

We want job security, says Motlatsi

James Motlatsi, re-elected President of the NUM at our National Congress, addressed delegates on the state of the mining industry and a number of other issues. Here we publish an edited version of his speech

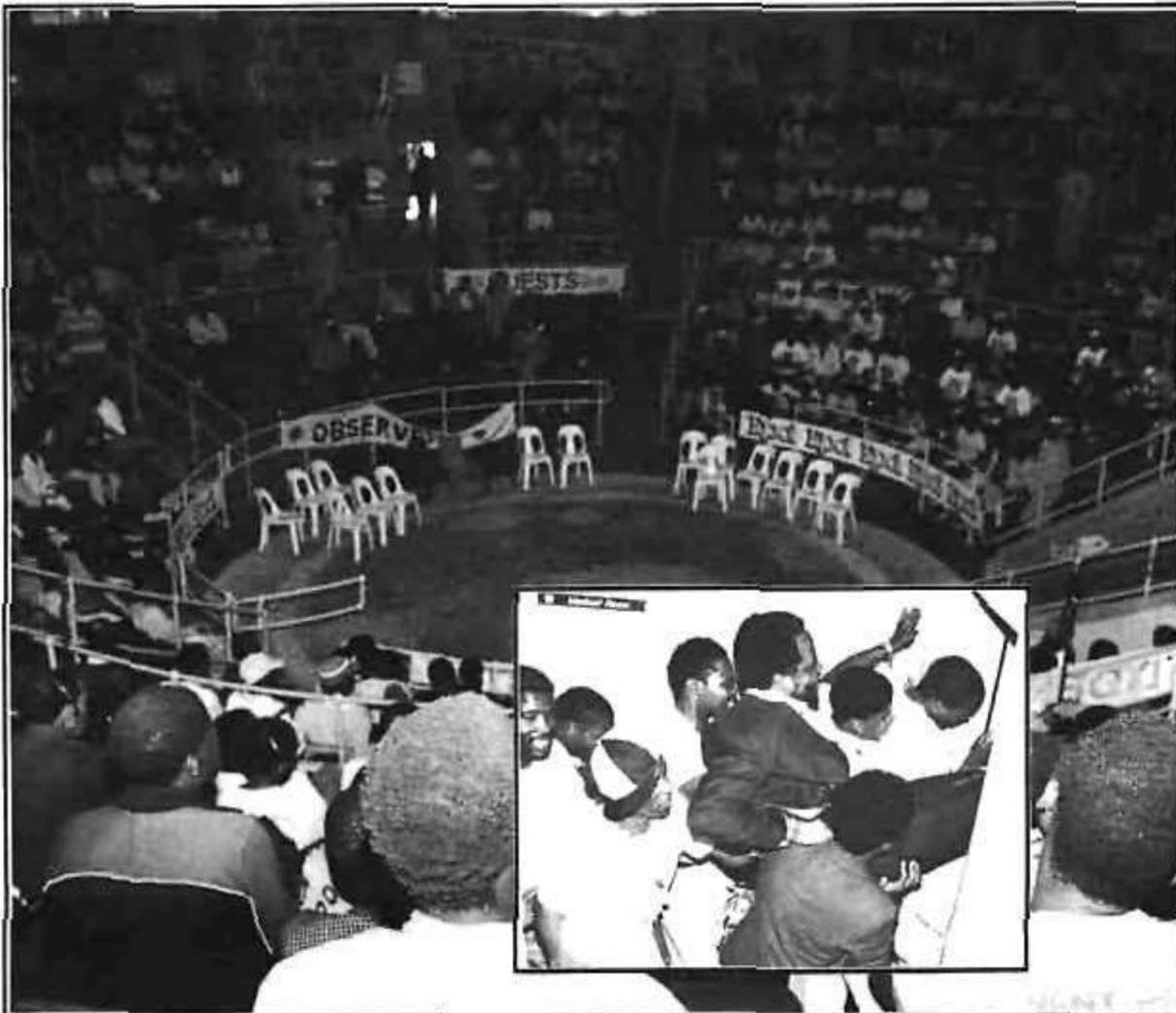
Each time we meet we make many important, sometimes dramatic decisions. We set our aims for the future and decide on the tactics to reach them. We did so in 1989. We made political demands which we knew we would eventually achieve through the power of our people united in the UDF, COSATU, the churches and civic associations.

