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IS HOLDING HANDS WITH BOSSSES THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE WORKERS?

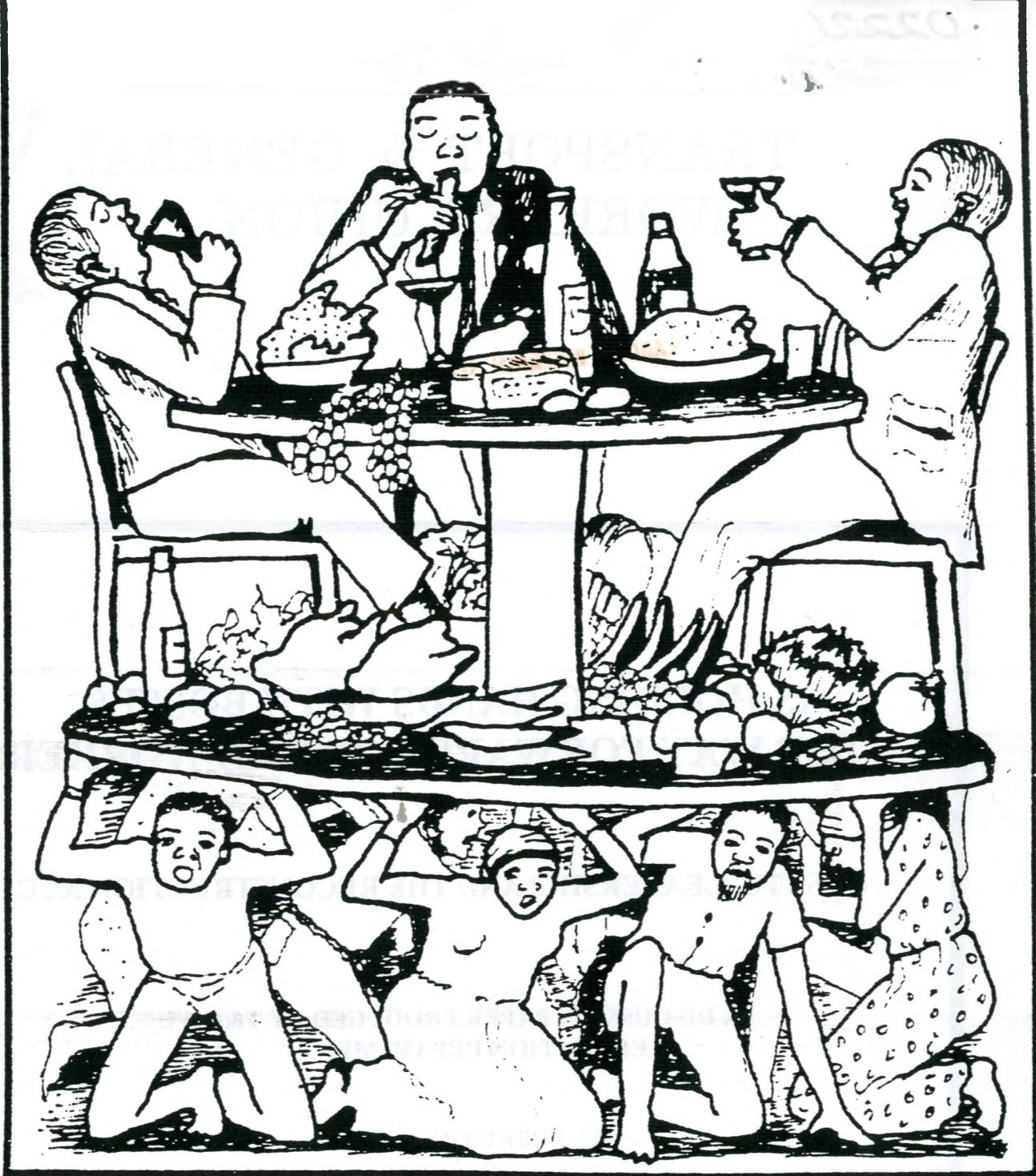
COSATU LEADERSHIP AND THE RECONSTRUCTION ACCORD

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COSATU WAY FORWARD FOR THE NEW SOUTH AFRICA IS HOLDING HANDS WITH BOSSES THE WAY OF THE WORKERS?

