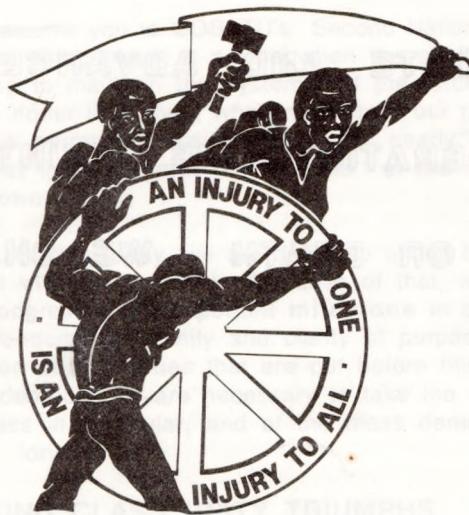


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COSATU

**SECOND
NATIONAL CONGRESS
JULY 1987**

JOHN BOLST
ONE THOUSAND
LITTLE HOUSES

MAATLA KE A RONA

CONSOLIDATE AND ADVANCE

ONE FEDERATION ONE COUNTRY

VICTORY OR DEATH , WE SHALL WIN

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS TO THE SECOND
NATIONAL CONGRESS OF COSATU HELD ON 15 -
17 JULY 1987 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG.

1. INTRODUCTION

Comrade delegates
International and local guests
Friends and compatriots

I wish to welcome you to COSATU's Second National Congress. This Congress is taking place at a time when the conflict between the forces trying to maintain the system and the forces of social progress is hotter than ever; when masses of our people are in a state of near permanent upsurge and when nearly everyone is now realising that the apparent iron fortress of the ruling class is breaking down.

As we are meeting today, we are doing so united by the deep-seated feeling that **victory** is certain. Because of that, we must be clear that our Congress is an important **milestone** in our march towards our total freedom. With unity and clarity of purpose, we must deliberate on all the issues that are put before this Congress and take such decisions as are necessary to take the struggles of the working class in particular, and of the mass democratic movement in general, forward.

2. WORKING CLASS UNITY TRIUMPHS

Comrades, we as workers have faced bitter battles on the road to COSATU. In order to build a trade union centre that truly represents our determination to fight the capitalist class and all those who act in defence of its interests, we had to set aside all the petty differences which existed among ourselves. It took us **four** years of painstaking talks to achieve the unity which is COSATU. Our search for that unity was born out of our historical experience of struggle and the terrible pain of seeing the harm disunity causes.

So we know how important the unity of COSATU is to us. COSATU alone is an achievement we are going to **defend** to the last drop of

blood. We must now consolidate our gains and strengthen our determination to move forward and play our **leading role** as organised workers in the struggle for **national liberation** and **socialism**. When we went out from our launching Congress to lead the massive wave of worker resistance that had swelled up, we proved - under the guidance of our practice and struggle - that the **policy resolutions** adopted at our launching congress are a **potent weapon** in the hands of the organised working class.

3. ONE COUNTRY, ONE FEDERATION

The **idea of one federation** in our country has increased our mobilising, organising and fighting capacity. From our launch in 1985, with delegates from 33 trade unions representing 450,000 paid-up members, we today enter our second Congress with delegates from 12 recognised national industrial unions/sectors representing about 712,000 paid-up members with up to 1 000 000 members if we include our signed up membership.

Our call for the **phasing out of general unions** was not made in a vacuum. It was made because the general unions were more vulnerable to the vicious attacks of the bosses, the state and well-paid bantustan puppet administrators. Our new and advanced form of organisation - **national industrial unions** - will enable us to **challenge** the power of the centralised **monopolies** who are championing the criminal cause of exploitation. To achieve our noble goals of a **united and militant working class**, we need to ensure that the new industrial unions become central to the continued organisation and mobilisation of the **unorganised** and the **unemployed**. At the same time, the doors of COSATU must remain **open** to all those workers who are still outside the mainstream of militant, progressive trade unionism. These are issues we will be debating in the congress over the coming days.

ALL WORKERS MUST BECOME MEMBERS OF TRADE UNIONS AND ALL TRADE UNIONS MUST BE IN COSATU.

4. CONSOLIDATION

So far we have established about 31 local **shopsteward councils** in the nine regions of COSATU. We need to intensify our efforts in this area of work. Let every big town and small "dorpie" have a

militant shopsteward council. For shopsteward councils are the **pillars** on which our federation is anchored. They have created the conditions for mass worker participation - the basis of real **worker democracy and worker control** in our congress.

5. COSATU AND POLITICS

Since COSATU was launched, a great conspiracy has been growing against COSATU and its affiliates. We were not surprised by this because we came into COSATU enriched by the experience of those who soldiered in struggles before us. We are accused of being more of a "**political front**" then a trade union federation. We make no apologies about connecting issues on the shopfloor and issues facing workers in society as a whole. Politics, and especially the lack of even the most basic democratic rights for the majority of our people is a **bread and butter** issue for the working class. It is the fundamental question which is tormenting millions of workers - and we are obliged to answer it. The solution to this problem has to come and it can only come from the **democratic movement** under the **leadership of the working class**.

Our history and experience has shown us that the working class cannot be **independent** from sectors of the democratic movement which have occupied and transformed schools, universities and the streets of our townships into trenches of struggle. We have seen in the last few years how the streets, factories, schools and universities have become laboratories of new forms and methods of struggle. To us, the emergence of alternative structures on the political horizon shows a new qualitative leap forward in the struggle for the **transfer of power** to the **democratic majority**. For these structures are emerging to combat the oppressive and exploitative conditions under which our people are suffocating, and to speak of a different kind of society where we have **full control over our own lives**.

