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COSATU

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SOCIALISM IS THE FUTURE, BUILD IT NOW!

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by Anele Gxoyiya



The Congress of South African Trade Unions in held rallies throughout the country on 01 May 2016 under the theme: **“Celebrating 30 years and Defending Collective Bargaining, Workers’ Jobs and Rights.”**

In the Northern Cape two rallies were held, one in Kimberley and another one in Upington. Both rallies were attended by the leadership of the alliance who delivered messages of support. In Upington Cde Sizwe Mbalo (SANCO NEC Member), Cde Godfrey Oliphant (SACP CC Member), Cde David Mahlobo (ANC NEC Member) and Cde Bonnie Marekwa (COSATU CEC Member) were the speakers at the rally which was attended by about 600 workers from the different affiliates.

The rally at Phatsimang College in Kimberley was attended by about 800 workers and was addressed by Cde Mathabo Leeto (SANCO Deputy President), Cde Norman Shushu (SACP Provincial Secretary), Cde Zamani Saul (ANC Provincial Secretary) and Cde Freda Oosthuysen (COSATU National Treasurer).

All alliance partners congratulated

COSATU on reaching the 30 year milestone as a united federation of the workers and they encouraged the federation to continue taking up issues affecting the workers without fear or favour. They also commended the federation for reaffirming its support for the ANC in the forthcoming local government elections and emphasised the importance of the alliance unity.

The National Treasurer of COSATU reminded the workers

“Celebrating 30 years and Defending Collective Bargaining, Workers’ Jobs and Rights.”

about the 53 workers who perished on 01 May 2013 when the bus they were travelling in was plunged into a river near Bethlehem. She remembered all the heroes and heroines of the workers’ struggle who sacrificed their lives for us to be enjoying the benefits of the progressive labour legislation.

The Central Executive Committee of COSATU declared the 2016 May Day as the platform to prepare the workers for the

battles ahead. Workers need to be united in a fight for the creation of decent jobs while launching an offensive on the businesses that continue to shed jobs in their quest to maximise profits. The fight against outsourcing and privatisation must be intensified to ensure the transformation of the apartheid structure of the South African economy.

Workers must forge ahead with their demand for the filling of vacant and funded posts in the public to ensure government’s positive role in the creation of decent jobs. The demand for the total withdrawal of the Tax Laws Amendment Act, the banning of Labour Brokers and the scrapping of e-tolls remain central on the agenda of COSATU. The introduction of the safe, reliable and affordable public transport system in order to make it easy for the workers to participate constructively in the economy is sacrosanct.

All these battles need a united alliance and progressive civil society to join hands and take the battle to the doors of capital. This calls for the progressive intervention of the state on behalf of the most marginalised and downtrodden workers of our country. Vulnerable work-



ers such as farm and domestic workers look up to the federation to emancipate them from the bondages of capitalist exploitation.

In order to ensure the defence of our revolution and hard won gains as well as to advance

more victories, workers need to ensure that the ANC remains in power by going out in their numbers and vote for the ANC during the forthcoming local government elections. COSATU still maintains that there is no political party in our country

that can deliver what the ANC has delivered for the working class and the poor.

Cde Anele Gxoyiye is the Northern Cape Provincial Secretary of COSATU



Role of the Trade Union

by Jacques Cupido



Our transition in 1994 have had major political, social and economic implications and ramifications. The integration of our economy into the global market meant many job losses and the increase of informal employment. Since 1996 this was entrenched with our government adopting the neo-liberal policy of GEAR. Political transition have and continue to exist alongside high

levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality, with our country being one of the most unequal in the world.

On the plus side the transition have ensured that many rights, denied for millions of people prior to 1994, and specifically workers' rights are entrenched in our constitution and in numerous legislations. This have changed the landscape for trade unions in our country as the right to strike, the right to

form trade unions, and the right to collective bargaining was entrenched.

Since 1994 the labour market and the SA economy have experienced a number of challenges. The impact internally and externally of globalisation and the current global economic crisis whilst the need to transform the labour market, creation of jobs and fighting poverty have been our constant challenges we are facing as a

transforming society.

Though workers have gained a lot since our negotiated breakthrough, many of the Apartheid economic fault lines remain intact, and we now see how many challenges impacting on the trade union movement that will have detrimental impact on the role and tasks of trade unions, especially progressive trade unions.

