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SADTU FIRST NATIONAL CONGRESS: 10-12 OCTOBER 1991

SADTU the Biggest Teachers' Organisation in South Africa

During the past 12 months the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) recruited 37 947 teachers to the union, making SADTU the biggest union in South Africa today. With completed membership forms in excess of 15 000 still to be collected, SADTU can talk of an effective membership of 50 000 teachers, the SADTU president, Shepherd Mdladlana said during his address to Congress at Nasrec, Johannesburg.

The SADTU membership further consists of teachers from all departments all over the country, making SADTU the only unitary, non-racial teachers' union in the country. In his report to Congress, SADTU General Secretary, Randall van den Heever, pointed out that the most progressive members of all erstwhile organisations – newly emergent as well as established – occupied leadership positions within the union's branch and regional structures, making SADTU the most well represented union of teachers from all sectors.

The SADTU Congress concentrated on consolidating the significant gains made during the last year and directed its proceedings in clarifying strategies and policies in respect of a number of issues. The following clear positions emerged from Congress:

- The adoption of a SADTU code of conduct with special reference to disciplinary measures against members where necessary.
- A mandate to negotiate



Tom Bediako, Secretary General of the All Africa Teachers' Organisation (AATO), addressing the SADTU Congress.

- interim recognition agreements with the various departments, while continuing the broader process of implementing a single department of education and a national collective bargaining mechanism.
- The acceptance of SADTU's political responsibility to sustain the teacher unity process under its leadership, and to continue negotiations with all teacher organisations (except NAPTOSA) in respect of

teacher unity.

- That the union should remain vigilant to all forms of victimisation and harassment of teachers and set up a Legal Defence Fund in order to protect members.

The SADTU first national congress provided a solid base for the future operations of a union which is sure to be a key facilitator in the transformation process from Apartheid to a democratic system of education.

The myth of 'Professionalism' exposed

The myth of 'professionalism' was well and truly exposed by inputs from branches, commissions, international guests and other plenary speakers during SADTU's first national congress.

'Professionalism' à la S.A. Government

In a submission to Congress, the SADTU Vryburg branch argued that the state had attempted to foist a definition of professionalism on teachers aimed at dissociating the teacher from the struggle for a democratic, non-racial, free and unitary system of education for all the people of South Africa. The branch stated further that professionalism, a democratic service contract and the right to organise were inseparable human rights under a democratic system of government.

'Professionalism' à la Harare Accord

In his presidential address to Congress, Shepherd Mdladlana outlined SADTU's position on the matter as being in line with the principle in the Harare Accord which stated that the national teachers' organisation we want to build "should protect and promote the rights of teachers as workers and professionals".

"It is simplistic merely to call on teachers to choose between unionism and professionalism. Teachers have no option but to fight for their rights as employees and at the same time exercising the responsibilities of the profession of teaching. It would be the most misguided view of professionalism to conclude that teachers by reason of their commitment to education should accept low salaries, unsatisfac-

tory conditions of service and discriminatory practices. The health and worth of any education system lies in its ability to attract to the profession teachers of high calibre, dedication and commitment."

Mutual Interests of Teachers and Pupils

Albert Shabangu, the key-note speaker from Southern Africa, expressed the view that the conditions under which teachers work are the same conditions under which children learn. There is no way teachers can hope to achieve their professional excellence if the conditions under which they work (and children learn) are not conducive. There is therefore a very clear and desirable mutuality of interests between the teachers as

learning conditions for the children. The Trade Union and the professional aspects of our organisations are the two sides of the same coin.

In his address to Congress, Tom Bediako – Secretary General of the All African Teachers' Organisation (AATO) – said that he did not want to waste time in continuing the debate on unionism and professionalism. "With the greatest respect, I consider the debate on the issue closed by those who started it or capitalise on it. To me the issue is not whether SADTU is a professional organisation or not. The challenge now is for all teachers in South Africa and all over the world through their democratic organisations to ensure that the status of teachers is commensurate with the needs of education as assessed in the light of educational aims and objectives."

"The Teachers' Organisation should protect and promote the rights of teachers as workers and professionals."

Harare Accord (1988)

professionals and teachers as workers.

