

COSATU VISION FOR 1994

The year of Freedom

Political freedom for workers in 1994 will mean a vote for democracy, a vote for jobs, a vote for peace, a vote for improved living conditions. COSATU has argued that these objectives will only be achieved by a concrete programme, supported by all our people, which sets out clear priorities, targets, time-frames, which the new government will have to reach within the first 5 years. The democratic movement has finalised this programme in the form of the Reconstruction and Development Programme, and beginning to prepare for its implementation. By the time a new government is sworn in, the whole of society must be geared towards implementing this process of reconstruction. Workers are prepared to take their places forefront of this process.

It is on the basis of this programme of reconstruction and development, which advances and defends the interest of all poor and working people, that COSATU is calling on all workers, not just its own members, to vote for the ANC to ensure that the ANC wins the April 27 elections decisively. Only a strong democratic government, together with the support of civil society will be able to



At the COSATU Special Congress -

From l to r: George Nkadimeng - First Vice President of COSATU, Gwede Mantashe - PWV Region co-ordinator, Obed Maila - PWV Regional Chairperson and Marcel Golding - NUM Assistant General Secretary

implement the reconstruction programme.

BUILDING A STRONG MOVEMENT OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Workers need to consolidate the



NUM delegates sing a freedom song at the COSATU Special Congress in Vista

culture of mass democracy which has developed in the trade unions and other anti-apartheid organisations. It would be a disaster if our people allow this culture to die, because they now expected the new state to deliver everything to them. We must not replace apartheid statism, and top-down rule, with a new form of statism.

1994 YEAR OF ECONOMIC BREAKTHROUGH

When the gold price goes up, gold miners must see the benefits. When international and local investment picks up, tangible results must be seen in terms of jobs created, people

trained, and technological development. The possibilities of economic boom must not be

squandered, but must be harnessed towards the process of reconstruction and development of our country, which in turn will open up the possibility of sustainable economic growth and development over the long term.

DEMOCRATISATION AT THE WORKPLACE

Employers have shown in the mining, textiles, and auto industries to name but a few, that left to their own devices, their decisions are based purely on short term profit, not the long term development of the

industry. This has resulted in a number of our industries being run into the ground.

Workers on the other hand have only one economy. They therefore have long term commitment to developing our industries.

STRATEGIC CHALLENGES FACING THE TRADE UNIONS

The immediate strategic challenges facing the trade union movement for 1994 are:

- To defend and extend the system of centralised bargaining to all industries. The current attack by employers on centralised bargaining not only jeopardises the industrial relations framework. It also makes it difficult, if not impossible, to rationally plan restructuring of our industries.
- Our fight for a living wage will continue to be central to COSATU's programme in 1994. 1993 saw workers battle to maintain living standards in the face of recession, declining wages, retrenchment, and growing unemployment. Our fight for a living wage will be given a massive boost by the introduction of a democratic government and the implementation of the reconstruction programme.

The restructuring of the taxation system will also shift the burden

which has been placed on the shoulders of working people and the poor. In the short term, hundreds of millions rands in site tax over-deductions will be refunded to workers, and basic foodstuffs and services will be exempted from VAT. In the medium term, COSATU will be fighting for a more equitable system of progressive taxation.

- Job creation will be a central focus for 1994, and will have two legs. Firstly, the framework agreements for public works programmes and labour based construction which COSATU negotiated in 1993 will begin to be implemented, as well as the youth employment corps. The



COSATU General Secretary, Sam Shilowa makes a point during the COSATU Special Congress at Vista, Soweto

other leg of job creation will be contained in proposals for restructuring of industries, which we believe should result in the creation of significant numbers of sustainable jobs as our economy moves onto a new growth path.

The process of consolidation and mergers into larger unions will strengthen the bargaining position of workers, facilitate co-ordination, and give benefits of scale in resourcing the union. Attention will be paid to improving co-ordination of affiliates around campaigns and solidarity actions, and building COSATU locals throughout the country.

- COSATU will strive to ensure that our platform of worker rights is introduced into the new constitution and appropriate legislation. This year will see the harmonisation of labour legislation, ensuring that all workers throughout South Africa will be covered by a single statute in line with standards set by the ILO.

1994 will be a watershed year for workers. It is a year of numerous opportunities, a year in which the vision which has driven decades of struggle finally has the potential to become a reality. ■