



The May Day mood: Namibian workers march through the streets of Katatura township in Windhoek after a rally attended by more

# One country. One federation.

WORKERS learnt a valuable lesson from May Day this year. The more they organise into one union in each industry, the more powerful the unions become and the more workers join up.

The more unions come together in one federation, the greater the power of the federation — and the greater the impact of organised workers on the unorganised, the youth and all oppressed people.

If May Day means working class unity, then working class unity means one union in each industry and one federation in the country.

Cosatu is committed to one trade union federation of national industrial unions in South Africa. Our slogan is: One Country, One Federation — One Union, One Industry. Today, Cosatu is closer to this goal than ever before.

In the *transport* industry, workers from the Cape-based Tramway and Omnibus Union, Nactu's TAWU, the SATS staff association BLATU and

**In true style, President PW Botha declared May 1 a workers' holiday — and then banned virtually all outdoor rallies organised by workers. But this didn't stop workers all over South Africa from celebrating the true meaning of a workers' day. Thousands attended indoor rallies, and thousands more stayed away from work. But what are the lessons to be learnt from May Day?**

Zakheni have made contact with Cosatu transport affiliates to become part of the one big transport union which is being formed. SARHWU alone has grown by 15 000 members in the past six weeks.

In the *textile* industry, Cosatu's NUTW is a major force in the 200 000-strong textile, clothing and leather union federation formed by all the major unions in the industry. Most of the unions were in Tucsua. The federation aims to eventually form one national union in the industry. Already merger talks between

NUTW and TWIU are fairly advanced. NUTW is busy forming one union with SATAWU and other textile workers in Cosatu

In the *commercial and catering* industry, HARWU and the 3 000-strong Cape Liquor and Catering Union are talking unity, while other locally-based hotel unions want to come in. Cosatu's CCAWUSA, HARWU and RAWU are forming one union in this sector soon.

In the *paper and pulp* industry, over 3 000 workers from the NUFW have joined Cosatu's PWAWU in the past month.

Meanwhile PWAWU, NUPAWU and other Cosatu affiliates with members in the industry have finalised plans for merging.

In the *metal* industry, one big union was formed at a congress in Johannesburg from May 22 to 24, bringing together more than 130 000 workers from Cosatu unions

and MICWU. Many other workers are expected to join this new union.

All IMF unions were invited to participate in the new union's founding congress.

In the *chemical* industry, the entire Northern Transvaal branch of NACTU's main affiliate, SACWU, have joined CWIU and others are joining in the rest of the country.

CWIU has repeatedly approached SACWU to discuss unity in the chemical sector.

In the *municipal* sector and the *public* sector, big gains are being made too. The organisation of municipal workers is spreading from the industrial centres to smaller towns and progress is being made in merging Cosatu's affiliates in the sector. The Natal-based DIMES wants to come into Cosatu's municipal union. The public sector is still weakly organised, but national organisation is being pulled together around health workers both inside and

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than 10 000 people.

## One May Day

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outside Cosatu. The newly formed organisation of postal workers, POTWA, has close ties with Cosatu and will decide in October whether to affiliate or not.

Cosatu is busy organising the millions of unorganised farm and unemployed workers. Unions for farm and unemployed workers will be launched as soon as national organisation is strong enough.

At the same time, organisations of teachers and artists have approached Cosatu to unite with the mass of organised workers. And youth, student and civic organisations are seeking unity in action with Cosatu.

In the mine, food, construction and domestic sectors, national industrial unions exist. These unions are all growing fast. CAWU has grown by a third since its launch in January; NUM is the fastest growing union in the world and FAWU now completely dominates the food industry in South Africa.

While Cosatu's affiliates are

consolidating national industrial unions, the structures of Cosatu are coming together as well.

At a national level, the number of affiliates has fallen from 33 to 21 through mergers. Only unions representing the national industrial sectors are expected to participate in Cosatu's July National Congress.

At a regional level, all Cosatu's nine regions have been successfully launched. The last regions to be established were the OFS/Northern Cape region; the Western Transvaal region and the Eastern Cape region. Together these regions unite over 200 000 Cosatu members.

At a local level, about thirty new locals are being set up throughout the country. In big industrial centres and small towns, thousands of Cosatu shopstewards are uniting at a local level to consolidate organisation and plan action.

The lesson from May Day is clear: The more unions come together, the greater the impact of workers.

## May 1 is our day — and always will be

**PW Botha says:**

The first Friday of every May is "Workers' Day" — a public holiday.

**Cosatu says:**

No thanks. You can't give us what we have already won.

May Day is ours. May 1 is ours. We had it last year. We had it this year. And we'll have it again next year.

Every year, on May 1, we will have our holiday — our workers' holiday.

We have demanded and won this already.

This country's employers have recognised that May Day is ours. It is written into agreements affecting hundreds of thousands of workers that they will have a public holiday on May 1, and be paid for it.

So what is this "first Friday every May"? Who did you consult? Who gave you the mandate? We never raised the demand.

We said May Day was ours. We told employers it was something we could not give up.

And we won't.

**PW Botha also says:**

- The state of emergency must stay.

- The Group Areas Act, bantustans and apartheid education must stay.

- The police and army must stay in the townships.

- People must stop campaigning for the release of detained leaders.

- People must stop campaigning for the unbanning of banned organisations.

- Opposition organisations must stop getting funds from overseas.

- People must stop promoting organisations like street committees and defence units.

- The ANC must be crushed.

**Cosatu says:**

We are opposed to what PW Botha says. We think the only way stability can be restored in our country is if:

- Apartheid is abolished completely.

- The emergency is lifted immediately.

- Leaders in detention and prison are released.

- The army and police are withdrawn from the townships.

- Basic democratic rights are guaranteed.

- Banned organisations are unbanned.

**Meanwhile the police:**

- Ban Cosatu meetings.

- Detain Cosatu leaders and workers.

- Ban Cosatu's newspaper.

- Raid Cosatu offices constantly.

- Monitor Cosatu meetings and offices.

- Seize thousands and thousands of Cosatu publications and pamphlets.

- Accuse Cosatu of promoting communism by campaigning for a living wage.

- Accuse Cosatu of being part of a conspiracy with banned organisations like the ANC and SACP to overthrow the existing political and economic system by violence.

**This is how workers responded:**

Over 3 000 000 workers decided to vote with their feet on May 6. They stayed away from work in protests against the activities of PW Botha and his police.

They demanded:

- The right to organise.

- The right to hold rallies.

- The right to promote the living wage campaign.

- The right to speak and write what they feel.

- The right to campaign for the release of their detained leaders.

- The lifting of the state of emergency.

- The unbanning of banned organisations.

They said, loud and clear:

We will struggle for a non-racial, united, democratic South Africa — despite what PW Botha has to say.