1. Introduction

The COSATU leadership is asking all its affiliates to discuss a way forward for South African workers. The COSATU National Office Bearers have produced a document titled "COSATU 1993 Discussion Paper on a Way Forward". It deals with the "Reconstruction Accord". This Accord is a plan for organised labour during this period of transition in South Africa. Since this plan is laying the foundations for a future South Africa, the COSATU document is therefore a plan for the future of the working class.

In this short paper we are going to answer the most important questions concerning this COSATU document: Is this the way forward for the workers? Is this plan going to free the workers from the chains of poverty and suffering? Is this plan going to lay the foundations for workers control of the economy, of politics and of the country? Is this plan going to stop retrenchments and starvation wages? In other words, we are going to study the COSATU leadership's proposals from the point of view of the needs of the workers.

2. What do workers need?

Comrades, we all know what the workers need. It is important in any discussion to start with looking at what the workers need. This will help us to make a clear analysis. Some comrades sometimes confuse the needs of the workers with those of the "economy", or of "the nation", or of the "black majority" and, worse of all, with the greed of the bosses. Our class is the working class, the beginning of our analysis is the needs of the workers. The workers need the following:

- * a living wage
- * a living UIF and living pensions
- * jobs for all with job security
- * food which is not expensive
- * decent and affordable housing
- * good and free health care
- * good and free education
- * a safe environment without violence
- * a government of the workers which will deliver all these things

3. What do workers get?

We have seen what the workers need. But what do workers get instead of all these things? Our discussion must always be based on what is actually happening to the workers and not on wishful thinking. Let us open our eyes and see more clearly the condition of the working class. These are the things the majority of workers in this country experience:

- * starvation wages
- * retrenchments
- * high taxes and VAT
- * expensive food
- * homelessness
- * gutter education
- * expensive medicine and few hospitals
- * unemployment
- * violence and intimidation
- * a government of the bosses which protects profits not workers

4. How can workers get what they need?

How can we workers get what we need? There are two ways to choose from:

- (a) One way is the way of holding hands with the bosses. The bosses like it and call it the "reasonable" way, the "internationally accepted" way, the "peaceful" way, the "balanced" way.
OR
- (b) The other way is the road of struggle, the way of building workers power through destroying the power of the bosses.

There is no middle road between these two roads. History has shown us that the first way is no way at all. It is not the workers way and it does not help the workers. They tried it in England. They tried it in the United States of America. The workers leaders were tricked by the bosses to abandon the struggle against the bosses. Instead they relied on making deals with the bosses. Instead of organising the workers struggle against the bosses, there were talks of co-operation and of "social contracts". Instead of waging civil war inside England against the bosses, the workers were tricked into fighting in the bosses armies against other workers in the world. Instead of fighting to the death against retrenchments, deals were made with the bosses whose foundation was to accept the bosses right to retrench. Instead of building the struggle among the rank and file workers, the leaders sat in committees and commissions with the bosses.

It was only yesterday with the ruthless anti-labour policies of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan that many workers realised how they had been tricked. Holding hands with the bosses has not helped the workers. It has helped the bosses. The bosses have made profits. They have increased their political power. Today many workers have even forgotten how to fight because their leaders threw away all their weapons. The way of holding hands with the bosses is not the workers way. It does not help the workers. It kills the workers struggle. It kills the workers confidence in themselves. It takes away the workers weapons and hands them over to the bosses.

