

• From Page 1 of this insert

This was only done because over six months had passed since the CEC had agreed to paying for Cosatu News and no affiliate had provided the information — despite repeated requests. To this day, only four affiliates have responded.

Another example is the CEC decision to establish a strike diary, with affiliates submitting information regularly on strikes and disputes. Only CMIU and TGWU do this. Meetings convened by head office on virtually every issue, from Living Wage Campaign to building and media meetings, are usually ignored.

Often when decisions are taken — for example, around the release of detainees in March 1987 — then we are the subject of criticism, labelling or condemnation.

Solutions:
• Affiliates must recognise that Cosatu is not a bureaucracy with specialised departments.

• Our success can only come as a result of the combined efforts between head office and affiliates.

• Our editor and information officer are dependant on information submitted by affiliates.

• Our education programme is dependant on unions themselves playing an active role. This is the strategy we have chosen because we believe it will strengthen democratic worker control. If affiliates have now changed their mind, then we need to re-examine our strategy and form specialised units such as UTP.

Executive

The previous executive, although it had certain limitations, acted as a Cosatu collective — guiding both the office bearers and head office.

It developed a spirit of comradeship and self-criticism. A good example was the Executive New Years Message in 1987 which focussed our energies into clearly visible tasks, or the Executive Discussion Document "The Way Forward" which allowed us to critically evaluate our strengths and weaknesses in a period of grave danger.

In the first executive meeting after the Second National Congress, we barely made a quorum. In that instance the unions which had in fact most strongly motivated the change in composition of the executive did not attend.

Unions are invariably — with the structure of the new executive — coming to represent their own specific



UNITY IS STRENGTH

interests and not putting the interests of Cosatu paramount.

Solutions:
• The executive needs the active participation of all affiliates. It must become a forum where we critically evaluate our progress and where the strategies of Cosatu are worked out.
• Paramount is the need for the executive to build the unity of Cosatu, where differences are aired and ironed out, where open and frank debates take place and where the activities of the head office and office bearers are supervised.

Central executive committee

Every CEC starts late because affiliates do not bother to arrive on time.

The major problem facing us prior to the Second National Congress was that unions had not merged. This has since been largely resolved with 13 unions replacing the 33. Yet it is impossible to say that the

CEC is functioning more effectively. A major problem still remains the extent to which unions discuss issues fully within their own structures before they come to the CEC.

Another problem we face is the attitude towards the CEC. Delegates from affiliates arrive and leave at times they choose. Full worker delegations in many cases are not brought. Issues are used to fight out narrow union interests without the commitment to build the CEC as a vehicle of unity and struggle within the federation. As a result we have seen endless decisions remaining just on paper — from our resolution on the new pass laws to the Labour Relations Amendment Act.

Solutions:
• Affiliates must be more disciplined in their approach to the CEC.
• Meetings must start on time, with full attendance throughout.
• Delegates must come with

proper mandates on all issues.

• Decisions of the CEC must be reported on fully within unions and acted on with enthusiasm.

• The unity of the federation must be paramount at all times, and differences must be ironed out.

• We need to avoid polarisation of views — the capitalist and apartheid system continuously exploits division between ourselves.

• Our decisions must be based on a full understanding of our strengths and weaknesses, so that when we decide on a campaign we know we can realise our objectives.

• We do not intend to stifle debates, but we are suggesting that they should be constructive and directive

Regions

The truth is that only the Highveld and Western Cape function as active regions. The majority of our regions are paralysed by the lack of discipline and initiative by

office bearers, as well as the consistent non-attendance by affiliates and the weakness of sub-committees such as Redcom and the Living Wage Committee.

Regional structures are not supervised effectively and CEC decisions are not carried through at a regional and local level.

Solutions:
• Affiliates need to take regional structures more seriously.

• The most capable, disciplined and hard-working comrades must be put forward as regional leaders.

• Leaders elected on purely political considerations may not, in all fairness, contribute to building all aspects of Cosatu.

• Leaders must have a history of consistent organisational work, and must have proved they are capable of building Cosatu and giving leadership.

