

COMMENT

Working class power is all we want

COSATU WORKERS

The state of emergency is aimed at stopping our day to day organising work and breaking our will to build organisation. But all around the country, from the small towns to the big cities, we see organisation and struggle growing despite the emergency repression.

In the factories, mines, farms and shops, COSATU shopstewards are building up workplace committees and local shopsteward councils. In the townships, the students are organising SRC's in the schools, whilst workers and youth are building street and area committees in their communities. Even in the countryside the rural poor are organising themselves in village committees.

ORGANISATION GROWS

Everywhere organisations of workers and youth are being built to lead the mass struggle against the poverty and oppression of the capitalist system of the bosses and their apartheid government. Workers and youth are fighting to give an organisational home to all the oppressed masses of our country - a home where the ordinary workers and youth can take control of the decisions that govern their lives.

Through these organisations workers and youth are learning to practice democratic debate and organisation. They are discussing and deciding what the demands of working people are. They are advancing the interests of the working class and youth. They are taking control of their lives by deciding democratically what the needs and demands of workers and youth are.

All of these organisations of workers and youth share a commitment to worker leadership and democracy. All of them share a common hostility to the poverty and waste of human resources that is the product of the capitalist system of the bosses. All of them share the common burden of the apartheid governments oppression.

WORKERS DEMOCRACY

In COSATU we have the strongest tradition of workers democracy and workers control. In COSATU we have long experience of resisting the exploitation of the bosses capitalist system and the poverty this breeds. In COSATU we are building the strongest force against the oppression and repression of the apartheid government - the organised strength of workers.

Now in COSATU, and in many other local organisations of workers and youth, we can see that the capitalist system has nothing to offer us except more poverty and exploitation, more police repression and racist oppression. So many workers and youth are saying that the only alternative to this system is a socialist system - a society controlled by workers and organised to meet all the needs of workers

If the masses of workers and youth are demanding a socialist solution to the crisis, then it is COSATU's task to take the lead in discussing with all organisations:

- * the principles and policies of workers democracy and control
- * the socialist solutions we need, and how to achieve them

Right now there are major struggles going on. In the townships hundreds and thousands of workers are refusing to pay rent. Around the schools, millions of youth are in struggle. And on the mines, hundreds and thousands of NUM members - together with members in other unions - are fighting for a living wage

COSATU comrades, how can we help build struggles like these with the methods of worker democracy and control? What programme of action and organisation do we need to unite our struggles together towards our common goal? How can we build the bridge from the struggles of today to a society where the needs of workers and youth will govern?

SAFETY BEFORE PROFITS

The bosses law of profits is that safety is not as important as profits. There will only be as much safety as profits will allow

The workers law is that workers needs and workers safety come first - no matter what it costs. It is not bosses who are dying underground or in the factories. It is workers. And as Cde Cyril Ramaphosa said: "Every death is one too many for us.

Safety can never cost too much. You can't put a price on workers lives. And in any case, all the profits the bosses have come from our labour. It is workers money.

NO - Conditions must be made healthy and safe before anyone talks of profits.



Examples of recent worker unity - the memorial services organised by NUM, backed by Cosatu affiliates.



One union one industry -- please!

The split in the National Union of Textile Workers (NUTW) is a serious blow for COSATU. COSATU's policy is One Union - One Industry; One Federation - One Country. Our task is to organise and unite the working class - and never to disorganise and divide workers.

So when a section of NUTW - the major affiliate in the textile industry - broke away to form a splinter union, COSATU took it very seriously. A Commission was set up to try and solve the problem and help bring unity back to NUTW. The problem is not solved yet.

But the Commission made many points and recommendations to the COSATU CEC which were agreed by the CEC. The points are:

* COSATU's policy is One Union in One Industry. Splinter unions must be prevented now and in the future.

* The unity of COSATU is our main aim.

* COSATU condemns the use of violence as a means of settling disputes within our unions.

* Differences within big national unions cannot be avoided and must be dealt with by the method of worker democracy.

Minority positions that work within the structures must be accepted.

* It is not good to have organisers closely linked with only certain factories. Workers might see the organiser as the union instead of the union as the workers.

* Affiliates must respect each others structures and act in a disciplined way. The same applies to organisations outside COSATU. Differences must be debated in a democratic way within affiliates and also within COSATU.

The Commission recommended that:

* NUTW keep its offer to expelled officials open to return and that it encourage a revolutionary spirit of unity with all their previous members

* TAWU - the splinter union - should deal with its grievances within the structures of NUTW, as members and officials of NUTW, in the interests of unity and the worker struggle. TAWU is not an affiliate of COSATU and is not allowed to use the facilities of COSATU or any of its affiliates.