We had a vision of a democratic South Africa and decided to plan that the mining industry should be organised in the interests of our members and the people at large.

We had just emerged from a bitter strike with the Chamber of Mines and its hostile, repressive aftermath, during which mine managements believed they could crush our union. We looked forward optimistically to a future in which we would regain our lost membership and organise the unorganised.

We want PEACE AND JUSTICE because we live in a society where there is only peace for the rich and justice for the whites. We have a right to justice and to live in peace.

We want NON-RACIALISM because for almost four centuries we have suffered from racism. Because of our skin colour we were made slaves and we have never escaped from that slavery. We want non-racialism



Delegates listening to speakers addressing them at Congress. Inset: James Motlatsi is held aloft after being re-elected President.

right through society so that the poorest, least educated black mineworker is treated with dignity.

We want JOB SECURITY because as mineworkers we know what insecurity means. We have never been secure in our jobs. We can be

dismissed in our ones, twos or in our thousands, put on trains, dispatched back to the reserves and forgotten.

We want WORKERS CONTROL because without it we cannot achieve any of our aims. We cannot escape from oppression, poverty, insecurity and racism unless we control our own destinies.

We do not want others to make decisions for us. We cannot have real democracy so long as a handful of people in a board room of the Chamber of Mines shape our lives by deciding on whether to close a mine or not.

We need to be a part of the decision-making process at all levels.

I am absolutely convinced that it is not so much the price of gold which causes the present crisis. It is gross inefficiency throughout the industry. It is a crisis which will grow until it destroys the industry no matter what the price of gold is, unless the mining houses have the courage and honesty to recognise the nature of the problem, the will to act on it and the wisdom to create an integrated non-racial labour force.

We shall, therefore, intensify our efforts to educate and politicise our members to prepare them for greater involvement in the running of the mining industry.

We shall also intensify our efforts for active involvement by our members in the ANC and SACP. The future, I can assure you, will include the National Union of Mineworkers.

Capitalism has failed in South Africa - Mufamadi

Sydney Mufamadi, the Assistant General Secretary of COSATU, addressed Congress and covered a number of issues. This is an edited version of his speech.

As workers organised into COSATU, we welcomed what we saw as real prospects of bringing about transition to democracy through peaceful means. We also supported the N.E.C. of the ANC when it decided to make contact with the de Klerk regime even before obstacles which stand in the way of negotiations could be removed.

The violence which is currently gripping our country is the most outstanding of these obstacles. Our people are not confused about its character and the intentions of those who organise it.

This demonstrate to us an obvious attempt to weaken our democratic objectives. In terms of what the outcome of this process should be, the de Klerk regime and us, stand on opposing corners. We remain committed to contest for our perspective on the political terrain. The choice is de Klerk's, not ours.

It is capitalism and apartheid which have failed in South Africa. We accept the principle of exploring a negotiated economic growth path. We want to point out that the agenda of such national debate cannot be dominated by capital's concerns and worries.

Despite the limited victories which we scored in our struggle against the LRA, we still face bitter struggles ahead of us. These struggles have got to do with our perspective of what we as workers, would want a new South Africa to look like.

We want to see ALL workers in South Africa covered by the LRA. We are not in the least confused about the regime's jig-saw puzzle which has located some workers in the Bantustans. We demand that these workers should be covered by the LRA and basic trade union rights should extend to them as well.

One of the immediate problems to us are the major structural changes that are currently under way in the gold mining industry. This involves massive retrenchments of workers, a reduction in the output of gold, and the closure of large mines.

This process will have a severe effect on unemployment. Not only will this process affect the mining industry, but also, it will affect the industries that supply the mines.

This restructuring is being undertaken by the major mining houses that administer most of the gold mines. These mining houses have a track record of putting profits before human beings. This calls for the whole of COSATU to devise ways and means of stopping the retrenchments and the job losses.

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