



LRA/Living Wage Conference Decisions and recommendations

From 12-13 May 1990 COSATU held its first LRA/Living Wage Conference. The Conference brought together 250 delegates, mostly shop stewards, from around the country to discuss the way forward.

Many of the inputs were given by union representatives active in COSATU's National Campaigns Committee (NCC). The following decisions and recommendations must be discussed in all structures, and especially in the Regional Campaign Committees (RCC).

A second Conference is scheduled to take place in August.

National Minimum Wage
The Conference agreed that there should be a national minimum wage which would bring together organised and unorganised workers, especially for workers in low wage industries.

The Living Wage Committee was mandated to establish what minimum wage should be demanded and to develop a programme of action to achieve a national minimum wage.

The August Conference will make the final decision on the national minimum wage.

Core demands for a Living Wage

The following core demands were agreed on:

- The right to a Living Wage
 - an end to racial employment
 - 40 hour work week
 - overtime ban
 - reduction of grades
 - right to social security
 - the right to education and training
- Parental rights
- Job security and job creation
- Centralised bargaining
- An end to privatisation

It was also agreed that the core demands should form the basis of all union wage negotiations. In this way uniformity and co-operation will be built.

It was further agreed that the Living Wage Committee look at ways of incorporating the demands of the unemployed.

The suggestion from the NUWCC was for the campaign to demand Living Wage/Benefits. By benefits the NUWCC are referring to social security.

Strike solidarity action
The central objective of COSATU is the co-ordination of the activities of the affiliated unions which includes strike solidarity. To achieve this objective we need to strengthen all the structures of the federation.

All unions should move towards negotiating wages dur-

ing a common period so that more effective solidarity can be achieved as we would then declare disputes at the same time. The period suggested is June-July.

We also need to ensure that sufficient information is forwarded to unions on time. Both the RCCs and the Campaign Bulletin should be used to circulate information timeously and proper links should be formed with community organisations to facilitate solidarity.

The LWC was mandated to make more concrete proposals to the next NCC.

Unemployment Insurance Fund Campaign

The proposal by NUWCC that COSATU take up a campaign on the role of the UIF Board was agreed to. The demands will include:

- worker control of the UIF Board



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- All workers should receive UIF benefits

Also to be discussed further by affiliates is the question of participation in the UIF Board. The Conference felt that in principle there would be no objection if the Board was restructured.

Anti-Privatisation Campaign

A workshop is to take place on the issue to work out a detailed programme of action. Suggestions made by the Conference include that COSATU meet employer bodies on the issue and that a list of buyers of shares should be forwarded to the unions. The question of Employee Share Option Schemes (ESOPS) also needs to be discussed and clarified.

Barlow Rand

BR is in the forefront of the bosses' deregulation battle and also their attempt to decentralise bargaining. Many overseas unions are struggling with this new strategy of the bosses. We should therefore take this issue very seriously.

The following suggestions were made:

- As BR have international subsidiaries, we should discuss the possibility of international solidarity with the ANC.
- We should embark on a publicity campaign to expose BR, both locally and internationally.
- We should contact and co-operate with other unions organising in BR.
- We should identify companies who supply BR and organise solidarity for BR workers.
- As many unions have Old Mutual pension and provident funds, we should develop a strategy and consider meeting them.
- Unions need to work out what level (conglomerate, industry, company, plant) they want to bargain at and look at how different levels of bargaining relate to each other.

Workers' Charter Campaign

Regions are holding workshops to discuss the WC and constitutions to see how the two relate to each other. It was agreed that we need to look for creative methods to involve all sectors of the community in collecting demands.

We also need to look at ways of linking the campaign to the demands for a new Workers'

LRA and the broader struggle for economic and political power. The discussion should not only involve leadership, but should be used to build the federation as a whole.

LRA Campaign

It was agreed that COSATU needs to formulate positions on a number of issues:

- Essential services and the right to strike in the light of strikes that can lead to death, injury and major damage to property.
- Closed shop agreements and democratic practice.

These issues will be discussed further at NCC once unions have been able to debate and formulate positions.

Towards a socio-economic programme

It was agreed that COSATU should formulate a socio-economic programme. Suggestions included:

- The NCC should set up a working group to look at "Goods and Services". It should also investigate and develop policies on issues like retirement schemes, alternatives to the high cost private home ownership market etc.
- Affiliates should set up Industrial Restructuring Groups to investigate how industry in their sector could be restructured to benefit workers. These groups will be co-ordinated by the LWC.
- A national workshop will be held on 9-10 July to look at an economic programme for COSATU and the question of restructuring industry.

The following committees are all responsible for assisting COSATU to develop an economic policy:

- The LWC will look at macro economic issues
- The committee on Human Resources Development will look at training.
- The LRA Working Group is looking at legislation and the constitution as a means of ensuring basic worker rights.
- The Workers' Charter Committee is looking at both short and long-term demands of the working class.



Joe Slovo, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party addressing COSATU's first LRA Living Wage Conference.



Another victim of the ongoing war in Natal. This woman was murdered in her home in Mpumalanga.

Forward to a national minimum wage!