

A year to unite in action in defence of NUM

THE NEC New Year message declares 1989 as the year of united action to defend NUM.

In delivering the New Year message on behalf of the National Executive Committee at the Witwatersrand rally, Comrade President James Mofokeng said 1989 must be the year when all NUM members will rise to the defence of the NUM.

"Since the 1987 miners strike we have entered a dangerous period where the mine bosses hand in hand with the state are bent on taking from us all our hard won victories and turning the clock backwards by 20 years", he said.

This will be done through repressive laws like the Labour Relations Act.

"We are the first union in the mining industry to challenge the combined forces of the Chamber and government in a manner that has shocked them, and so they want to destroy us".

Comrade President Mofokeng said a series of vicious attacks against the union had been launched in the past 18 months.

Vicious attacks

Four comrades had been sentenced to death while 25 others were given harsh prison terms.

The bosses had a planned strategy of trying to persuade workers not to join NUM and refusing recognition union staff demands.

They are unwilling to negotiate with the union, ban union meetings, and force workers to resign from union.

On the mines since the strike there have been mass retrenchments, dismissals of NUM members, increased distribution of anti-union propaganda, and the closure of union offices.

There are assaults of black mineworkers by white miners, intensified racial discrimination, attacks of black mineworkers by mine security and the instigation of faction fights to divide mineworkers.

In the face of all these attacks, it is clear that we have to defend our gains and NUM if we are to win, said Comrade Mofokeng.

"We can't allow our fate to be decided by the Chamber, Anglo, Goldfields, JCL, Anglovaal, De

Bears, Exco and lawyers."

Without defending the union we will not win the fight for a living wage, better and safer working conditions, and good living conditions.

He said mineworkers must win the battle to destroy migrant labour and unite together to win our liberation from oppression and exploitation.

Biggest union

We have achieved strides in our six years of existence:

- We are the biggest union in Africa. There are 350 000 members, with 200 000 paying subscriptions.
- Wages have gone up since the NUM started challenging the Chamber. Our effort in 1989 must be to push our wages up to those of factory workers.
- Safety at work is starting to improve since the NUM became the watchdog of the workers. No other union takes safety so seriously.
- The death benefit scheme is improving for workers.
- The union fights against dismissals.
- Job security and income security for all workers is improving.
- Hours of work have been reduced.
- We have forced the Chamber to agree to a President Fund scheme for all mineworkers.

Our achievements have shown that no matter how powerful the Chamber and the government, no matter how they increase their repression against workers, they will never succeed in crushing us.

We have fought against the Chamber and the government in the past and we won.

NUM members country-wide have paid a high price to safeguard the only organisation that is able to advance their cause.

After the 1987 strike Anglo dismissed 50 000 workers thinking that it would discourage workers from joining the union.

They were proved wrong as workers are still joining the union in their thousands.

Our union is young - we are only six years old. Mistakes have been made by the leadership at national, regional, branch and

'Without defending the union we will not win the fight for a living wage, safer working conditions, and improved living conditions.'

staff level.

NUM members have also made mistakes. But we must learn from the lessons of our mistakes so we don't make them again.

We are a great union and have demonstrated that mineworkers are the best at admitting and correcting mistakes.

Tasks

He said in 1989 union members had to:

- Defend and consolidate the union at all levels: national, regional, branch and staff.
- Free structures where they did not exist and strengthen existing structures, particularly at the branch and staff level.
- Ensure that the recruitment campaign is successful. NUM members should not leave the task of encouraging others to join to organisers, but take it on themselves. The slogan: "1989: Every mineworker a NUM member" should be heard in every mine.
- Take active part in COSAATU locals.
- Take forward the union campaign such as Anti-Repression, Living Wage, Save the Patriotic, and Health and Safety.

We are men and women of struggle and have never been discouraged by any difficulty because we have shown how to live through the most difficult dangerous and oppressive times.

We were able to win when we were few. Now that we number 350 000, there is nothing to stop our victory march to the future.



'Our programme in 1989 must be aimed at defending and advancing our members and our union...'

ABOVE: Carrying the union logo high. LEFT: NUM President Mofokeng and ... at the anti-repression rally in February. BELOW: Vice President Barayi. BELOW LEFT: Thousands of NUM members will defend and advance the union at all costs.



Campaigns to build union and recruit members

The National Executive Committee of NUM proposes the following programme of action and campaigns for NUM in 1989.

Membership recruitment

Our slogan for 1989 should be 'Every mineworker a NUM member'.

Every member will be involved in the task of recruiting new members and getting old members to sign the new stop order forms.

Our membership target for 1989 is 400 000 paid up members. Every shaft must have a recruiting committee immediately.

Without being united in a disciplined organisation such as NUM, we can't win struggles for higher wages and better working conditions. Unity is how such victories will be won.

Anti-Repression campaign

In order to eliminate repression, we have to conduct a campaign against the current state of emergency declared on the mines.

We can no longer allow illegal or racist acts to be committed against us without challenging these.

An anti-repression campaign committee has to be elected or appointed at every branch and region, and co-ordinated at head office, to watch and monitor all repressive measures mounted against the workers and the union.

Workers must be informed of their rights, and cases studied by them so action can be taken.

Health and safety campaign

As mineworkers continue to lose their precious lives through so-called accidents, it becomes vital that the health and safety and compensation campaigns be revived and strengthened.

Workers should form health and safety committees at branch and regional level to report all accidents. Workers should try and go to all accident inquiries.

Shaft and branch committees

Shaft and branch committees that are no longer meeting must be started again.

Form interim committees if management bans meetings to elect such committees.

Shaft and branch committees must meet every week to discuss the situation on the mine or plant.

Branch committee must receive regular reports from every shaft committee and demand meetings with management.

Living wage campaign

Because black mineworkers are among the lowest paid section of the South African working class, the fight

for a living wage is a life and death struggle.

This year we must struggle to win satisfactory wage increases. All workers must be mobilised for us to win a living wage.

Living wage committees at branch, regional and national level should meet to discuss our wage demands and make sure management sticks to the conditions of employment.

Away with migrant labour

Our goal, in line with our 1987 congress resolution, still remains taking control of our lives in hostels.

All branches should elect hostel committees to run hostels democratically. In addition we must form workers defence committees to defend ourselves against management instigated attacks.

Unemployed comrades

In an attempt to begin facing up to the many problems of the unemployed, co-operative projects have been established in Lesotho Transkei and Phalaborwa.

Our active support for these projects is needed. Concretely we have to be associate members.

Discipline

We must always be conscious of our tasks, duties and responsibilities without being policed or supervised by anyone.