

COSATU Congress

Cosatu held its third National Congress between the 12th and 15th July. There were 1875 delegates representing 921 497 workers from 16 unions. The major issues discussed at the Congress were the L.R.A. campaign, peace in Natal, the negotiated settlement, and an anti-apartheid coalition.



In this article we focus on the last two issues which generated the most discussion. Even before the issue of negotiations was discussed Cde Barayi began his presidential address the previous day by giving De Klerk "six months to negotiate with the ANC". This remark was given prominence in the capitalist media. A delegate from Numsa questioned Cde Barayi about his statement and asked that it be retracted as the issue of negotiations was not yet discussed. Cde Barayi responded by saying that he does not feel obliged to retract as it was a personal remark made in his personal capacity.

Ccawusa which could not put forward any resolutions unless there was consensus from all sides in the commercial and catering sector (this decision was made by the resolutions committee of Cosatu) nonetheless took part in the debate. A delegate from the "Mtwawing" (the Mtwawing had 80 delegates while the Papi Kganare or "Charterist" wing had 47 delegates) received wide support from rank - file

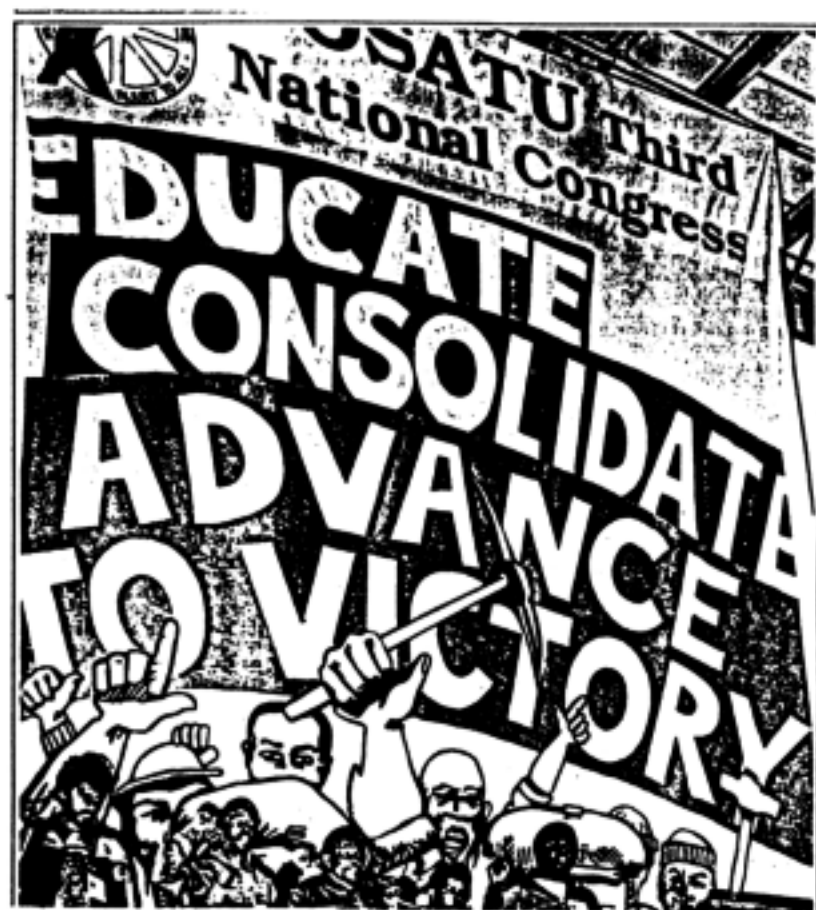
delegates when he put forward his position. The following is a summary of what he said "

"The interest of the capitalists and the interest of the working-class are irreconcilable. The move towards a negotiated settlement is a strategy to ensure the survival of the capitalist system in South Africa. Socialism cannot be achieved through any negotiated settlement with capitalism and the regime. A negotiated settlement will result in a major defeat for the struggle for Socialism led by the working-class"

The CCAWUSA delegate called on the congress to oppose any secret or open negotiations with capitalists and the regime. "Rather" he said "what is needed is to formulate and practically implement a programme for Socialism.",

A number of unions notably CAWU, NUM, NEHAWU and FAWU responded by saying that they had no problems with negotiations as long as certain conditions were laid down. The following day a speech was read out by Cde Mohamed Valli Moosa ex-executive member of the UDF. This speech emphasised the need for a negotiated settlement but stressed that the anti-apartheid forces must be strengthened across class lines in order for them to be in a bargaining position. He also called on the regime to create the right climate for negotiations.

During the debate on resolutions a Numsa resolution was passed with amendments from CWIU. The resolution reads:



NUMSA Resolution on political settlement.

1. To reject any attempt to impose reformist solutions which do not address our fundamental social and economic demands and needs in a non-racial unitary and democratic South Africa.

