this country. What exactly do we expect from them? Which sections can we align with and on what terms? We also need to consider the exploitative, sub-imperialist role of South African capitalists in other countries on our continent.'

'A big challenge that confronts us is patriarchy. You can't have democracy, let alone socialism, if men are oppressing women. Our Congress needs to look at what we do to deal with patriarchy more effectively'

'Our National Congress also needs to ask: what type of SACP do we want? What type of SACP member do we want? People cannot join us because they have some personal grievance with the ANC. We are not a grievance party. And we must also be clear: are we a vanguard party or a second ANC or second Cosatu?'

Cde Nzimande noted that KZN would have the largest delegation to the National Congress. 'Being the biggest province doesn't mean bulldozing others. It means exercising mature leadership. That's true strength!'

While welcoming the government's massive infrastructure investment programme, Cde Nzimande said the focus should not just be on lowering the cost of doing business, but more importantly, 'lowering the cost of living'. He expressed concern that Blacks did not have the skills to fill many of the jobs being created by the investment programme.

Cde Nzimande referred to the successes of the Financial Sector Campaign. He said that there was now agreement that all those owing less than R500 will be removed from the Credit Bureau blacklist. 'This means about 40% of those blacklisted will now be removed. Of course, we still have further demands to win. But we won many demands because we just didn't complain, we acted, we mobilised. That's how you build power!'



**Cde Blade Nzimande**