As our revolution is under threat both from within and outside our movement, our principle task at this stage of our revolution is that of building working class hegemony in all key sites of power. For workers it means building strong workplaces, which not only attend to normal challenges workers face, but to the relationship between what is our developmental agenda and a state that is built on the foundations of neo-liberal capitalism.

We need a strong workplace organisation to influence government policy, and thus our task as shop stewards is to understand our broad agenda of building a developmental state.

We must be aware and at the same time open minded to the challenges facing our Federation and subject these challenges with critical analyses. We have been faced by challenges over the last couple of years, internally as well as externally. These challenges are well known to many of us, and have diverted our attention to attend to the core objectives and programmes of the Federation. These challenges have had a major impact on the unity of the Federation and the unity of affiliates themselves. Issues such as casualization,



labour brokering and retrenchments have led to the weakening of the Federation. These however did not start overnight, it started well before the capitalist's crisis in 2008. As some sectors and unions have been weakened, the public sector have seen growth, and public service unions are now the biggest in COSATU.

It is important that we remain focussed on the unity within the trade union and the broader Alliance if we are to advance the NDR.

We have to find ways of organising and recruiting better in all sectors, including the vulnerable sectors such as farming, hospitality and domestic sectors. We must heed the call of going back to basics of organising and develop new methods to organise in an ever changing environment and workplaces, which in itself is capitalist by nature. As the public sector unions are growing, which is positive, we have

to constantly assess and analyse our relationship with the state. There is a difference between state and government and we must be able to make that distinction. The state as a key site of power is the main vehicle for the advancement of our national democratic revolution. Workers in the public sector are also getting younger and their role in the union can't be underestimated.

We should be able to move with the times of ensuring that the youth understand the challenges facing them as well as challenges facing society in general.

It is important that we remain focussed on the unity within the trade union and the broader Alliance if we are to advance the NDR. As we see the phenomenon that is termed state capture comes out in the open, trade unions themselves are not immune to this so-called capture. We must pronounce today very loudly, that our COSATU is not for sale. We can't afford to gamble with the future of workers and the working class in general as it will mean an end to the NDR.

We need strong, militant, fighting trade unions, not ones that is conforming to government and seen as labour desks. We must be robust in our relationship with government, as the employer, and take up the struggles of workers constantly at our workplaces. Trade unionism is a contested terrain and not immune to challenges facing our revolution. It brings together workers from different political and ideological backgrounds, and fight for workers' rights in the work-

place. This is the primary role of a trade union. We will weaken trade unions significantly if we organise workers along political and ideological orientation, but at the same time workers are not isolated from political issues. At the same time trade unions do educate workers politically and build ideological consciousness. Unions have to take political posture within wider political perspectives.

Born within the midst of the harshest oppressive policies in the 1980's our Federation was instrumental in fighting oppressive policies and as a motive force ensured that Apartheid was dismantled. Post 1994 trade unions have taken a particular position for the advancement of workers interest. Political decisions taken by any political party that's in power have an impact on workers, we are not immune from the ills of society. We are witnessing a capitalists offensive as the crisis of the capitalist system deepen. This offensive is evident in our own country, which is to roll back the gains we as workers have made.

Therefore it is important that we should define ourselves as what kind of trade union we need today? Through what kind of approaches and methods do we need to fight the capitalist offensive? We must build on our strengths and keep intact our values, principles and traditions such as worker control, democratic centralism, and non-racialism.

In conclusion, as public sector unions we have a very im-

portant role to play in building a developmental state. We must be able to build the capacity of the state and government as it is where we are located, strategically so to deliver services to our people. At the same time

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we must keep our government accountable. We can and must transform the state from within. We have the means to combine our state power with that of mass power to direct the NDR.

We can't sacrifice the inde-

We are in Alliance with the governing party and we need to exploit that positively.

pendence of trade unions and at the same time treat the democratic government as the enemy. We are in Alliance with the governing party and we need to exploit that positively. We

have to take responsibility for the NDR, as it our revolution, so we have to advance it and protect it.

The intensification of the NDR can't be done without community struggles, as workers we live in communities and we should use our organising and mobilising skills and experiences to take up community issues that will advance our revolution. It is sometimes at that level where capitalism is at its most evil, causing hardship and social ills that communities are unable to cope with, and as trade unions we should be able to take up that battles.

We must take responsibility for the direction of the NDR, we must acknowledge our setbacks and progress, weaknesses and strengths of the revolution.