There is a school of thought who suffer from the mistaken belief that somewhere exists some good and benevolent father christmas who is always ready to reward teachers for a good day's work. In practise, however, teachers have realised that there is no such father christmas, and that teachers therefore had to struggle for their trade union rights like all other workers.

Two sides of the same coin

Teachers organisations such as SADTU exist in order to assist its members to do their job well. They are able to collectively bargain for better conditions of service which also result in better

Worker Federations

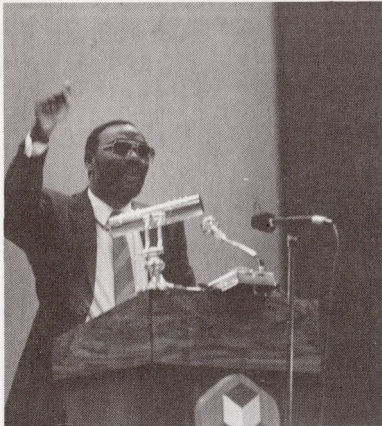
A commission at the SADTU Congress focussing on the question of unionism, professionalism and affiliation to Worker Federations proposed a resolution which was adopted by the Congress. The gist of this resolution is:

This Congress, noting that:

- as teachers we have been separated from the oppressed and exploited on the basis of being professional and therefore considered to be different;
 - this has been a strategy of the state to divide and control teachers by tying us down to the 'responsibilities of our jobs' within the existing racist and undemocratic education system;
- (continued on page 3)

Shabangu's Keynote Address

In his keynote address to the SADTU Congress, Albert Shabangu – President of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers – called on teachers not to sacrifice the children and the future of South Africa.



Albert Shabangu

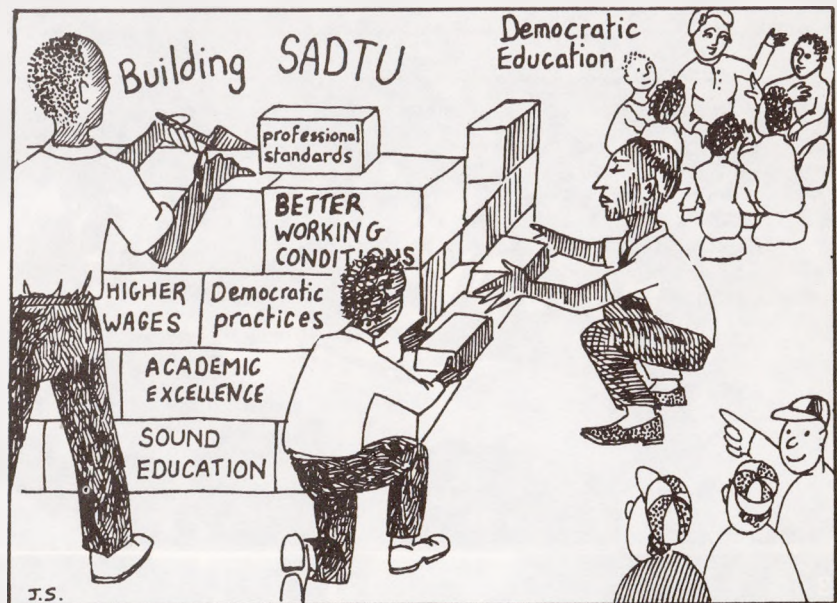
Save the Children

In the face of all adversity, let us not sacrifice the children and the future of South Africa. The black children of this country have been denied equality of opportunity, as a matter of official policy. On the route to the new South Africa and the new society, let us all encourage maximum use of the facilities we have. We cannot wait and postpone education to a future date without at the same time betraying the gains of the liberation struggle."

"The World, Africa and South Africa need a new type of citizen. This new citizen has to come from the schools of this country. Indeed, when the roll is called up yonder, our people should be there."

Real Freedom

Shabangu continued by stating that the struggle for real freedom of our people to participate as equals in the develop-



The conditions under which teachers work are the same conditions under which children learn. There is therefore a mutuality of interest between teachers as professionals and teachers as workers.