One of the arguments used by leaders who mislead workers and encourage the politics of holding hands with the bosses is this one: Just as we negotiate with the bosses over wages, we must also negotiate over how to run the economy. Let us look at this argument to see if it is true or not. Remember how every year we negotiate with the bosses but every year we are never satisfied. The wages increase, but so do the food prices and the transport prices. Remember how the bosses always say there is no money. Remember how the bosses always talk about their profits when we are talking about the hunger of our children. Remember how in the negotiations the bosses tell us that they are going to retrench more workers. Remember how the bosses call their police to beat up workers and break our picket lines. The bosses and some of our leaders say that negotiations is give and take. But remember how the bosses are always taking and the workers are always giving. They took our land by force, they took our cattle by force, they made us to work for them by force using their pass system. Today they say we must have give and take. We the workers have got nothing more to give! The bosses have taken everything already. Negotiating with the bosses is a struggle. We know that if we have to win anything from the bosses we must struggle. And we know that the bosses force us to negotiate over what they have stolen from us in the first place.

Comrades, we know that the bosses system kills workers with its retrenchments and starvation wages. The bosses system is like a jail. **The workers are trapped inside the jail which is the bosses system.** Whether you have got a job or you are unemployed, you are still trapped inside the bosses jail. It is okay if you are in jail to fight and negotiate for better food, better conditions. But if you are in jail you know that your real victory will come the day you leave that jail! The prison warders can bring you the best food, but you must always struggle to leave the prison. Those leaders who say we must hold hands with the bosses are saying it is okay for workers to live trapped inside the bosses system. They are doing the bosses propaganda job. They tell workers to reconcile themselves with living under the boot of capitalism.

The only way forward for the workers is to fight the bosses. The only way forward is to build workers power. The workers must destroy the power of the bosses. The bosses are thieves, they steal everything the workers produce. The bosses are murderers, they kill the workers with their retrenchments and their starvation wages. **The only way forward for the workers is to destroy the bosses system.** As long as the bosses exist, the workers will suffer. As long as the bosses make their profits, the workers must suffer. Down with the bosses system. Down with the bosses. No deals with the bosses. No reconciliation with the thieves. No power sharing with the murderers. That, comrades, is the only way forward.

5. The COSATU way forward: Reconstruction Accord

The COSATU leadership has written its document. It proposes a Reconstruction Accord as the way to win the needs of the workers. The aim of the proposed Accord is to "open up the possibility of fundamental transformation of our society to benefit workers and the poor" (this is on page 1 point 1). The COSATU leadership says we must be careful that the new democratic government must not be "a weak government which can't deliver to the majority of the people". The leadership also says the workers must be careful of "a corporatist solution where only an elite benefit - including a trade union elite." (point 3.2) The COSATU leadership is warning the workers that the new South Africa must not be a new deal with the same old pack of cards. The workers must not be fooled or tricked with talks of change when in reality nothing changes. This is what the document says. There should be real changes in the lives of the workers. All suffering must end.

How can the new South Africa benefit the workers? The COSATU National Office Bearers propose in their document that the democratic government must address the following four issues: "(1) job creation (2) human resource development (3) social services e.g health, houses, social benefits (4) individual and collective rights for workers, women and youth." (page 1). These issues must be addressed immediately if workers are to benefit from the change of government and the end of apartheid rule. This is what the COSATU leadership says it wants. The big question now is: What is the method by which all these things can be done? Does the COSATU leadership have a way forward to win these demands of the workers?

To answer these questions we must first look at the context of these proposals. And then we must look at whether the method proposed by our leadership will indeed help the workers. Is the leadership's method the road of struggle or is it the way of holding hands with the bosses?

The proposals for the Reconstruction Accord come at a time when the ANC leadership is busy sitting with the Nationalist Party in their *bosberade*. The ANC leadership in its "Strategic Perspectives" document and in its actions has shown the road it wants to follow. The road the ANC leadership wants to travel is that of holding hands with bosses parties in a government of "national unity". All political parties will have a place in the new government of unity between the apartheid criminals and their victims.

