



THE YOUNG LIONS

Cosatu News spoke to the South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) about the youth struggle. Some points:

Role of youth

We as the youth see it as our duty and our right to change this society. Sayco is part of the whole liberation movement, but it has a specific target - the young people of SA.

The youth are the future. So they are bound to adopt the views of the class that represents the future - the most progressive class, the working class.

The working class struggle in SA is unfolding within the national democratic struggle. The two are dialectically linked. So the role of South African youth today is to strengthen the present national and class forces against apartheid colonialism, and to help bring about the necessary unity among them. Their role is to advance the struggle of the oppressed and exploited at all levels.

But in doing this they mustn't usurp the leadership position of the working class. We have to forge a new non-racial and democratic culture to

forge a new person for a new SA as a whole. This means one task of the youth is to learn. For example - how to ensure the implementation of the Freedom Charter in SA, how to live for the future, how to defend the future. They must go out to the human archives. They must be guided by struggles nationally and internationally.

Youth militancy

The youth are at a particular point where they are receptive to ideas. They have nothing to lose and a future to gain. They go out consciously to seek progressive ideas. This makes them a more conscious sector of the community.

From the seventies onwards the student youth in particular spearheaded the struggle of the youth. It was from their ranks that the idea for a national youth organisation first developed.

The youth are militant and often more conscious. So they are often at the forefront initiating campaigns and struggles. But this is not to say the youth is the vanguard. The workers are the vanguard because of history. They are the producers, they hold the key to any future that can develop out

of the present.

The youth and the workers are not in competition as far as the future goes. We have a common interest in the future. And we must build it together. And we see it as one of our tasks to strengthen the working class.

Workers' future

Workers are the most progressive class but this does not necessarily make them organise on their own. For example, workers are denied the right to learn, they have little time in developing independent ideas, they are constantly locked in work. Students and other youth are confronted by independent ideas which can only be carried out by the participation of the workers, but which the workers aren't necessarily aware of.

So the youth and students encourage and organise workers in civics and trade unions etc. Progressive ideas are often introduced to the workers by those who have been more active in the process of learning. This is a historic reality. But those who are at the vanguard are those who are in production, who build the future in their hands - the working class. So the two supplement each other.

On People's power

We can only say people have power when they actually govern in one way or another. People's power is the exercise of power by our people. The establishment of organs of people's power, eg. street committees, is not yet a realization of our power - it is the beginning.

We must fight for people's power to create the future, but also to defend it. People can seize political, economic and social power. But they have to control and defend it with the structures they themselves have formed. The present method of organisation affects the future SA. The new SA we are building is not in the womb of the old one, but is built parallel to it.

Youth and socialism

There are many youth talking about socialism. Many would support socialism. Though this is not an official position of the youth organisations at this point. Youth organisations agree on the Freedom Charter.

The route to socialism in SA is through certain stages. These stages are not separate

ones taken place within the other. The vehicle now is the national democratic struggle which will have the implementation of the Freedom Charter as its goal.

Our understanding is not one of getting a black face to sit in parliament. It is not only having the right to vote but it is actually related to the solution of the main problems of economic exploitation and national oppression. The masses of the people in SA, all of them, must consciously take part in solving these problems.

As the process unfolds, entire masses will be more conscious, getting rid of the old ideas, attitudes and apartheid values like racism, tribalism, individualism and acquiring new progressive values like collective work, non-racism, non-sexism. So part of transforming society is transforming people, creating a new person in SA.

Alliances

Organisations are formed around groups of people with particular demands and needs.

SAYCO LAUNCHED



COSATU's aim of building an organised alliance of workers and youth took a giant step forward with the launch of the militant South African Youth Congress (SAYCO) last month.

Over 200 delegates, representing about a 1,000 locally-based youth congresses with 700,000 members throughout the country, met secretly in Cape Town to launch SAYCO.

Unity talks

The process of forming SAYCO was similar to the lengthy "unity talks" to form

COSATU. In 1982 a COSAS National Congress resolved to build youth organisations nationally. Between 1984 and 1986 three national consultative conferences of organised youth were held. Each time more and more locally-based youth congresses came together to discuss building national youth organisation.

In May 1986 a National Youth Co-ordinating Committee was formed with two delegates from each region in South Africa. This committee co-ordinated bringing regions together to finalise discussions on SAYCO's constitution and resolutions before the launch.

10 regions

SAYCO has 10 regions country-wide - Northern Transvaal, Southern Transvaal, Natal, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Southern Cape, Eastern Transvaal, OFS, Northern Transvaal, Border. Some regions are still functioning on the basis of interim regional structures while others have already been launched. Only the Border region was not represented at the Congress.

SAYCO is the first national

youth organisation with a programme and principles similar to COSATU to be launched since the ANC Youth League in the 1940's.

The revolutionary spirit of the launch and the militant programme of action adopted by SAYCO make it likely that SAYCO will play the same role in relation to the broad democratic movement today as the Youth League did to the ANC in the 1940's - to radicalise it by turning it more to mass organisation and mass mobilisation.

Resolutions

Regions came with resolutions and a programme of action (see this page) ranging from international solidarity, to national liberation and alliances with workers and other progressive organisations. SAYCO says the working class is the leading force in the liberation struggle and an alliance with COSATU and between youth and workers is a top priority.