2. That there can be no genuine negotiations unless a climate conducive to such negotiations is unilaterally created by the S.A. regime by fulfilling the following conditions;

2.1 Unconditional unbanning of all banned organisations.

2.2 Unconditional release of all detainees and political prisoners.

2.3 Unconditional return of all exiles.

2.4 Confinement of SAP/SADF to barracks.

2.5 Lifting of the state of emergency and the repeal of security legislation.

2.6 The end of all political trails and executions.

3. To call upon frontline states, OAU and all international forums to increase pressure on the regime to meet the above requirements so that a climate conducive to negotiation prevails.

4. To ensure in the event of negotiations taking place that the masses of our people are involved in shaping the process so that no negotiations can take place

without the democratic participation of the people.

5. That only a sovereign body mandated by the people as a whole can have the authority to develop a new constitution and decide on the method of implementation.



6. To avoid any settlement being imposed on the masses the MDM should initiate discussion aimed at developing a common position.

7. To reiterate our demand for a non-racial democratic South Africa based on one person one vote.



ANTI- APARTHEID COALITION

This debate was kicked off by a Numsa delegate who passionately put forward a position that an anti-apartheid coalition is a necessity but that such a coalition should not include the likes of Gavin Relly from

Anglo American, Zac de Beer from the Democratic Party and Van Zyl Slabbert from IDASA.

He went to on to call for a united front of working class forces across ideological lines. Comrades from FAWU, CAWU and the unemployed committee objected by stating that we are involved in a two stage struggle and at this point we are in a national democratic phase where we need to build a broad front against apartheid, regardless of class. CWIU disagreed and questioned those who talked of inviting a capitalist like Gavin Relly. The curious response that was given by none other than Cde Cyril Ramaphosa from NUM was that in Relly's capacity as a representative from big business he should not be invited but perhaps if he belongs to a church structure and if he is sent as a delegate then he should be welcomed.

A delegate from the MDM (mostly ex- UDF comrades who were granted speaking rights) was called to give the MDM's position. This position corresponded with the view given by FAWU, NUM, CAWU and the unemployed workers union. A Ccawusa delegate felt that capitalists and liberal are the working classes enemies. He stressed that they have shown no weakness in using every weapon handed to them by the state in bashing unions. He said that the first loyalty of capitalists is to the maintenance of a society where the accumulation of capital is guaranteed, where profitability is high.



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That is why the delegate said " attempts to use the bosses against the government's labour bill proved such a failure ". The Ccawusa member recalled Jay Naidoo's report which called for creating divisions amongst the ruling class but took issue with the view that these divisions can be created through alliances. It will be by largely increasing the struggle against apartheid-capitalism that real divisions amongst the ruling classes will appear. The delegate rounded off by calling for alliances with all those who are anti-capitalists and who are not part of

government structures. He felt that the convening of such coalition should be none-secretarian, along the lines of the workers summit.

NUM resolution on the Anti-Apartheid Conference.

Therefore resolves:

1. To reconvene the AAC by not later than October this year;
2. That such a Conference draw in all forces that are opposed to apartheid.
3. To develop a unifying perspective around the demands for:
 - 3.1 one person one vote in a democratic and unitary South Africa free from racism;
 - 3.2 the unbanning of the ANC and all other banned organisations.

3.3 an end to the State of Emergency and all other forms of repression.

3.4 freedom of press, political association and other political expression.

4. While COSATU and the UDF are to play a leading role in such a coalition we must draw in and involve from the beginning all major forces.

5. To this extent, we should establish a convening committee representing the major social forces who shall immediately start making plans for the process leading to the Anti-Apartheid Conference and after.

6. That all organisations in such a AAC shall retain their own autonomy and decision making structures but be united by the perspective arising out of the Conference.

SCHOOLS - ACTION AGAINST THE ELECTIONS

A week before the September 6th General elections, a meeting was held where representatives from schools in the Johannesburg area decided on a one week protest action against the elections.

On Monday 4th high school students staged a placard demonstration along Maraisburg road in Bosmont, calling for a no vote. This action was repeated along Main Road, Eldorado Park.

Two teachers and a number of students were arrested. In both Bosmont and Eldorado Park, police used tear-smoke to disperse the demonstrators. All the students were released on the same day, and the teachers were released on Friday the 8th. In Lenasia demonstrations went ahead

with minimal police intervention.

This action by thousands of students is a clear indication that they are once again consolidating and organising themselves after State repression took its toll on student's structures over the past few years. It is only consistent follow-up by activists in the schools that will ensure that the basic awareness achieved through the anti-election actions is transformed into solid gains. This show of unity by students is an important

foundation on which to build stronger SRC and solid Parent-Teachers-Student associations. Students must also continue to link struggles nationally, as is the case with the Uppington Support Committee (UPSCO). Once again, it is vital to stress that students must support, in a disciplined way, working class struggles and campaigns. This can be done in a number of ways. Immediately, what comes to mind, is strengthening support committees which assist striking workers.