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TRADE UNION
LIBRARY



THE GIANT FEDERATION

CONVENOR'S ADDRESS BY J T MNDAWENI

CUSA and AZACTU believe in the commonness of the problems of workers and it is for this reason that only a united front by workers will achieve the best results for the working class.

Proceeding from this principle, CUSA and AZACTU entered the trade union 'unity talks' with a firm commitment to see them succeed.

The magnitude of the programme of these talks was such that they did not permit hasty and ill-considered decisions by participants

It was also necessary that as many worker organisations as was possible should be party to the talks.

CUSA and AZACTU as democratic organisations believed that this was a basic requirement for the proper foundation of true and real unity.

However, certain parties in the talks, in their haste and perhaps for personal reasons, pushed CUSA and AZACTU out of the talks when they realised that decisions could not be rammed down our throats.

- Financial accountability.
- Independent actions of unions within the federation.

The federation's policy:

Black working class leadership.

In 1922 white mineworkers went on strike on the Rand. The strike failed and striking miners turned in anger against their fellow black workers. From that moment on white workers turned against their class brothers, left the working class and became entrenched exploiters of black workers.

Since then we have been on our own to wage our own battle as the real exploited and oppressed working class.

There must be in the country we envisage independence, democracy and respect for the individual, human rights and liberties.

Our country will be part and parcel of a united Africa. We must not be puppets of the West or the East.

There shall be free and independent trade unionism, the people of the country must be mentally liberated.

The trade union must preserve and defend the freedom and independence.

Independent trade unionism:

Our members on the factory floor are

people's struggle is political, economic and social. That our struggle must be directed on all these fronts.

The federation therefore urges its members to participate in the people's political, economic and social struggle for liberation.

However, our point of departure is that the federation is a worker organisation first.

If we accept this then we need to accept that as a worker democracy in each instance we have to consult with our membership first and obtain a proper mandate.

It is with this mandate that we can participate in the broader liberation struggle.

Other community organisations cannot dictate to our democracy when and how we should participate in the struggle. They, as democratic organisations have to respect our rights to a free, independent and democratic decision making process.

Education:

The federation's education must inform and educate its members life-long. It must be based on a broader political philosophy of self-reliance and self-determination.



• Conference delegates sing the national anthem

Our initial discussions were for an alliance. The talks continued and we agreed on common principles.

At that time we agreed on black leadership, worker control, industrial trade unionism, independent trade unionism, non-affiliation to political parties, white involvement at grassroots level, continued community involvement and financial accountability.

From these common principles we realised that there is a strong potential for forming a new federation.

The principles were accepted by the federation. Since November 1985 we have never looked back and today our dream of forming a giant federation has been fulfilled.

This new federation is the worker's federation. Worker's aspirations and their political aspirations will begin to emerge from the 350 000 membership. Through this new federation the working class will march towards total emancipation.

The federation's principles:

- Black working class leadership.
- Worker control.
- Industrial trade unionism.
- Independent trade unionism.
- Non-affiliation to political parties.
- Acceptance of white involvement at grassroots level.
- Continued community involvement.

exposed to and subscribe to one or more of various political ideologies.

Our membership consists of different schools of thought. For these reasons we will never force our members into adopting any particular ideology.

We are a democratic organisation. It is our members who will shape the direction of our federation.

This they will achieve independently of any party politics.

Worker control:

We understand worker control to mean a process by which members on the factory floor become involved in the running of and decision making in their union/federation.

Only through exercising their true mental independence and self-determination can our members develop into the true leaders the federation desires them to be, and this is our guiding principle.

Commitment to the workers' struggle:

I call upon all office-bearers, fulltime or otherwise, to bear in mind that workers are the vanguard of the struggle, and the worker cause cannot be compromised.

Officials have a duty to advance and defend the interest of the workers who elected/appointed them.

Political affiliation:

Non affiliation:

The federation accepts that the

We must have this important and crucial unit in our fold.

We must immediately work towards this goal. We the workers must strengthen our federation and the entire trade union movement by education which is directed, planned and controlled by the workers.

Our education must encourage and attract new affiliation to boost our membership. With correct education we will bring about workers unity.

It is also a milestone to self-reliance and finally our members will identify with us and defend the federation's principles.

Sanctions:

It is time that we say clearly to the foreign investors and their governments that human rights and trade union freedoms and political rights cannot be bought at the expense of their own domestic economies.

We say to them quite clearly that no matter what the cost we are willing to pay the penalty.

It should be we, who are the sufferers, who should decide what pain we are willing to bear.

This conference therefore reaffirms its commitment not only to the broader liberation struggle but also to this particular aspect of the struggle.

LET THE WORKERS' VOICES BE HEARD, SAYS JOE THLOLOE

IN his keynote address, Joe Thloloe urged a liberatory morality on the new federation, a two-pronged approach to workers' day-to-day activities.

