

Labour Research Service

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PRESS ALERT ON THE COSATU RECRUITMENT DRIVE CAMPAIGN

THEME : THE UNION A SPEAR - COSATU A SHIELD

Members of the Press are invited to a high profile public launch of the COSATU Autumn Offensive Recruitment campaign that will be held on Monday 23 March 1998 at CNR Old Verneeniging and Jacobs Street, Alrode in Alberton - Gauteng at 12noon.

In attendance will be members of the COSATU Executive Committee led by President John Gomomo, the ANC and SACP leadership.

An invitation has been extended to comrades Thabo Mbeki and Charles Nqakula to speak at the launch.

For more information contact Nowetu at 082 858 9251 or 082 932 4081

BELOW is a statement released on the 18 March 1998

COSATU press statement on the launch of the April mass recruitment campaign, 18 March 1998

The 6th National Congress adopted a range of resolutions on building COSATU and its affiliates. While the resolutions are wide ranging, the essential focus of our programme of building organisation are:

- =B7 Recruitment
- =B7 Serving membership
- =B7 Rebuilding regions
- =B7 Rebuilding locals
- =B7 Building leadership with a specific focus on women
- =B7 Assistance to affiliates especially the less organised ones
- =B7 Self sufficiency
- =B7 Building an effective administration

Recruitment of membership

The ILO report which was released late last year, has confirmed what we in South Africa have always known: COSATU, which has grown from 450 000 to 2 million membership over the past 12 years, is one of the fastest growing trade union federation in the world. Further that it has continued to grow inspite of the decline in trade union membership internationally due to oppressive political and economic conditions. This growth can be attributed in part to the 80's when slogans such as an injury to one, is an injury to all! and Organise or starve! were taken seriously by all our affiliates and leadership and were consequently put in practice. The rights that we enjoy today are as a result of the same struggles. The challenge is how we protect them from being rolled back by employers call for a flexible labour market. What they mean by flexibility is low wages, no rights. This we will not accept.

We had a focussed campaign to organise the unorganised in every workplace. With employers resisting recognition of our unions and shop stewards, just like the political situation, it was a case of submit or fight. Together with the rest of the mass democratic

movement and communities we chose to fight.

Our locals were vibrant and active, concentrating in the main on issues of solidarity, dismissals, recognition, community issues, political, national campaigns, etc. Most of our shop stewards knew what the line of march was on most issues. The shopfloor could easily explain most of our policies. Recruitment of membership was not only left to organisers. It was an issue for all shop stewards and workers regardless of affiliated union in the federation. Since there was less overlap of organising scope and no poaching, all affiliates were engaged in efforts to help swell the ranks of the federation, as opposed to their own ranks.

While we have been able to sustain our membership, it is also clear that organised workers are under threat, as employers engage in unilateral restructuring of the industry and the workplace in search for maximum profits. While we are well organised in certain sectors of the economy, we remain less organised in others.

It is in this regard that an essential focus of COSATU's organisational programme for the next three years is on recruitment of more membership into the ranks of our affiliated unions. We regard every worker who is outside of COSATU as either unorganised or disorganised. This is because we are the only national trade union centre with a coherent strategy for transformation, and the organisational muscle to propel this. While other federation shun involvement on political issues, we are part of the Alliance with the ANC and the SACP. It is this Alliance which has championed our struggle for liberation. SACTU which is a forerunner to COSATU in the alliance also had a similar approach. The ANC itself has a history of involvement with worker issues.

With this campaign, we are targeting those who do not belong to any union as well as those who are in unions or federations outside of the COSATU fold. We will also use the opportunity to speak to federations and individual unions whose positions are not hostile to COSATU. This means that where mergers are possible or affiliation, it will be pursued without in any way abandoning or undermining the campaign.

The autumn offensive

Every year in April - beginning from 1998 leading up to our 7th National Congress in 2000 - is designated as a month of mass recruitment. On such occasions, we expect all affiliates to secure the release on paid time off of all shop stewards to carry out this campaign. The same applies to all affiliate national leadership who should be in the forefront to lead this campaign.