– Albert Shabangu (Swaziland)

'Professionalism'

(From page 2)

and believing that:

as teachers we are part of the workers struggle, fighting not only for better service/working conditions but also for the libera-

tion of our country;

therefore resolve to:

develop a working relationship with worker federations that share our fundamental principles of non-racism, non-sexism, democracy and accountability.

ment of South Africa will have to take place and be won in the schools of our country. The empowerment of our people will have to come through the

who will make these policies become reality. The schools and the teachers have to equip the people with skills, knowledge and attitudes that will lead

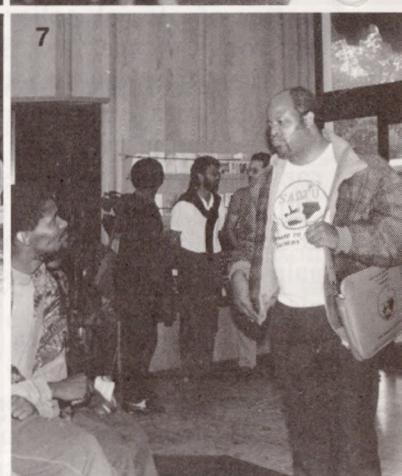
Teachers cannot postpone education to a future date without betraying the gains of the liberation struggle.

– Shabangu

schools and the teachers, Shabangu said.

"A new and democratic government of this country will formulate policies on a variety of areas, including discrimination, non-racialism and economy. It will be the people

to the realisation of those policies. The task of human resource development is fully and squarely in the hands of educators.



(1) OFS and South Natal delegations celebrating SADTU. (2) SADTU staff members, Naomi Mackay and Sidney Gcingca. (3) Poobie Naicker welcoming delegates. (4) Zimkita Lesoro (Border). (5) Teacher Unity discussion, with George Strauss, Ismail Vadi and Salome Francis facilitating. (6) Fighting Western Cape: Milton van der Berg (Paarl), Brian Heber (Langa), Ronnie Gabriel (Grassy Park), Fred Stripp (Athlone East) with Deon Pokpas (Strand) at the back. (7) B.B. Mabandla (Transkei) with delegation at Hotel Johannesburg. (8) Transkei's dramatic entrance.



(9) M.P. Thobejane (Northern Transvaal). (10) Mandy Sanger (W. Cape) and Ampie Williams (E. Cape) exchanging media. (11) Lynette Faragher (W. Cape). (12) Emanuel Fatoma (IFFTU representative from Sierra Leone). (13) Palesa Popi (Southern Transvaal). (14) Vivienne Carelse (NEC). (15) Randall van den Heever (General Secretary).

SADTU and the Defiance Campaign

One of the most controversial issues debated at the SADTU Congress was the 'Defiance Campaign' instituted by various constituencies within SADTU ranks against education authorities. In his report to the SADTU Congress the SADTU General Secretary, Randall van den Heever, pointed out that there was a constant criticism levelled at SADTU that the militant actions by various sections of its constituency was often destabilising the intensive learning campaign. Van den Heever expressed the need for enhancing organisational discipline by forming accountable branch structures and finalising a Code of Ethics in order to promote accountability and responsibility.

President deplores ill-discipline

In his presidential address to Congress, Shepherd Mdladlana deplored problems of ill discipline among some members, and

pointed out that SADTU had not formally decided for a defiance campaign against principals, HOD's, attendance registers and preparation of lessons.

"All SADTU members must be disciplined cadres and disciplined teachers. Good teachers are good activists. Militant teachers are disciplined teachers. How can we claim to be militant when we are undisciplined, uncontrollable and arrogant. Those undisciplined teachers must stop their actions because they are damaging the image of the Union and also scaring off potential members of SADTU. They are playing into the hands of the system. We must not allow these bad elements to abuse our union. Such ill discipline is not welcome in this Union," Mdladlana said.

Debate on 'Defiance'

A strong debate also developed within the SADTU congress about the merits and de-merits of

the Defiance Campaign. Some delegates pointed out that the 'Defiance Campaign' had been unilaterally implemented as SADTU policy by some of the constituting organisations who had participated in the formation of SADTU. Other delegates argued that since the campaign had been initiated by constituencies loyal to SADTU, it would be insensitive of the broader membership to merely dissociate themselves from an action which appeared controversial in their eyes.

