

Workers Charter Campaign

Background to Campaign

OUR country is passing through a critical phase in our history at present - we find ourselves in a transitional situation where even the regime admits that the old order can no longer survive.

In its attempt to regain the initiative the state has shifted the battle onto the political terrain. With concessions like the release of Mandela, Sisulu and others and the unbanning of the ANC and SACP the state has been able to project itself both nationally and internationally as the initiator of change and the ones who will bring democracy to this country.

This situation confronts the democratic movement with many challenges. A key question in this period is whose ideas will win the support of the oppressed masses of our country. It is therefore necessary for the forces of liberation to do everything that is necessary to win the support of the oppressed masses. We need to enter the ideological battle to win the hearts and minds of the majority of our people.

Last year the ANC circulated draft Constitutional Guidelines for discussion among organisations inside the country. The draft was intended to facilitate discussion about different aspects of society with a view to shaping a democratic constitutional model for a future democratic South Africa.

Different sectors of the liberation movement have already initiated discussions on all aspects of the guidelines and in some instances they have focused on specific areas relating to their own constituencies.

The Constitutional Guidelines call on workers to develop a Workers' Charter protecting workers rights and their trade union rights. The South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) have already circulated drafts of the Workers' Charter as a basis for discussion.

COSATU's 3rd National Congress in July 1989, adopted a resolution on the Workers' Charter and emphasised that the process towards drawing up the Charter must deepen our struggle against oppression and exploitation. It

also emphasised that the Charter should be the product of thorough debates, discussions and consultations involving the entire toiling masses of our country.

Congress therefore resolved that COSATU should launch and spearhead a Workers' Charter Campaign that will involve the broadest section of the oppressed and exploited masses through democratic and participatory methods of consultation. This process must culminate in the drafting of a Workers' Charter that will be adopted at a National Congress to be called

the 'Workers Charter Congress'. The Congress will be attended by COSATU, unaffiliated unions and other formations of the Mass Democratic Movement.

The resolution on the Workers' Charter was further discussed at the 2nd National Education Conference in October 1989. Conference recommended that as a first step a joint CEC/NEDCOM workshop be held to plan the campaign. At the workshop on the 16 February, recommendations and guidelines were discussed for the Workers' Charter Campaign.

Programme of action

Questionnaire:

A draft questionnaire about the Workers' Charter has been circulated to all General Secretaries, Regional Secretaries and Regional Educators for comment. Deadline for feedback is February 28, after which the questionnaire will be printed and circulated to all structures. The questionnaires should assist in educating workers and ensuring that we get responses from all factories and workplaces.

Working Group:

It was agreed that all affiliates immediately nominate one representative each to the Workers' Charter Working Group which will form part of the new National Campaign Committee (see LRA page for details of the committee). The Working Group will meet on the March 9 to look at other ways of intensifying the campaign.

Regional workshops:

All regions are to conduct workshops on the Workers' Charter by the beginning of April.

Regional Rallies:

All regions and locals are to convene rallies to popularise the campaign. May Day and June 16 and any other rallies should also be used to strengthen the campaign.

Marches and factory demonstrations:

Marches and factory demonstrations should be held to highlight the workers demands. There should be a very strong build-up especially in the month before the Workers' Charter Congress.

Evaluation:

In June a CEC and NEDCOM evaluation meeting will take place.

Workers' Charter Congress:

A Workers' Charter Congress will take place between September and October. Congress will meet to adopt a Workers' Charter and address issues relating to current political developments. Representation will be along the lines of the Workers' Summit. National, regional and local structures should ensure that discussions and debate take place to make sure the Workers' Charter reflects what workers want. Shop steward committees should assist in drawing all workers together to participate in this process. Womens' structures, both in affiliates and COSATU, should draw women workers together to contribute to the formulation of the Charter.

Only through the broadest possible debates and discussions will we be able to develop a Charter that will ensure better conditions for workers in a future democratic South Africa.

Workers' Charter Campaign



Questionnaire

1. Basic Worker Rights

What rights should workers have, from the state and employers, in relation to:

- 1.1 Right to join trade unions
- 1.2 Right to a living wage
- 1.3 Right to social security
- 1.4 Right to education, training and skills upgrading
- 1.5 Right to job security
- 1.6 Right to work / full employment / job creation
- 1.7 Right to healthy and safe working conditions
- 1.8 Other rights

2. Trade Union Rights

What rights should trade unions have, from the employers and the state, in relation to:

- 2.1 Right to bargain collectively
- 2.2 Right to determine the bargaining levels and bargaining issues
- 2.3 * right to strike
 - * right to sympathy strikes
 - * right to picket
 - * right to job security while on strike
 - * right to protection against employers taking on scab labour during a strike
 - * right to strike fund
- 2.4 Right to appoint judges to the Industrial Court.
- 2.5 Right to negotiate all laws affecting workers.
- 2.6 Right to represent workers to state administrative bodies on labour issues.

3. Parental and Recreation Rights

- 3.1 What kind of provisions should we make for workers to enjoy family life?
- 3.2 What social facilities should be provided for workers to enjoy their recreation time?

4. Women Workers' Rights

4.1 What women workers' rights should the Workers' Charter have in relation to:

- * wages and grading
- * education, training and skills upgrading
- * job security
- * social security
- * taxation
- * sexual harassment
- * contraception
- * other.

4.2 How must trade unions, worker political parties, all other mass organisations, employers and the state correct inequalities base on sex?

4.3 How can we ensure all workers have equal rights and equal opportunities regardless of race, sex and creed?

5. Political Rights

- 5.1 What political rights should workers have?
- 5.2 Should trade unions be independent of the state and political parties?
- 5.3 Should the state have any say in the running and control of trade unions?
- 5.4 Should trade unions have a right to differ with the state?
- 5.5 Should the state have powers to reverse / suspend worker rights e.g. during a state of emergency?
- 5.6 What access / control should trade unions have to all forms of media?

6. Rights for Economic Planning

- 6.1 What rights should workers have in a mixed economy, in managing privately and state owned companies?
- 6.2 What rights and support should be given to co-operatives?
- 6.3 What role should trade unions play in relation to economic planning at local, regional and national level?

7. Relationship between the Workers' Charter and the Constitution

- 7.1 Should the Workers Charter be part of the Constitution or a separate document?
- 7.2 What should be the status of the Workers' Charter be in a post-apartheid South Africa?

8. Charter Preamble

- 8.1 What should the Workers Charter Preamble contain?

Discuss the Charter and forward your demands!