This release must be coupled with the setting aside of resources by both the federation and affiliates for a successful campaign. The resources will be utilised for hall hire, pamphlets, and adverts on radio, television, travel, accommodation and other build up activities. We see this as a campaign for affiliates by affiliates. The federation will play a secondary but important co-ordinating role. The federation's role include *inter alia* the following:

=B7 Broad co-ordination of the campaign at all levels;
=B7 Placing adverts for the broad campaign on radio, and television; =B7 Production of pamphlets and posters for circulation in industrial areas and workplaces; =B7 Co-ordination of the release of a national team to assist regions and affiliates in their campaign; =B7 Co-ordination of Alliance and MDM participation in the campaign; =B7 Help consolidate affiliate data with that coming from COSATU locals and NALEDI; =B7 Engaging unions and federations outside of COSATU to try and woo them over to our side.

Affiliates' responsibilities among others include the following:

=B7 Broad co-ordination of the campaign within their union structures; =B7 Production of own adverts, posters and pamphlets to raise issues specific to their industry or sector; =B7 Co-ordination of the release

of shop stewards, organisers and national leadership to assist union regions and locals in the campaign; =B7 Collection of data of level of organisation in industry, sector and workplace for circulation to own structures as well as to the federation; =B7 Engaging unions within their sectors to try and woo them over to them and the federation.

COSATU locals in conjunction with affiliates at local level guided by a national programme have been asked to identify industrial areas that are not organised or where our affiliates have only a small presence for targeted recruitment. At the same time each affiliate will set itself a target number to increase its membership over the next three years. This will be guided by the resolution that commits us to increase our membership by 50% in the next three years. We therefore see the start of this year's campaign as but a small beginning of greater things to come.

The campaign becomes an even bigger challenge when we take into account the current situation of job losses due to unilateral restructuring of the economy and the workplace by employers. While this may not affect our current membership, it will reduce the workforce. Apart from job shedding in the private sector as well as the threatened ones in the public sector, our country also has jobless growth. We will use the campaign to popularise our positions on job security, job losses and job creation. The Alliance should use the opportunity to harmonise their positions on the Presidential job summit.

As agreed at the 6th National Congress, we will focus on the most vulnerable workers over the next three years. At the same time we need to finalise the dermacation process so that we can be able to place all workers into our fold. In this regard we will focus on the informal sector, women, youth, white collar workers, white workers, farmworkers and the public sector. In most industries some young people are hostile to the trade union movement. This trend should not be allowed to continue. It is often women and the youth that are found in atypical work in the informal sector, casual workers and contract workers. They should be brought within our fold.

The public sector should be targeted including the new bureaucracy so as to strengthen the role of the Alliance in the transformation of the public sector. We should reverse the trend where the new bureaucrats pay lip service as ANC activists to the important role of the trade union movement, yet take very few steps to themselves join COSATU affiliated unions. This applies also to former COSATU officials currently in the state sector. They should be compelled to join or sever ties with us. The time for paper activists is over. They either believe in trade unions or they don't. The situation where all Directors Generals and senior management belong to the PSA is not conducive to a climate for transformation. While we may differ with the government, we also share a common vision for a better life for all and the important role of the civil service and the state.

With the restructuring of representation in the public sector bargaining chamber, some staff association will attempt to come together in order to consolidate their membership so as to meet the new threshold. This means that it is in our interest to immediately bring together SAPSA, IPS and NEHAWU so that the first two are not left out of collective bargaining.

Affiliates should also look at how we can use sections of the LRA such as the closed shop provision to swell our ranks. It is no use heralding the LRA as a major advance if the only people to use it are employers, consultants and the now mushrooming unions.

Since the beginning of March we have deployed a national team of worker leadership as a COSATU team to help regions to mobilise as well as deal with any dispute that may arise around the issue of poaching. Strong steps will be taken against anyone found to be recruiting membership outside of the approved COSATU scope.

have been requested to submit lists of unorganised, disorganised as well as less organised workplaces in their industries and sectors. Such information should be fed to the COSATU Secretariat by regions and by General Secretaries of affiliates.

Regions should discuss the data on the unorganised industrial areas and workplaces including detailed plans of taking the campaign forward. This will include the number of shop stewards to be released by each affiliate as well as a contingent of all full time union staff and regional leadership. Regional Shop stewards Council meetings to be held on 28 or 29 March 1998 should be used as a final mobilising platform and not as a planning forum.