Congress finally resolved to request Southern Transvaal to prepare a discussion document on the question of the 'Defiance Campaign' for distribution to SADTU regions. Regions are requested to hold workshops on the issue before the end of the year, and that a national workshop would be convened early in 1992 to formalise a national position on defiance.

SADTU Code of Conduct

The SADTU Code of Conduct adopted by the first national congress, contains the following main principles (in summary):

1. The teacher should treat pupils with dignity and respect.
2. It is an abuse of the professional relationship between teacher and child for a teacher to enter into an improper association with a pupil.
3. The teacher should fulfill contractual obligations to the employer.
4. The teacher should adhere to agreements negotiated on the teacher's behalf by the Union.
5. The teachers shall act responsibly in the discharge of professional, organisational and administrative duties.
6. The teacher shall act in a manner which maintains the honour and dignity of the profession.
7. Teachers shall not denigrate their colleagues in the presence of third parties nor should a teacher adversely criticise a colleague in the presence of others, save in the context of appropriate procedures.

SADTU'S International Affiliation

SADTU presently enjoys de facto recognition, financial and moral support from:

1. The World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP) based in Morges, Switzerland.
2. The International Federation of Free Teacher Unions (IFFTU) based in Amsterdam, Holland.
3. The All African Teachers' Organisation (AATO) based in Ghana, Africa.

The first national congress of SADTU resolved to refer the issue of the union's international affiliation to the regional and branch structures in order to obtain mandates so that a formal decision in this regard can be taken by the NEC at its second meeting after the SADTU Congress.

The constitutions and historical background of each of the above international organisations will be circularised to all SADTU

regions shortly. The question of SADTU's international affiliation will be one of the most important decisions of the union.

EVALUATION

The Congress Resolution on evaluation (in summary) is:

This Congress noting that:

- the present system of inspection is designed to supervise, control and manage apartheid education;
- the present system of inspection has been used to victimise and harass teachers;

believing that:

there is a need for effective and democratic control of education where the inspection process will be for the enhancement of education;

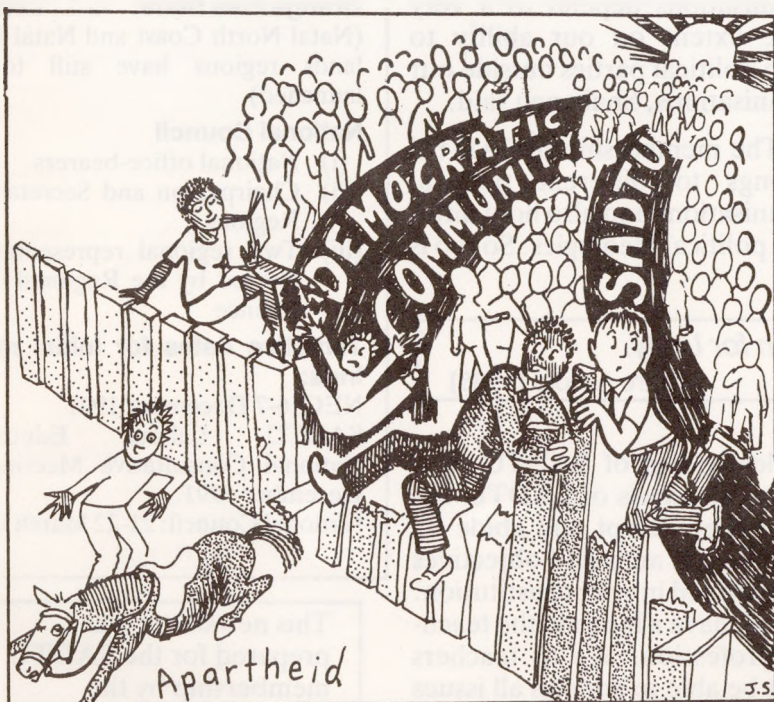
therefore resolve:

that inspection be suspended until a democratic form of inspection and evaluation has been thoroughly negotiated and developed.