Now in the Reconstruction Accord the COSATU leadership is proposing to "reconstruct" the economy together with the bosses. The bosses who ruined the economy in the first place are the ones who together with workers must reconstruct the economy. This is what the COSATU leaders are saying in their Reconstruction Accord. It seems the real aim of the Accord is to bring workers on board the multi-party bandwagon to the new South Africa. The aim is to get organised labour behind the new deal which the *bosberaad* has written and which will be made official in another CODESA. This is the bond which ties the ANC leadership to the COSATU leadership's Reconstruction Accord. It is the common bond of the politics of holding hands with bosses. In this section we are going to look in detail at this COSATU proposal. We are going to show how behind the Reconstruction Accord lies the politics of holding hands with the bosses.

How has the COSATU leadership been behaving these days? We must look at our leadership so as to understand why they come up with this kind of plan. Of late the only time we see the leaders is on TV. Most of the time they are sitting with the bosses in committees and commissions. There is the National Economic Forum. The COSATU leaders sit there the whole day with the bosses and the bosses government discussing the best way forward to the new South African economy. There is the Peace Accord. The COSATU leaders sit there with the bosses police the whole day discussing how best to keep the peace. There is the National Manpower Commission. The COSATU leaders sit there the whole day with the bosses government debating how best to avoid struggle and build co-operation (between the exploiter and the exploited).

This is the leadership which is today coming with the Reconstruction Accord. It is a leadership which spends most of its time not with the workers. Its time is spent sitting in committees with the bosses. Debating with the bosses, talking with the bosses, eating with the bosses, drinking with the bosses, laughing with the bosses, planning with the bosses. When they appear on TV it is even difficult to tell who is the boss and who the worker because they all are wearing suits and ties! This confusion gets worse because, despite all the differences, the bosses and the workers leaders on TV end their discussion by saying they are all in agreement on the main points.

POINT BY POINT DISCUSSION OF COSATU DOCUMENT

The document itself is short. There are only two pages of written text. The rest are word drawings. But from the two written pages one can see the approach of the COSATU leadership. It is the way of holding hands with the bosses. This politics is not so clear because the document says so little. This politics is hidden because whoever wrote the document was doing their best to present the argument so that it appears to be in the interests of the workers. But let us look at what the document says to find out whether it is giving a way forward for the workers.

Point 5.1 "restructure the public service"

The document calls for the restructuring of the public service. But it says nothing about the ANC's promise to the apartheid civil service that they will not lose their jobs. The ANC has promised the SAP, SADF and all the apartheid managers that if a new government takes over, no one will lose their job. According to the ANC leadership this is done so that these servants of apartheid should be won over and be supportive of the new government. The COSATU leadership says in one of its word drawings "no golden handshakes" (on page 5) meaning the apartheid servants must not be retrenched with expensive packages. Then they say there must be integration of the civil service. Yes, there must be no golden handshakes. But what is this "integration"? It means the apartheid servants will remain in their jobs and then the democratic government will add its own people to the existing apartheid bureaucracy. Talk about mixing oil and water! Can you really integrate the murderers and the victims? Can you integrate the rapist and the victim of the rape? This is what the COSATU leadership is saying when it calls for the restructuring of the public service and the integration of the old forces of repression and the new forces of workers democracy.

Point 5.2 "mobilise domestic savings and international resources"

To mobilise domestic savings is the COSATU leadership's solution to the economic crisis. Which savings are they talking about? We all know that the workers do not even have enough to eat, let alone savings. Perhaps the document is trying to say we must use the bosses money. So why don't they say so? All the money is with the bosses, it is from the bosses that the money must come. But the document will not say that. Probably they don't want to antagonise the bosses. Nowhere in the document is our policy of nationalisation mentioned. All the talk about nationalisation is today a dream. Today the bosses profits are called savings! The thieves are no longer thieves, they are now respectable businessmen.

The document then talks about "international resources". Here they must be talking about inviting other bosses from different parts of the world. The COSATU leadership wants to encourage more bosses to come into South Africa to exploit more workers! This is what the document calls "job creation". If they are talking about "international aid" then they must be talking about the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These imperialist organisations have only one aim: to crush the struggle for the needs of the working class and to help the bosses make more profits. The only advice these two organisations of the United Nations have is to raise taxes, remove food subsidies, remove minimum wage laws, retrench workers employed in the public sector, privatisation, deregulation and other blows to the workers.