They should regard their day-to-day battles for better wages and working conditions as merely peripheral.

They should have their eyes on the ultimate goal: a society free of oppression and exploitation, and that should be the guiding principle for all people in trade unions.

"Any and everything they do should be determined by what it will contribute towards reaching the ultimate goal.

"One of our goals is democracy. Everytime we take decisions in our unions, we should be clear that it is the workers' voice that is heard — not that of the secretary or of the executive committee. Leaders are merely servants, not bosses."

He said worker unity was a key ingredient in the arsenal of the oppressed and exploited on the long, painful and costly road to liberation.

Worker unity raised important questions: Why is a second giant federation being created? Was that not divisive? Is worker unity really possible? Where are the unions of the oppressed and exploited headed?

He outlined his views in the search for answers.

Resistance

"Since whites first set foot in our land, there has been resistance to oppression, resistance from the indigenous Africans and from other blacks brought here by force by whites. The resistance has always had two tendencies.

"The one believes that there are some whites who will help in the struggle for liberation and that these whites have to be allowed membership of organisations of the oppressed and the exploited.

"The other has always been against whites being members of organisations of the oppressed.

"It was therefore inevitable that these arguments should filter through to the trade union movement.

"The groups that have white members have argued that if you want to create a non-racial society in future, you need to start practising non-racialism now.

"The second group has argued that such anticipation of a future South Africa would be artificial because all the structures in our society are designed to maintain white privilege and power.

"They argue that the whites who do come into the organisations of the oppressed are beneficiaries of the apar-

theid system; they have better education, they are more skilled.

"It is therefore obvious that when they come into our organisations, they will control them."

Once that happened, "we will have transferred apartheid relations, from out there, into our organisations".

He explained that apartheid was not only a vertical line that separated toilets for blacks from toilets for whites. It was rather the horizontal line that placed whites right at the top and the oppressed and exploited black masses below them.

It was a line that separated those with political and economic power from those who did not, it separated the rulers from the ruled, the dispossessed from the dispossessors.

Mr Thloloe said the first trade union for blacks in this country was organised in 1917 by whites.

Kadalie's ICU was born in 1919 with the help of a white socialist, AF Batty. Whites had since played a major role in the formation and running of black trade unions.

"In fact, some of the unions represented here today owe their existence to people like Eric Tycke and others who started the Urban Training Project. This is a debt we should not forget.

"But people who want black control of unions argue that the tutelage has to end at some point, that blacks should start doing things for themselves and in the process they will be getting the skills that will be necessary in a liberated Azania.

"Where we still need help, we will go to the whites with the skills on these specifics.

"What we are doing now is to take the organisations, the concepts the whites have introduced to us and measure them against our experience."

Speaking on the wider role of the trade unions, he said: "Already we have found that the concept of trade unions being outside the political arena unacceptable because of the structure of our society.

"We have found that the idea of a trade union being the third leg of a three-legged pot unacceptable (the other two legs are management and the government) simply because there can never be a reconciliation between the workers on the one side, and the present government and the capitalists who exploit our labour, on the other.

"We are discovering our own truths, even if we started from what was given to us by our white patrons.

"Frans Fanon speaks about the cathartic effect of violence on the revolutionary. Some of us believe that there is also a cleansing that takes place when the



• JOE THLOLOE (above), founder-member of the now-banned Union of Black Journalists, the Writers' Association of SA and the Media Workers' Association of SA (MWASA), was the keynote speaker at the unity conference

oppressed themselves create their own organisations and shape them into instruments for a revolutionary change in society, and prepare themselves for the new society.

"The interesting thing about our revolution is that the two tendencies are now starting to talk more or less the same language."

The "non-racial" organisations were getting to be as radical as what were once considered ultra radical blacks-only organisations. Virtually every organisation in the liberation movement now agreed that "the goal is to create a non-racial society out of this accursed one".

New society

They agreed that there should be some redistribution of wealth in the new society, that it would be pointless to shout that apartheid was dead when some people were still enjoying the economic fruits from it, while the rest continued to starve.

"Slowly the gap is narrowing. These are good signs that in the not so distant future, real principled unity among the oppressed will be achieved.

"All we have to do for now is accept that there is one liberation movement in the country, but that there are various tendencies within this movement.

"Once we get to accept that, then we will not have reason to concentrate our efforts on attacking each other while we let the enemy get away. Once we accept that, then a time will come when we talk one voice.

"As our language get more pointed, more focussed, the liberal whites, the major cause of division among us, will fall by the wayside as the real revolutionaries, those who want to see change starting from the roots, continue with their work.

"Time and commitment to clear goals will weld the workers together, not artificial marriage of convenience," Mr Thloloe said.

STRUCTURE OF THE FEDERATION

CONGRESS

Who attends: 5 delegates for first 5 000 members in good standing and 1 delegate for every 1000 members. 2/3 of delegates must be worker representative.