Gender Issues

Flowing from various recommendations from the SADTU Empowerment of Women in Education Congress held in Durban from 5 to 7 July 1991, the SADTU Congress adopted the following resolution (summary):

1. This first national congress ratifies the resolutions adopted at the Gender Conference;
2. This Congress proposes that the NEC set in motion mechanisms through which the recommendations of the Conference on Gender can be discussed and implemented;
3. The Congress resolves to establish a gender committee that would:
 - 3.1 be a standing committee;
 - 3.2 be part of the National Education Committee of SADTU;
 - 3.3 have a budget allocated in order to carry out its programme;
 - 3.4 initiate programmes in consultation with Branch and Regional Gender Committees;
 - 3.5 at branch level bear the responsibility of implementing such a programme;
4. An interim national gender committee consisting of comrades A. Chancee, T. Combrinck, J. Mogane, M. Reginah and L. Giya will finalise all details relating to the establishment of the gender committee.



To our colleagues who are still sitting on the fence, I want to say: Please do not sit on the fence, especially a fence which is crumbling; We should not be deceived to back a dying horse. We cannot reform Apartheid. Marriages and alliances of convenience do not last.

Tom Bediako (AATO and WCOTP)

SADTU's Political Independence

The question of SADTU's so-called alignment to certain political movements, so glibly used by dissenting groups to dissociate themselves from SADTU, was laid to rest during the SADTU first national congress.

Harare Accord Principle

"SADTU as an organisation is independent from any political movement", SADTU president



Shepherd Mdladlana addressing Congress.

Shepherd Mdladlana stated unequivocally in his presidential address to Congress. Clause 8 of the Harare Unity Accord spells out very clearly that 'Ideology shall not be a pre-condition for unity', Mdladlana said. "Com-

SADTU is the only union that is ready to challenge any government. SADTU is not only a union of teachers for TODAY, but also for TOMORROW."

SADTU's Political Independence

Mdladlana was strongly supported in his stand by Albert Shabangu, president of the Swaziland National Association of Teachers and executive member of the World Confederation of Organisations of the Teaching Profession (WCOTP).

During his keynote address to the Congress Shabangu advised SADTU to maintain an independent political posture so that the union may continue to address all issues – including political/national issues – independent of partisan political platforms. Our unity as teachers and teachers' organisations depend to a very large extent on our ability to keep political parties outside our organisations, Shabangu said.

"The membership of SADTU belongs to different political organisations and also hold different political ideologies. So too is

Ideology shall not be a pre-condition for Unity.

Harare Accord (1988)

rades, go and join the ANC, the PAC, etc. But wherever you are you must know that SADTU is a home to those who believe in non-racialism and democracy; to those who believe in one education system that is non-racial, non-sexist and democratic."

Whoever comes into power must find SADTU strong, independent, tried and tested. The government must be confronted by a fearless and a powerful teachers' union like ours.

the leadership of SADTU. But all are members of SADTU because they accept and abide by the policies, aims and objectives as enshrined in your constitution. You all have a home in the teaching profession. We as teachers must be able to address all issues relating to politics and education without being 'His Master's Voice', Shabangu said.

SADTU

National Executive Committee (NEC)

(a) National Office-Bearers

President: M.M.S. Mdladlana
Deputy President: P. Naicker
1st Vice President: T. Mseleku
2nd Vice President: D. Hindle
3rd Vice President: R. Swartz
4th Vice President: I. Vadi
General Secretary: R.P. van den Heever
Assistant General Secretary: T. Nxesi
Treasurer: H.E.S. Samuel

(b) Chairpersons of Regions:

Central Transvaal: M. Khumalo
Southern Transvaal: I. Vadi
Northern Transvaal: L. Nevhutalu
Western Transvaal: O. Sebolai
Eastern Transvaal: S. Sukati
Western Cape: V. Carelse
Eastern Cape: F. Nqonqoza
South Cape: P. Metembo
Northern Cape: E. Musi
Border: N. Mathanda
Transkei: B.B. Mabandla
South Natal: R. Brijraj
Orange Free State: G.L. Lefuo
 (Natal North Coast and Natal Midlands regions have still to be launched)

National Council

- (i) National office-bearers
- (ii) Chairperson and Secretary of Regions
- (iii) Two regional representatives elected by the Regional Conference

Tentative dates for initial meetings:

NEC: 6-7 December 1991
 SADTU Labour Education National Consultative Meeting: 8 December 1991.
 National Council: 21-22 March 1992

This newsletter was prepared for the SADTU membership by the SADTU National Office, 112 Main Street, Johannesburg 2000.

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