POINT 5.3 "no tax increase and an independent tax commission"

Our demand is clear: Away with VAT! But the COSATU leadership even during the great anti-VAT march was already talking about "negotiate VAT", against workers policy. Today they can only talk about no tax increase. We say: No vote, no tax. We had already decided in COSATU structures to have a boycott on Pay As You Earn (PAYE). But what happened to that boycott? The COSATU leadership allowed the bosses to persuade them to stop it! And all this without the mandate of the workers. This decision to stop the workers tax boycott was taken in a CEC meeting which did not have a mandate from the workers in the affiliates.

What does it help to say "no tax increase"? Already the bosses government wants to increase taxes again. They want to increase VAT. They want to increase income tax (PAYE and SITE). But the bosses government does not want to tax profits. The bosses government says it will not increase tax on the bosses because "we must encourage investment". The workers are always paying with their blood and flesh. Already the workers pay the biggest share of taxes. We pay to maintain a system which kills us. This is why to say "no tax increase" is to say this bad situation must simply continue. We the workers say: No vote, no tax. Tax profits. Tax the rich. Tax the bosses.

The method preferred by COSATU leaders to fight high taxes on workers is to call for "an independent tax commission." Will another commission help the workers? It is very strange when our leaders talk of independent commissions. This structure they are proposing is independent of what? Is it independent of the workers mandate? Is it independent of the struggle between bosses and workers? Comrades, there is nothing independent in the class struggle. Either you are with the bosses or you are with the workers. There is no neutral position. If the tax commission will include both workers and bosses, it is still not independent. Inside that commission there will be a

struggle between the bosses and the workers. If the commission is going to have retired judges and learned professors, then it does not belong to the workers. It belongs to the bosses because these people serve the bosses system. Have these retired judges and professors ever slept without food? Have they ever been retrenched? It is nonsense to believe that any commission can be independent of the class struggle. The call for an independent tax commission is a call for more collaboration with the bosses.

POINT 6.2 AND 6.3 "engage with business"

Yes, comrades, we must engage the bosses. We must engage the bosses in struggle not in committees. When we meet the bosses we must simply put the workers demands on the table. Our job is not to find out about the problems of the bosses. They created the problem in the first place with their capitalist system of profits. If engaging the bosses means sitting down with them to discuss their problems, then the workers do not want that. What we need is a set of demands and a list of things which the democratic government will do when it takes over. The workers government must implement policies to stop the suffering of the workers as soon as possible. It must not engage the bosses but it must nationalise the bosses factories. It must not have discussions with the bosses but it must force the bosses to stop retrenchments. It must not form commissions with the bosses, but it must make a law which forces all bosses to pay a minimum wage. That, comrades, is the way of the workers. The way of struggle to win the needs and demands of the workers.

POINT 7 "engage with other classes" and create "a Commission for Reconstruction and Development"

The way forward of the COSATU leadership is here made very clear. They seek to collaborate with "other classes". This disease of class collaboration with the bosses class is killing workers organisations throughout the world. This is the disease we must fight comrades. The sickness of the politics of holding hands with the bosses. And you can see what this disease does to our leadership. If you read this clause in the document you see that the whole purpose of the Reconstruction Accord is to form another committee with the bosses, the "Commission for Reconstruction and Development." The bosses system is the chief engine of destruction and reaction. But now we are told that if we sit with the bosses in a committee we will have reconstruction and development. Engaging the bosses in battle is something very far away from the minds of the COSATU leadership. Do they want to engage the bosses and get married to them in the committees?