Decides on: Policy issues.

Meets: Once every 2 years.



NATIONAL COUNCIL

Who attends: President, Vice-President, Regional Chairpersons, 2 union representatives per union for the first 10 000 per union members, thereafter 1 delegate for every 5 000 members. General Secretary and Assistants attend. Regional chairperson can speak but have no vote.

Decide on: Policy issues and joint action between congress.

Meets: Not less than 3 times per year.



CENTRAL COMMITTEE

Who attends: President, Vice-President, Regional Chairpersons, General Secretary and Assistants. 1 representative from each affiliate. Regional Chairperson can speak but have no vote.

Decides on: The daily business of the Federation.

Meets: Not less than 10 times per year.



REGIONAL CONGRESS

Who attends: 5 representatives for the first 1 000 members per union and 1 additional representative for every 500 members thereafter.

Duties: Implements aims and objectives of the Federation and decisions of NC and CC and attends to any special regional issues.

Meets: At least once every 4 months.

REGION

R.E.C.

Who attends: 2 delegates of each union in the region where 3 or more locals exist.

Decides on: Matters submitted by affiliates in the region.

Meets: Once a month.

LOCAL

LOCAL

LOCAL

NOTE: 3 or more affiliates in an area make a local.

AFFILIATES

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REGION

R.E.C.

Who attends: 2 delegates of each union in the region where 3 or more locals exist.

Decides on: Matters submitted by affiliates in the region.

Meets: Once a month.

LOCAL

LOCAL

LOCAL

AFFILIATES

AFFILIATES

AFFILIATES

Conference '86: Faces of the Workers



• CUSA/AZACTU officials Pandelani Nefolovhodwe (left), Phiroshaw Camay and James Mndaweni greet delegates



• Laundry workers' secretary-general Mrs Molefe and Mahlomola Skhosana address delegates

• A scene from the historic meeting



OFFICIALS OF THE FEDERATION



• The officials of the new federation (from left): Mahlomola Skhosana (Second Assistant General Secretary, Pandelani Nefolovhodwe (First Assistant General Secretary), James Mndaweni (President), Stewart Moletsane (Vice-President), and Phiroshaw Camay (General Secretary)

MAHLOMOLA SKHOSANA

Second Assistant
General Secretary

- Born and educated at Daveyton.
- Studied Maboya High School.
- Began working on the East Rand.
- In 1981 was appointed researcher at Institute of Race Relations till 1983.
- In 1983 he started work at CUSA.
- Appointed Assistant General Secretary of CUSA in 1986.

PANDELANI NEFOLO- VHODWE

1st Assistant
General Secretary

- Studied at Mphaphuli High
- Started work as an assistant welfare worker on the mines
- Left to teach at his old high school.
- In 1974, registered at Turfloop University. Later, arrested for planning Viva Frelimo Rally.
- Jailed for 6 years on Robben Island after SASO/BPC trial.
- Released in December 1982. Employed as an organiser for Black Mining Construction Allied Workers Union in Northern Tvl area.
- Elected General Secretary 1984-1986.

JAMES MNDAWENI

President

- Born in Nquthu, Natal.
- Educated at Hlabahlangemi (primary), St Chades in Natal (high school) until 1974.
- Started working for Unilever as a laboratory assistant in 1975.
- Joined FBWU. Elected shop
- Elected to NEC.
- Elected President of CUSA in 1984.

STEWART MOLETSANE

Vice-President

- Born in Johannesburg.
- Studied at Madibane High School.
- Started working as an issuing clerk at the old Johannesburg Hospital.
- A founder member of the Insurance and Assurance Workers Union in 1980.
- Elected shop steward in 1985 at an insurance company where he is employed as a clerk.
- He is the Church Secretary of New Reformed Pentacostal Church.

PHIROSHAW CAMAY

General Secretary

- Born and educated in Johannesburg.
- Started work in a Johannesburg warehouse. Later worked at the Johannesburg City Council library department.
- Joined JMW Union and was elected to Executive Committee.
- Joined Sached Trust in 1976.
- Worked at the Institute of Industrial Relations 1978 to 1980.
- General Secretary of CUSA 1980 to 1986.



PRINCIPLES OF THE FEDERATION

- Worker control
 - Black working class leadership
 - Non-affiliation to political organisations
 - Financial accountability within unions
 - Independent action of unions within the federation
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POLICY OF THE FEDERATION

NATIONAL LIBERATION STRUGGLE

- Commit ourselves to the national liberation struggle and to fight oppression and exploitation

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

- Will relate to national and international organisations on the basis of principled working class ideology without affiliating to them.

EDUCATION

- Commit ourselves to continuous research in order to develop an alternative system of education

SEXISM

- Commit ourselves to the total eradication of all forms of discrimination in the struggle

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

- Commit ourselves to a full sanctions program as long as the racist capitalist minority regime exists
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