Affiliates should ensure that their organisers and provincial/regional/branch/local structures co-operate fully with the campaign. This will include identification of the weakly organised factories in the industrial areas/ small towns and villages.

Affiliates have agreed to release human and financial resources for the campaign. This includes negotiating the release of experienced shop stewards, making necessary budgets for transport of recruiters, getting dedicated persons to drive/co-ordinate the campaign at all levels. Each union should set up sub committees for media, dealing with COSATU, transport etc.

All affiliates should ensure that during the campaign all organised factories reach a 100% unionisation rate. This may appear difficult but it is definitely not impossible. It is a matter of planning and dedication. This is what trade union work is all about - organising the unorganised!

Taking into account the need for the training of new shop stewards, it is proposed that all Regions organise two to three hours' broad shop stewards training either on a fortnightly or monthly basis. Thereafter such fora should be opened to other active members and focus on topical issues including policies of the federation and of the Alliance. This does not imply the convening of seminars in halls, but can take place during local meetings or in industrial areas. Training does not have to be by Educators, but shop stewards who are our main resource. This can also be done by ANC and SACP activists as part of building the Alliance. This should be done taking into account that there are members of COSATU who are not members of the ANC and SACP. In line with our congress resolution we have an obligation to build these two formations. Equally, they have the same obligation to build COSATU.

A high profile public launch of the campaign will be held on Monday 23 March 1998 at Alrode in Alberton - Gauteng. In attendance will be the EXCO together with the leadership of the ANC and the SACP. An invitation has been extended to comrades Thabo Mbeki and Charles Nqakula speak at the launch. On Tuesday 24 March, the campaign will be launched in Grabou, Cape Town - Western Cape. Another invitation has been extended to comrade Mandela to join Connie September in the launch. The presence of the ANC and SACP will also dispel the notion that because we disagree on one issue, we are not able to work together. It also gives us an opportunity to explain to workers the gains since 1994 well ahead of the election campaign which all of us will engage in. The slogan of the campaign is: "The union a spear, COSATU a shield - Join a COSATU union now!"

COSATU and affiliates have established co-ordinating committees for the campaign at all levels. These committees are co-ordinated by full time people whose main function is to ensure that there is information flow within affiliates and between affiliates and COSATU head office and regional structures. The following co-ordination approach is now in place for the campaign in COSATU:

The General Secretary has assumed overall political and organisational responsibility for the co-ordination of the campaign. All worker National Office Bearers have been deployed into the following regions for the whole of March to assist our regions in mobilisation of our

structures.

=B7 Connie September -	Western Cape and Northern Cape/OFS
=B7 John Gomomo -	Eastern Cape and KwaZulu Natal
=B7 Ronald Mofokeng -	Wits and Western Transvaal
=B7 Peter Malepe -	Northern Province and Mpumalanga

They will be assisted by a team of the following worker Office Bearers from affiliates nominated by the National Office Bearers:

=B7 Petrus Mashishi -	Gauteng and North Province
=B7 June Dube -	Gauteng and Kwa-Zulu Natal
=B7 Mthuthuzeli Tom -	Eastern Cape
=B7 Willy Madisha -	North Province
=B7 Amon Ntuli -	Kwa-Zulu Natal
=B7 Vusi Nhlapo -	Mpumalanga and Gauteng
=B7 Joseph Thee -	Western Cape
=B7 Nolingo Welile -	Eastern Cape
=B7 Dumisani Yoyo -	Eastern Cape
=B7 James Motlatyi -	Gauteng and the mining towns
=B7 Jan Scheepers -	Gauteng and the Western Cape

Servicing of membership

Over the past few years we have seen a decline in quality of service to membership by some of our affiliates. The extent of the malaise differ from affiliate to affiliate and from region to region. Some unions have developed strategies to address this issue while others do not know what to do or where to start.

The Autumn offensive will be a waste of trade union resources unless it is followed by concerted efforts to improve service to membership. We are aware that the few unions whose membership have moved from one COSATU affiliate to another is based on perceived lack of service. These range from the outcome of collective bargaining agreements to inability to represent them in various cases - dismissal, retrenchments etc.

Unions need to develop own programmes to deal with this issue. This should be seen as part of the implementation of the resolution on the need to return all members that are not part of our respective scopes by June 1998 back to their unions in COSATU. Without a commitment and improvement of service by affiliates, some workers may choose to leave COSATU affiliated unions than return to certain affiliates. This we can not allow.