Let the workers see with their own eyes what the bosses mean by "reconstruction and development". The bosses just speak these words, but

what they are really after is profits. Look how the Development Bank, the Urban Foundation and all the big banks do their development work. They make the workers to pay! They "developed" houses in the township by chaining us with their bond system. They "developed" low income housing by putting workers in places like Orange Farm and Palm Springs, places which are 30 kilometres away from work. And still they make the workers pay. The bosses who control the banks sit in committees to "look at the housing crisis" but the same bosses are busy repossessing houses and sending people to sleep in the streets. That is the bosses method of reconstruction and development. To say that workers must form a committee of reconstruction with the bosses is the same as telling a man in death row to make a committee with the hangman.

POINT 8 "once a new constitution is in place, implement the Accord"

This idea of first making a constitution and then later to implement the Reconstruction Accord is not right. Why must workers wait long for urgent steps to be taken to address their suffering? The elected Constituent Assembly will be the government while it drafts the new constitution. Then that government must immediately start implementing a programme to address the needs of the workers. We workers cannot wait in our suffering. What the workers want is a constitution which supports the workers struggle. We don't want a bosses constitution and then only later implement the Reconstruction Accord. We want the rights of workers to be protected by the constitution. We want the constitution to have the Workers Charter in it. And we know that the only way to have this is to fight for it. The bosses will never agree to include our demand for jobs for all in the new constitution. That is because it is the bosses who make profits by retrenching us. We will have to fight them to include this clause of "Jobs for all" in the constitution. The bosses want to include the protection of private property clause in the new constitution. We can sit the whole day in committees with the bosses, but we will never agree to this protection of stealing.

We can see what is missing in all this talk of the Reconstruction Accord by the COSATU leadership. There is nothing in their talk about how we have to fight and struggle to win our demands. The leadership is dreaming about sitting in committees and making consensus with the bosses. We say the democratic government must implement an emergency programme to address the urgent needs of the workers and attack the greed of the bosses. Such a programme will include a total ban on retrenchments.

POINT 10 "ensure participation in business investment decisions"

This point which is on the word drawing on page 10 again shows the COSATU leadership's dreams of holding hands with the bosses. Our

leadership believes that it can advise the bosses where to invest the profits. Yes, the bosses can pretend to agree to this participation by workers in business investment decisions. But we know that the bosses have got a million ways of hiding their profits. Already Anglo American has investments all over the world. Will Oppenheimer agree when we tell him to take the profits from England and put them in South Africa? Is it not our class brothers and sisters who will suffer when we say close down your factory in Brazil and put it up in South Africa? Workers in Brazil also feel the pain. It is going to be the same thing inside South Africa. The bosses are already taking factories away from where our unions are strong and putting them in Bophuthatwana where they can pay workers starvation wages. Are we going to "advise" the bosses to close down these factories in Bop and put them up in Johannesburg? The road of holding hands with bosses will leave us totally confused and trapped in mixed up bosses politics.

How can workers co-operate in their own exploitation by advising bosses where to invest the money they have stolen from workers? This is totally unacceptable. Investment under capitalism is a nice word for exploitation. Profit-making is stealing. Where do profits come from if not from the unpaid labour of the workers? How can we throw away our opposition to the bosses system so easily and accept the bosses right to exploit? To call for workers to participate in investment decisions is to call for workers to collaborate in their own exploitation.

6. What is the way forward with the Reconstruction Accord?

Now we must ask ourselves what is the way forward with this Accord. Point 10 of the document says "affiliates of COSATU are called upon to discuss". This is correct. COSATU is nothing but its affiliates coming together. The real COSATU are all those struggling workers in the different unions. COSATU is not the leadership. The leadership sometimes seems to forget this as they take decisions without a mandate. This matter of the Reconstruction Accord and of the future of organised labour in South Africa must be decided upon by the workers. This matter is very serious, the workers must say what they want in the new South Africa. There must be a special national congress of COSATU to discuss the way forward. This is the workers way forward, the way of workers democracy. Let the voice of the workers be heard. Let the workers speak. Open the door and let workers power come out.

