

trade union offices (i.e. rent, telephone and payment for elected union officials as well as for various social work and activities for the members). The permanent officials should have a wage equal to that of a skilled worker in the industry.

Trade union democracy does not rest exclusively on the three principles given above, but these principles are none the less the most important and characteristic, to a large degree, of the true status of a trade union. Regular and systematic participation of the members in the activities of their organisation, their complete freedom to elect and replace the responsible leaders and functionaries, the absolutely voluntary character of dues payments, the control of expenditure by the membership, such are the conditions to be fulfilled in order that trade union democracy be not an empty word.

The observation of the rules given above will ensure the support of the members for all measures taken by the trade union and will guarantee as a consequence their healthy and vigorous development.

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## **FOSATU on Unity**

### **An editorial from Fosatu Worker News, March 1983 (No 19)**

On the 9th and 10th April FOSATU will send a worker delegation consisting of representatives from all the federation's regions and affiliates to a meeting in Cape Town to once again discuss trade union unity. There is no doubt that this meeting of unions will be crucial for workers in South Africa.

Unity is at the very heart of the workers' struggle as it is only if they can achieve unity of organisation and political direction that they can build a society of equality and justice for all.

Workers understand this well and ever since the rebirth of independent non-racial trade unions in the early 1970's there have been moves to build a wider trade union unity. In 1979 FOSATU was formed and CUSA shortly after that. However, outside of these two federations there remained other independent unions and new unions began to emerge.

It was clear that the task of building a wider unity had to continue. Faced by new labour laws an important step towards unity was taken by the independent union movement at the Langa meeting in Cape Town in August 1981. This was followed by further meetings in April and July the

following year held in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth.

But, so far no wider unity has been achieved and in fact at the Port Elizabeth meeting talks deadlocked when seven unions attempted to set down seven non-negotiable principles which they wanted to apply to any new federation.

However, all has not been in vain. Since the talks there has been a great deal of rank and file discussion on the question of unity in many unions. And in many cases a better understanding has grown between the unions.

In building trade union unity, FOSATU believes there are two basic principles which should guide our actions and between which we have to reach a workable and acceptable position.

Experience has taught us that on the one hand trade union unity will only truly benefit the worker movement if it is based on **UNITY of PURPOSE and POLITICAL DIRECTION**. We need an organisational structure which will allow us to take effective common action at all levels — local, regional and national. We also need a common political direction since all trade union activity is political and wide differences prevent common worker action.

On the other hand, FOSATU knows that to achieve these things we have to deal with the histories and problems of the unions involved. It is impossible to build unity if any one union or group of unions insists on dictating the terms of unity.

Within FOSATU there has been detailed discussion on how to balance these two basic principles in a way which will acceptably advance unity.

However, FOSATU believes there are two crucial policies which we can never sacrifice if we are to remain true to the worker movement — **WORKER CONTROL** and **NON-RACIALISM**. It is our belief that both should be carried out in word and deed.

FOSATU has other important policies but we accept that they will have to be fully debated with other unions committed to unity. It is our strong hope that out of this we will achieve a unity truly beneficial to the worker movement.

FOSATU remains committed to the building of such unity — a task which daily becomes more urgent and cannot be neglected by those committed to the worker struggle. We need unity to face the anti-union attack of employers and the State and it is needed to deal with the new challenges created by increasing international interest in South African workers.

**ALL TALK AND NO ACTION IS A DANGEROUS GAME!**

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