To end I want to quote Joe Slovo: "It is impossible for trade unions in any part of the world to keep out of the broader political conflict despite the existence of cultural and racial diversity, South Africa is not a multinational country. It is a nation in the making, a process which is increasingly being advanced in struggle and one which can be finally completed after the racist tyranny is defeated. The concept of one united nation, embracing all our ethnic communities remains the virtually undisputed liberation objective." Unions must play a pivotal role in achieving this objective.

Cde Jacques Cupido is the Northern Cape Provincial Chairperson of NEHAWU



A United COSATU

by OJ Fourie



Workers Day, also known as May Day, is a celebration of the international labour movement and left-wing movements. It commonly sees organized street demonstrations and marches by working class people and labour unions throughout most of the world. May 1 is a national holiday in more than 80 countries. It is also celebrated unofficially in many other countries throughout the world. International Workers' Day is the commemoration of the 1886 Haymarket Massacre in Chicago, when Chicago police fired on workers during a general strike for an eight hour workday, killing several demonstrators and resulting in the deaths of several police officers. In 1889, the first congress of the Second International, meeting in Paris for the centennial of the French Revolution and the Exposition Universelle, following a proposal by Raymond Lavigne, called for international demonstrations on the 1890 anniversary of the Chicago protests. Workers Day was formally recognized as an annual event at the International's second congress in 1891. In many countries, the working class sought to make Workers Day an official holiday, and

their efforts largely succeeded. Workers Day has long been a focal point for demonstrations by various socialist and communist groups. In some circles, bonfires are lit in commemoration of the Haymarket martyrs, usually at dawn. Workers Day has been an important official holiday in Communist countries such as the People's Republic of China, Cuba and the former Soviet Union.

For the workers of the world this is not a public holiday, but a day in which we gather in our numbers and raise our voices and continue to fight for better working conditions.

Following the first democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, 1 May was inaugurated as an official national public holiday. Workers Day symbolises the historical struggles of

the workers of the country and their trade unions for solidarity between working people, and in their struggles to achieve fair employment conditions. This included the need to establish a culture of human- and worker rights which are enshrined in international law and the national law of the countries aligned to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), of which South Africa is a member.

Allow me to recall the four freedoms which constitute the ILO's global fundamental principles and rights at work: Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining; Freedom from discrimination in employment and occupation, Freedom from forced labour, and Freedom from child labour.

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COSATU

The SACP continues to support COSATU as the only pro-

gression trade union federation to fight for the struggles of the workers. The workers of the country needs a united COSATU. The capitalist wants to see a weakened COSATU that will not be capable of fighting for the rights of workers and fighting to improve working conditions. A weakened COSATU will only weaken the voice of the working class. A united COSATU will lead the workers to improved working conditions. A weakened COSATU also weakens the Alliance.

Strength and unity of the alliance is needed to ensure that we drive the radical second phase of the national democratic revolution. Unless we embark on a radical second phase of our revolution, crisis levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality will continue. It will place impossible strains on the trade union movement, threatening all the gains that have been made.

As part of the struggle to en-

sure radical transformation, the SACP continues with COSATU in the struggle for:

- A new income and wage policy focused on addressing poverty and inequalities;
- A comprehensive social security system and a rejection of piecemeal approaches;
- The aligning of the mandate of Treasury and the Reserve Bank to the agenda of a radical economic transformation;
- Measures to ensure beneficiation of our natural resources;
- The channeling of retirement funds towards investment including building infrastructure where workers live;
- Comprehensive land reform to reverse the legacy of rural and urban racialised spaces; and
- De-tenderisation of the state.

Young Workers

The SACP calls on all young workers to join unions affiliated to COSATU in their numbers. Young workers must not be distracted by the counter revolutionary forces that wants to weaken the cause of the workers by starting brake away un-

ions. Young workers are called upon not to leave the revolution. The youth must remain committed to the NDR and therefore remain committed to COSATU. The YCLSA must continue to fight against the casualization of workers and against to the use of labour brokers!

South Africa has been the defender of human- and worker rights, throughout the struggle, and earned the respect of the world. Let us continue to uphold these rights and let us continue to defend the rights of all workers.

All workers in the country must unite and protect the gains that has been made for workers in the last 22 years and ensure a decisive election's victory for the ANC!

Forward to united COSATU forward!

OJ Fourie is the SACP Kimberley District Deputy District Secretary and a former YCLSA National Committee Member



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