Together with our democratic allies, we have made it difficult for the ruling class to continue to pretend that they have a way out of the political and economic crisis currently gripping our country. No wonder the apartheid regime is becoming an **open dictatorship**. In an attempt to resist the impact of our perspectives, the regime is continuing to produce monumental records of massacres all around our borders and within South Africa itself. Against us, it whips up a climate of hatred, bans our meetings and publications .

In this climate we face right-wing terrorists who **bombed** our headquarters , **Cosatu House** and attacked our offices in many parts of the country with impunity. We now have to squat in order to continue to carry out our day-to-day activities. However, counting on the strength and resistance of our members and the oppressed people as a whole, we promise that : **WE WILL RETURN TO COSATU HOUSE.**

6. HANDS OFF COSATU

The "**HANDS OFF COSATU**" campaign should not just be seen as a campaign by COSATU to defend COSATU. The central thrust of this campaign is to **defend democracy** and the democratic march towards a democratic South Africa. Defence of our organisation is an important issue in our congress. This campaign for the defence of democracy should also involve trade unions and peace-loving people in the **Frontline states**. The only defence our neighbours have against the war which is ripping Southern Africa apart is to defend and support our struggle. **For our victory is a precondition for peace in the whole region.**

7. LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

Comrades, the united working class of our country has been able to present demands which disturb the enemies peace and leisure. When we launched the Living Wage campaign, the regime said it was a "**communist-inspired campaign**" which we were co-ordinating with the SACP, ANC and UDF. To us the living wage campaign is a legitimate struggle by **millions** of workers earning **starvation wages** and we wish to place on record that the deafening silence of the employers does nothing to dispel our belief that there is an **alliance** between capital and the apartheid state. While the bosses leave us to debate the living wage with an incompetent police captain, we want to tell them that we will not bow to actions like the banning of our living wage rallies and that they will pay the price for keeping quiet in the face of these actions. This is a central issue on the agenda of our congress.

8. THE FREEDOM CHARTER

We produce the wealth of SA. yet we are victims of a brutal and exploitative system of apartheid and capitalism.

- our people are condemned to to live as **wage slaves**. We demand the right to share the **wealth** we create.
- our people are condemned to to the poverty and squalor of township **ghettos**. We demand the right to **proper housing**.
- * our people are chained to the poverty of **rural** areas and the tyranny of puppet controlled bantustans. We demand **full political rights** in a united SA.
- * our families are torn asunder by the by the vicious and inhuman system of **migrant labour**. We demand an end to this system and the right to **live and work** where we want to.
- our children still suffer the humiliation , the insults and provocation of **Bantu Education** .We demand the right to proper education and training that develops our **human potential**.
- our **land** is owned by a small minority . We demand the right to share the land amongst those who **work** it.

These are basic democratic demands that millions of our people are demanding every day.

Comrades, we should also note that this Congress is taking place after other important Congresses of NUM, NUMSA, CCAWUSA and NEHAWU. These unions and FAWU have decided that our **day to day struggles** have to be guided by clear perspectives of where we are going to. This is especially important because as a labour movement we cannot afford to run after events. The fact that many of our major affiliates have endorsed the **Freedom Charter** as a **guide** in our struggle for **democracy and socialism** seriously places the question of a **political programme** to guide our action on the agenda. Our Congress must confront this question fully.

9. INTERNATIONAL PRESSURE

The economy of our country is in **tatters**. Inflation is running between **18% and 20%** , thousands are losing their jobs through rationalisation and **mechanisation** by the monopolies that control our economy **unemployment** is around **five million** and we are faced with a massive housing crisis. This is a direct result of the disastrous economic and political policies of the apartheid regime and their industrialist allies.

Our standing resolution supports all forms of **pressure** against **apartheid**. Our resolution calls for **increased pressure** including **sanctions** and **disinvestment** if it has become clear to us that the government was not prepared to accept the legitimate demands of the democratic majority. The regime in addition to banning peoples organisations and imprisoning our leaders, ignores international opinion which says that **apartheid is a crime against humanity**. So when we support our democratic allies internationally who are intensifying the campaign to isolate apartheid, we are looking at one of a **non violent** means to end the **civil conflict** in our country. In the light of the growing attacks against us, workers are calling for more **decisive and mandatory** measures against the regime.

We note that although Reagan, Thatcher and Kohl say sanctions cannot work in SA, they do make them work when aimed against social progress in countries like **Cuba** and **Nicaragua**. This shows us that our only hope is ourselves and our people and the international solidarity movement which has worked hard to counter imperialist forces in their own countries. We salute those **democrats**, particularly in the labour movement internationally, who have consistently shown their support for our struggle against racist tyranny. These are issues we will be discussing during our congress.

10.CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I wish to say to all comrade **delegates** that millions of workers in the entire **democratic movement** in South Africa and internationally are watching our Congress with keen interest. Let us shape policies that will **guide** us concretely in the struggles ahead - policies that will allow the **organised working class** under COSATU to fight **apartheid repression and capitalist exploitation**. Let us forge a workers way forward . Let us build true working class unity . Let us have democratic , critical debate and discussion.

Our place is in the frontline of struggle and to the frontline we must go !

AMANDLA NGA-WETHU