Point 9.5 in the document talks about "the need to develop a long term view of COSATU's role". Are we workers looking at ourselves still under the harsh system of the bosses in 5 years time? Do we want our children to follow our footsteps and be slaves to the bosses like us? There is only one long term view, comrades. That is to prepare the workers to destroy the

bosses system and build socialism. We workers are prisoners in the bosses system jail. Whatever we do today will never confuse us as to what our main goal is. Our goal is to build workers power so that the workers can control everything in society. Our goal is to destroy the bosses system and build a workers future. If we cannot do that today because we are not strong enough, then we must prepare for the day by building our forces. We know we cannot destroy the bosses system in one day. This will require a life and death struggle. But we also know that the only way forward for the workers is to destroy the bosses system. The plans of ANC and COSATU leaders to hold hands with the bosses will immediately take us backwards and weaken our struggle for workers power. We are not confused or demoralised by the strength of the enemy today. We are not confused or persuaded by the bosses nice talk of reconciliation. We are not confused or misled by the collapse of Stalinism in Eastern Europe. Stalinism is the politics of holding hands with bosses and crushing workers democracy. Our goal is clear. Socialism. Our method is one. Struggle.

The Reconstruction Accord proposed by our leaders will tie us in the chains of class collaboration with the bosses. We must turn the Reconstruction Accord into a weapon for workers against the bosses. We must turn it into an Emergency Programme which must be implemented by the workers government as soon as it takes over. COSATU must campaign for the ANC to agree to implement this programme once they are in government. The workers and their forefathers and foremothers have been suffering for the past 300 years. Today is the time to end all the suffering. We are not prepared to wait any longer. The Reconstruction Accord must be decided upon by COSATU, the ANC and other workers democratic forces. No bosses should be part of the drawing up of our Emergency Programme. It is the workers and their children who have built COSATU and the ANC. The workers must tell the ANC leadership straight that when we vote for the ANC we are voting for the implementation of the Emergency Programme To End Oppression And Exploitation. Workers, make sure that your delegates to the COSATU CEC on March 5 go with this mandate. Our slogan is: Turn the Reconstruction Accord into the Emergency Programme To End Oppression And Exploitation. Away with the bosses and their system. Away with the politics of holding hands with the bosses. Away with sitting with the bosses in committees above the heads of the workers. Away with making deals with the bosses behind the backs of the workers.

Turn the Reconstruction Accord into the Emergency Programme To End Oppression And Exploitation

Here are some of the main things that workers should discuss and demand in the Emergency Programme which the ANC in government must implement:

1. A total ban on retrenchments. A 40 hour week.
2. Abolish VAT and all taxes on the poor. Tax profits.
3. A minimum wage for all workers. Force all bosses to pay a minimum wage.
4. UIF and pensions for all who need them.
5. Free health care and education.
6. Public works schemes under workers control to create jobs and to build houses, creches, schools, community centres.
7. Disband the SAP and SADF. Lay charges against apartheid criminals.
8. Subsidise bread, mealie meal, milk and all the basic foods of the workers.
9. Abolish hostels.
10. Arm the workers defence units. Disarm Inkatha, bantustan warlords and all murderers.
11. Introduce a relief programme for the workers in rural areas.
12. Nationalise without compensation all public assets which were privatised by bosses government. Nationalise all companies which want to close down and retrench workers
13. All government ministers, officials and MP's to be paid the same wage as skilled workers.

Our way forward is clear. We turn the Reconstruction Accord into an Emergency Programme which will be implemented by the ANC in government. We fight against the politics of holding hands with the bosses. We fight for workers control of COSATU and its affiliates. We fight today so that tomorrow we can build socialism.

AWAY WITH THE BOSSES SYSTEM!

AWAY WITH HOLDING HANDS WITH THE BOSSES!

AWAY WITH SITTING IN COMMITTEES WITH THE BOSSES!

**TURN THE RECONSTRUCTION ACCORD INTO THE EMERGENCY
PROGRAMME TO END OPPRESSION AND EXPLOITATION!**

PHAMBILI NGOMZABALAZO WABASEBENZI!

