



Information Digest

COSATU

Number 10

12 March 1991

FOCUS ON COSATU CAMPAIGNS CONFERENCE

Three hundred delegates from COSATU's 14 affiliates and nine regions met on the 9th and 10th March to discuss COSATU's Campaigns programme of action for 1991. The Conference decided that the major campaigns for the year will be:

- Campaign for a Constituent Assembly and Interim government closely linked to a Campaign for Workers Rights in a new Constitution.
- Campaign for job security and job creation entitled: "Jobs for all - no retrenchments"
- Campaign for the extension of the Labour Relations Act to farm, domestic and public sector workers as well as workers in the Bantustans.

1. CONSTITUTIONAL CAMPAIGN

COSATU is campaigning for a Constituent Assembly and interim government together with its allies the ANC and SACP. The conference decided that COSATU would put its full weight behind the ANC's signature campaign in support of these demands. The signature campaign was launched on the 11th March.

Joint rallies of the tripartite alliance should be held where possible on the 21st March focussing on the demand for a constituent assembly and interim government.

The conference agreed that workers should be actively engaged in the collection of signatures. COSATU will target a date in April where workers will collect signatures in the factories, mines, shops and farms. It is anticipated that key trade union and political leadership will take part in the collection of signatures on this day.

In addition, COSATU will choose a day between 10 and 16 June to embark on worker led marches in all cities and towns of South Africa to demand a Constituent Assembly and highlight the key demands we want incorporated in a new constitution.

WORKER RIGHTS

The conference endorsed the following rights as the key worker rights it believes need to be included in a future South African constitution:

- The right to strike
- The full right to organise.
- The constitution must respect the independence of trade unions.
- The constitution must ensure that there is accountable government - COSATU has suggested provisions for a referendum on unpopular laws, free access of mass organisations to the media, the right to information and protected clauses in the constitution to ensure accountable government.

- The constitution should enable people to fight for a democratically planned economy, and other social and economic rights, such as jobs for all.
- The constitution should recognise fundamental equality between men and women in marriage, employment and in society.

COSATU will shortly begin a process of engaging with the ANC to ensure that the demands of workers are included in any ANC proposals for a new constitution. We will also raise these demands with all potential future political actors. The proposed Patriotic Front would be one such forum where workers demands would be raised.

As part of the campaign for a Constituent Assembly, COSATU will stress the need for the proceedings of the constituent assembly to be public and for there to be regular report backs to the people.

COSATU is also firmly committed to a constituent assembly that has been elected in a one person one vote election.

Workers Charter : The Workers Charter committee will draw up a document putting together all the demands for a Workers Charter. This document will be referred to affiliates for discussion.

2. CAMPAIGN FOR JOB SECURITY AND JOB CREATION

The conference put the blame for the escalating number of retrenchments firmly on the state and bosses - as a result of their concern to maintain profits and their lack of concern to build the economy and create jobs. A substantial number of jobs have been lost as a result of restructuring of industry. This loss of jobs is not a result of cyclical fluctuations in the economy. Jobs have also been lost as a result of privatisation.

The conference agreed to embark on a

major campaign against job loss- for job security and job creation. The overall demand of the campaign will be: **"Jobs for all- no retrenchments!"**

COSATU will be making the following demands on ending retrenchments to individual employers as well as to employer federations and the state:

- Workers facing retrenchments must be trained or retrained.
- Employers and the state must establish a job creation fund.
- There should be a 40 hour week without loss of pay.
- There should be a living UIF and pension, and price control of basic goods.
- Industrial restructuring should occur to expand the economy and create jobs. This must be done in consultation with the trade union movement.
- There should be an end to privatisation, and privatised industries should be renationalised.
- Extra shifts should not be introduced without agreement from the unions.

Job creation projects were identified which not only create jobs but have "spin-off effects" for the entire economy, and address burning social needs. Areas identified were:

- Electrification of townships and rural areas;
- Mass housing projects;
- Expansion and changing of existing factories.

These demands will be backed up by factory and other forms of action. Retrenchments will be one of the major focuses of May Day rallies, together with the cam-

campaign for rights for farm, domestic, and public sector workers.

3. CAMPAIGN FOR A LIVING WAGE

Conference agreed that it was premature to specify a set amount for a living wage. Further discussion and consultation was needed. A workshop on wage policy (26-27 March) would look at this issue further.

Conference also agreed that research needed to be done on the most effective way to synchronise bargaining. It was important that, as far as possible, annual bargaining climaxed in all sectors at the same time. It may be necessary to have different bargaining periods for the public and private sectors.

4. NMC AND LABOUR CODE

There was agreement that COSATU should enter a restructured NMC subject to certain qualifications:

- The principle groups in the NMC should be the unions and employers. The participation of the state needs further discussion;
- The forum needs to be seen as a negotiating forum;
- Decision making in the NMC, and its relation to parliament needs to be investigated further;
- Participation in the NMC should not be allowed to undermine COSATU's worker control, democracy, and militancy;
- Participation in the NMC should be linked to our demand for an interim government.

The conference rejected the Department of Manpower's fair labour practice code, and any labour code which is not drawn up with the consent of the major players. A labour code would serve as a guide to the courts on how to interpret what is a fair or unfair

labour practice. It was felt that such a labour code would be in our interest if it was agreed to by the key parties.

5. CAMPAIGN FOR EXTENSION OF LRA

We are now in the second phase of the LRA campaign, which is the extension of the LRA to farm, domestic and public sector workers and workers in the Bantustans.

- The conference endorsed a proposal from FAWU that the federation be involved in a sticker campaign to highlight the plight of farmworkers and their exclusion from the LRA and Wage Act. Workers who handle agricultural products - during processing, packing or selling will be called on to put stickers on these products.

The federation also committed itself to intensify organisational efforts in the farm sector. It was agreed that the CEC should decide whether the farmworker project should remain under FAWU or become a project of the federation as a whole. It was also agreed that affiliates connected in some way to the organisation of farm workers (Fawu, Ppwawu, T&G, Sactwu) should co-ordinate their efforts.

- COSATU and Public Sector workers will put forward their demands for rights for the public sector including basic organisational rights and the demand for one centralised bargaining forum.
- To focus on the rights of domestic workers, the conference endorsed the idea of a domestic worker human chain.

6. LITERACY CAMPAIGN

The conference endorsed the proposal that COSATU embark on a major national literacy campaign, subject to certain suggestions:

- There needs to be clear deadlines and definition of which workers are being targeted;

- The question of training trainers needs to be addressed in detail;
- The programmes shouldn't only focus on union members, but should also target other sections of the community;
- COSATU should also get involved in influencing already existing employer initiatives.

7. The conference pledged itself to a **solidarity campaign for the four COSATU leaders** (Jay Naidoo, Sydney Mufamadi, Moses Mayekiso and Baba Schalk) who will stand trial from 24 June on charges of alleged kidnapping and assault of a police informer last year. This was viewed as part of a political attacks by the apartheid state on the leadership of COSATU. The conference recommended that workers take

some form of action (still to be decided) between 24 June- 5th July, to show their support for COSATU leaders on trial.

8. REPORT BACKS/EDUCATION

Regions, affiliates and locals should hold workshops, shop steward councils etc to report back on the decisions of the conference and to discuss how to implement the decisions.

There should be joint alliance workshops on the Constituent Assembly and the Interim Government.

A special NCC should be called in July to assess the progress of the campaigns, and prepare a report for the COSATU Congress. COSATU Congress will take a decision on further mass action.