SAYCO aims, amongst other things, to :

- promote and deepen amongst the youth the outlook of the most progressive class, the working class
- mobilise and organise

unemployed youth

- encourage working youth to join progressive trade unions which are part and parcel of the struggle for total political and economic liberation

- unite all youth - working, unemployed and student - regardless of race, colour, sex or religion.

Slogan

The Congress adopted SAYCO's slogan - "Freedom or death - Victory is certain"; SAYCO's colours - black, green, gold and red; and SAYCO's logo - a hammer, spear and book being carried above a crowd of youth marching across a South African map under the SAYCO banner.

After elections the conference became an open session. Hundreds of youth who were waiting outside marched into the hall chanting slogans. The newly-elected SAYCO President and a comrade from COSATU addressed the meeting. The organised unity of workers and youth was stressed. The whole delegation joined in singing freedom songs and dancing the toyi-toyi - SAYCO was launched. Long live SAYCO.



SAYCO President Cde Peter Makoba (left) and Education Secretary

Freedom or death - Victory is certain !

RISE UP

This determines their methods. There are strategies and tactics for each organisation to exploit.

As an organisation, after defining your principles and methods, you look to organisations with similar principles to form alliances with - this would be a principled alliance. We have stated in our analysis that workers represent the future, so the alliance with workers is a principled one, in current and future struggles.

Then there are organisations which don't necessarily have the same principles. For example, the youth structure supports the Freedom Charter but the church structure doesn't. But there are burning issues for all, irrespective of ideological outlook. So organisations decide whether to form links from time to time in a tactical alliance. And in the linkage they identify certain things to promote within a certain discipline.

Then there are parallel alliances, where there are no formal links, but where the one encourages the other to take a particular action.

Worker-youth alliance

The workers and youth realise the enemy doesn't differentiate between Cosatu and the UDF. They give the same

treatment to both. So we need to unite with other organisations in the community.

The youth have a historical link with the workers - many joint campaigns, stayaways, consumer boycotts etc. Many have been implemented by the youth and observed by the workers. In different local areas the youth have come together with workers in workshops, looking at how to work together.

Our national interim committee is working out guidelines for the working relationship between Sayco and Cosatu.

Young Workers

We are calling all the youth to give all the support they have to the workers, and we are assuring the workers of youth support, now and in future struggles. We want to approach Cosatu unions to encourage the working youth to join and strengthen local youth congresses and Sayco.

The youth can ask for their members to be allowed to attend Cosatu shop stewards locals. An exchange of ideas can take place in those forums. This is the line that should be followed.

Workers and youth have been organising the unemployed together and setting up projects. The formation of these structures becomes even more urgent with increasing retrenchments and lack of jobs.

Education

We encourage the youth congresses to be rooted among the masses. This is the pool from which we get people and train them. As organisation expands they must be training people at all levels.

The principle of collective leadership and criticism and self criticism must be applied. These liberate the youth from the idea that they won't become leaders, or that leaders can't make mistakes, that they can't be replaced etc. People must be armed with theory and politics.

But this must happen against the background of them being prepared to be able to carry on the struggle even under the worst conditions. And we are expecting worse than the emergency before we get freedom. Political education should also take into account the present political climate and the needs of the youth in the youth organisations.

What are they asking, what

are the political questions they are raising. Without this history will unfold, and people won't be able to intervene appropriately in the situation they are addressing themselves to.

Discipline

There are those who try to use struggle to their own advantage - the opportunistic elements.

And then there are those who are genuinely concerned about the future. Their outstanding characteristic is whatever they do is not against the people, but in the best interests of the people and their organisations. You constantly find them with fellow comrades, discussing politics or building street committees, developing working relationships to organisations.

The opportunistic elements have characteristics opposed to the generally concerned youth, trying to steal people's money, robbing them etc.

The solution to this can only come about through strong organisation in all communities. Then these people will be easily isolated and identified - the community will reject them, no matter what T-shirt they wear.

Programme of action

SAYCO's programme of action, adopted as a guide in struggles youth are fighting, is :

- organisation of the unemployed. This campaign will be in conjunction with the COSATU initiative to organise unemployed workers - Jobs for all at a living wage.

- Political Education. This arises from the need to evolve a political ideology that reflects the social realities of our country and is subject to the needs of the masses.

- May Day, Living wage campaign, June 16th, Sharpeville day. These campaigns will be spearheaded in alliance with other national mass democratic organisations - COSATU, UDF and the NECC.

- Popularisation of SAYCO. A 3 month campaign to popularise SAYCO through pamphlets, stickers and press conferences.

- Anti-vigilante campaign. The vigilantes must be socially isolated wherever they are.

- Cultural campaign. The state has taken an offensive on the cultural front through structures like the Joint Management Committees . There is a need for youth to actively

- participate in all forms of culture to counter the state offensive.

- Forming defence and propoganda committees

- Organising women to participate actively in SAYCO

- Campaigning against the bantustans

- Campaigning against illiteracy

As part of the UDF SAYCO will campaign for :

- the unbanning of the ANC

- against the state of emergency and detentions

- for peoples education

- against the white elections