

FORWARD TO THE WORKERS CONGRESS!

The build up to the 7th National Congress of the Union kicked off with different branches holding their conferences to set the pace for regional congresses. The union has about 350 branches that are organised into 16 regions.

The branch conferences were preceded by the drafting of resolutions that were first debated at branch general meetings.

Once the branches finalised their resolutions, they were then forwarded to the regional office for inclusion in the consolidated list of resolutions to be presented to the regional congress.

These processes are signs of the seeds of democracy and mass participation by the membership in the shaping of their organisation.

It is a sign that despite all the negative influences stacked against workers and their organisations, there is a lot of enthusiasm and effort to practice democracy.

Democracy is not an abstract idea. We have to strive to effect democratic practices in the building of our organisation. The struggles that we engage in on a daily basis are the best tutors in democratic principles. Decisions and or resolutions that are taken without the active and conscious participation of the general membership, no matter how well-intentioned they may be, do not stand a chance of gaining mass popularity and support.

Resolutions that were debated and adopted at regional congresses reflect the mineworkers concern over the current socio-political crisis. This translates into an awareness and a consciousness about the level of political activity among the mineworkers.

At a political level, support for a Constituent Assembly and the establishment of an interim government is overwhelming.

One region, for example, argues that 'it is only through a Constituent Assembly that we can achieve a completely non-racial constitution'.

Two regions have called for the stepping down of the apartheid regime and ascertain that the issue of an interim government is non-negotiable.

Another resolution makes a call to the regime 'to legislate itself out of power and parliament so that it (the regime) can participate in the negotiating process not as a referee but as a player'.

Mineworkers still show full commitment to the retention of sanctions to pressure the regime to abolish apartheid.

"We the oppressed and underpaid workers of South Africa call on all countries to continue with sanctions until we tell them to stop. Those who are calling for the lifting of sanctions have no interest of those who suffer under the apartheid regime", says one of the draft resolutions.

Calls for the resignations of Vlok and Malan are made in the light of mass murders committed by vigilantes carrying the so-called



Retrenchments remain a major challenge to mineworkers.



A delegate makes a point at one of the regional congresses.

traditional weapons without fear of arrest. Mineworkers are determined to build ANC and SACP structures at all levels including the workplace.

"Every member of COSATU must be an organiser for the ANC/SACP alliance", states another resolution.

On negotiations with the apartheid regime, mineworkers caution against negotiations being conducted without proper mandates. One resolution confirms the mineworkers support for the negotiation process, but warns that 'such negotiations must serve to achieve the aims of democratic values'.

The resolution continues by stating that 'negotiations must not be conducted above the heads of the masses'.

WORKPLACE PROBLEMS

Resolutions about work-related conditions

cover a wide range of issues.

Retrenchments remain the major challenge facing mineworkers this year.

One resolution states that 'the retrenchments of workers is not only as a result of the low gold price, but mainly due to mismanagement by mine bosses, poor long term planning and their short-sightedness in their obsession with the accumulation of super profits'.

It goes on to call on the Chamber of Mines 'to set aside a portion of its profits so that it can be invested in the sinking of new mines to create employment'.

Other key resolutions relate to the hostel system, production bonuses, deferred payments, repression in Bophuthatswana and the unification of Lesotho with a new non-racial South Africa.