

COSATU divided over tactics

— labour expert

Radicals were ahead of the rank and file membership of the Congress of SA Trade Unions (COSATU) and insufficient attention was being paid to seeking mandates from members for executive action, according to labour expert, Mrs Kate Jowell.

Mrs Jowell, a senior lecturer in industrial relations at Cape Town's Graduate School of Business, recently addressed the Johannesburg branch of the school's alumni association. Her address was reported at length by Sheryl Raine in The Star newspaper.

The topic of Mrs Jowell's address was: "Trade unions and politics after COSATU."

She said the more pragmatic

leadership within COSATU realised the confrontation politics being espoused by some COSATU officials posed a real danger for the union movement unless those responsible knew how and when to beat a strategic retreat.

"Insufficient attention is also being paid to seeking mandates from the membership for executive action," she said.

The Star commented that "similar criticism" had been levelled at COSATU from UWUSA. COSATU had repudiated such criticism stating that it was a federation which followed democratic

principles.

Mrs Jowell said unions could be broadly categorised as reformist or radical.

Reformist unions worked within the economic system to reform it, using legal channels and focussed industrial action to achieve their ends.

Such unions gave selected support to political actions outside the workplace.

Radical unions wanted the destruction of capitalism.

Unions could be used as a mobilising force towards an overall radical end, although their independence and role in collective bargaining were likely to be the first casualties of any new non-capitalist regime.

KwaZulu accepts May Day as a public holiday

KwaZulu is to recognise May Day as a public holiday.

This was announced in the KwaZulu Legislative Assembly by the Chief Minister, Chief M G Buthelezi.

He said a Bill would soon be introduced to declare May 1 a KwaZulu holiday to honour the country's workers.

Chief Buthelezi said KwaZulu could not wait for the South African Government to decide on this issue and the KwaZulu Government wished to identify with the workers who were "the kingpin" of the economy.

KwaZulu had always fought for trade unions and the region's legislation which governed labour disputes were the same as in the rest of South Africa.

KwaZulu and Inkatha had fought for black participation in the trade union movement and had stated clearly their strong opposition to the continued exploitation of black South Africans all over South Africa — including the KwaZulu/Natal region.

"Now that our labour legislation has the same clauses as legislation in the

rest of South Africa, the trade union movement must ensure that any such exploitation comes to an end," said Chief Buthelezi.

"We have interceded for workers wherever there have been problems in the labour field. The 1973 strike in Natal/KwaZulu was so successful because the KwaZulu Government fully supported the strike and we were involved in it.

"We are not against workers involving themselves in the liberation struggle as the black struggle is one. What we do take strong exception to is Inkatha members in trade unions being carried willy-nilly on Mr Elijah Barayi's back in COSATU for handing over the SACTU and automatically to the External Mission of the ANC. This is undemocratic and our members have come to us to complain about it ...

"This is political poaching ... Inkatha members and supporters had no choice but to pick up the gauntlet which was thrown at them ..."