Properly trained shop stewards can provide service to membership on the shopfloor in the same way that organisers can. With well trained shop stewards, the organiser's role can be changed to planning recruitment and other collective bargaining strategic issues like workplace restructuring. This means that all affiliates will have to put enough resources for the training of shop stewards, staff and worker leadership in order to equip them to deal with issues that may be raised by workers. These may range from simple trade union duties to areas related to workplace participation.

Rebuilding regions

We should over the next three years initiate a programme to rebuild and empower our regions. Such empowerment should focus on areas of leadership training, building women leadership, training those who are engaged in negotiations in developmental forums, engaging with provincial legislatures and the NCOP process. Once a year we will hold a national workshop to integrate NEDLAC and similar provincial for a broader COSATU plan.

In line with the resolution on regional and national structures affiliates need to take responsibility for the effective attendance in REC's and Regional Congresses by their regional leadership. We will however only have effective and functioning regional structures of COSATU once affiliate ones are effective. It is therefore imperative

that affiliates put resources to build their own regions. It will however be difficult for the unions to blame their structures for not attending COSATU meetings unless they improve on their own attendance at EXCO and CEC meetings.

Over the next three years we should hold a number of seminars at a regional level on the above mentioned issues. It will now be easier to train REC members since regional leadership in COSATU is elected to serve over a three-year period. Furthermore we should schedule a conference of all regions once a year to look at issues related to regional development. This will allow regions to share strategies as well as allow us to develop a national perspective on such issues as Industrial Development Zones, corridors etc.

Rebuilding locals

As stated above, our locals can play a major role in rebuilding and sustaining the organisation. We need to develop a systematic programme that links our leadership and the grassroots. The best insurance for a strong COSATU beyond the current leadership at federation and affiliate level is strong local leadership.

Guided by the congress resolution, we should embark on a relaunch of our locals to elect the new Local Office Bearers as well as new Local Executive Committees. This should apply to areas where locals are still functioning as well as where they have completely collapsed. This return to our locals can play a major role in running and monitoring our campaigns. This is the only way to go back to basics.

The COSATU worker NOB's will each be assigned to two provinces on a rotational basis. This should be combined with the re-allocation of all CEC members to locals within a given area. Together with the relevant NOB and regional leadership, they could help give direction and life to the locals. Regional Secretaries should ensure that their regional reports to the CEC and REC should include the role that such members are playing in the lifeblood of the locals.

Furthermore we need to empower the local leadership to engage with local government and local developmental forums. As raised under building regions, affiliates need to also have their own programme of building locals. This becomes even urgent since the COSATU constitution has been amended to include representation in the LEC by local affiliate leadership. It is important that those who represent affiliates should have structures to report back to and to receive mandates.

COSATU regions are looking at areas with low potential membership for affiliates in order to implement the decision on sharing of resources as defined by the national congress. In our view this is the only way the small rural towns and villages can be serviced and be made to feel that COSATU cares about them too and not just the big cities.

Building leadership with a specific focus on women

In line with our congress resolutions we are expected to integrate issues related to building women leadership within a broad organisational and political programme of the federation. At the same time we need to agree on a process to monitor success. The National Gender Forum with the participation of the President and the Deputy General Secretary should initiate discussion on how we reach measurable targets around the issue of women leadership. All affiliates will be requested to provide us with information on issues such as the number of women in the union or sector, potential leadership, existing leadership, etc.

Over the past few years we have neglected the training of national leadership of COSATU and affiliates. We need to develop a programme that empowers the CEC members and women leadership on areas such as globalisation, macro-economic issues, socialism, etc. This will help empower worker leadership, some of whom are disadvantaged due to their confinement to the shopfloor.

Without wanting to bureaucratised the federation and its affiliates, we need to develop managing skills for national and regional leadership so that they can best administer and manage trade unions.

Conclusion

The campaign is the biggest one we have undertaken since the living wage campaign. It will require strong co-ordination, better communication and effective administration with our allies we can build a strong force for transformation. This challenge we intend to meet. Everyday from 2nd April 1998, we will release information on areas of recruitment as well as relevant information on the campaign.

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