Locals

We acknowledge that our shop stewards councils are

the pillars on which Cosatu stands. Yet locals in many areas are not set up. Affiliates in many cases take no steps to encourage their leadership to involve themselves in councils, and in some cases affiliates actually boycott the locals.

Solutions:
• Build participation in all locals.

• Set up locals in areas where they do not exist.

• Give all available support and resources to assist the growth of locals.

• Accept and accommodate the tensions that could develop between locals and union structures. This is what maintains the militancy and vibrancy of Cosatu and generates the leadership which makes the workers' movement insurmountable on the ground.

Affiliates

• Union structures: In many cases, structures are in disarray. This is the primary cause of the weakness of Cosatu structures. Many decisions taken by Cosatu do not get reported to rank and file membership. BECs, RECs and Redcoms are inconsistent in meeting and disseminating information.

Workers are in many cases not able to effectively control structures. Cosatu offices are inundated with reports of workers complaining of the lack of servicing. Instances of financial corruption have also occurred.

• Involvement: The CEC consistently receives regional reports of unions failing to attend Cosatu meetings and of decisions not being implemented. The result is the serious weakness in our campaigns and the lack of co-ordination that presently exists.

• Union divisions: Disunity within affiliates is another reason for our weaknesses. An example is the divisions in the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers' Union (Ccaawusa). Such divisions paralyse our affiliates and effect the whole of Cosatu.

• Relationships between affiliates: Affiliates should look beyond their own interests. The chauvinism of unions must disappear. We cannot do without each other. We are all spokes in the great wheel of liberation. A failure to understand each other, to accommodate each other's views, of respecting the decisions of the majority, will cripple our liberation struggle. We must curb the divisive tendency of labelling.

Misunderstandings must be dealt with in an adult and comradely way — we must seek out solutions rather than polarise or create factions.

We have to put democracy into practice

WE are seeing internationally a new spirit of criticism and self-criticism. Essentially, our organisation will stagnate and we will build bureaucracies if we do not build openness and criticism as an integral part of our organisational and practical work. We can only be strengthened by openly acknowledging our weaknesses and strengths and then carefully reassessing our strategies and tactics.

Criticism of organisational practice — especially from rank and file members — is critical in guaranteeing the militancy and dynamism

of our organisation.

Democracy is not only a theoretical concept. It has to be built into organisational and political practice. In the 1986 Executive Discussion Paper, we first established an understanding of what democracy meant:

• A democratic honesty about our views and ideas.

• A democratic freedom to promote those ideas within the structures of our organisation.

• A democratic discipline when debating the issues of the day.

• A democratic willingness to be patient, to listen to the

views of others, to be prepared to learn from each other.

• A democratic right to criticise our comrades but to carry out such criticism in a constructive way that strengthens our organisation as a whole and not one or another faction — to remember that while each of us has the right to criticise, this also involves the duties and responsibilities to build the organisation.

• A democratic loyalty to the views of the majority — even where these may not be our own views.

• A democratic duty to carry

out the decisions of the majority with the maximum discipline and energy.

• A democratic responsibility to search for compromise where there is a sharp division and to fight consistently for compromises which strengthen our unity.

No leader is above criticism. Such criticism can, however, only strengthen our organisation if it is raised in structures. Such criticism can only succeed in building democratic leadership if it is based on truth. Rumour-mongering and pinning

labels on people can only contribute to heightening suspicion and divisions and playing into the hands of our enemies.

OUR very existence in spite of our weaknesses, in spite of the massive onslaught against us by the state and employers, is a triumph for the working class and all democrats.

The mass militancy of our membership, the mass struggles waged around our Living Wage Campaign, the key role played by our leadership in community-based struggle, show that our strength lies in our mass membership.

We must take courage from the ongoing militant spirit of our membership and go forward to build our organisation in the strongest ways.

The issues raised in this message reflect a view that arises from an analysis of the issues that face us.

We would appreciate a written response from all affiliates, locals and regions as to their view of the weaknesses and strengths of Cosatu and what way forward they propose.

Correction of our shortcomings can only emerge out of a critical analysis of these weaknesses.