

BAKHALA NGEFREEDOM CHARTER

COSATU adopts the Freedom Charter

The singing rang through the Flower Hall, after COSATU adopted the Freedom Charter. "Bakhala ngeFreedom Chart..." The COSATU Congress said: "The Freedom Charter is the only guiding document in our struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation."

COSATU ADOPTS FREEDOM CHARTER

The Freedom Charter enjoys mass support and has become a rallying point among all the people in our country.

As the political and economic crisis deepens and the struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation intensifies the demands of the Freedom Charter have taken on a new meaning to workers.

Today we can truly say that the Freedom Charter has become the beacon in our struggle. The relevance of the demands of the Freedom Charter is reflected in the democratic manner in which it was drawn up.

In 1953 when Z.K. Matthews called on the people to give their vision of the future

South Africa, thousands of volunteers, dressed up in their khaki uniforms, went door to door, factory to factory, farm to farm to collect the demands from the people. These demands were compiled into a document which was presented to the CONGRESS OF THE PEOPLE. Three thousand delegates debated these demands and finally the Freedom Charter was adopted at Kliptown on 26 June 1955 by representatives of the majority of all South Africans.

On 16 July 1987, thirty two years later, COSATU adopted the Freedom Charter as a guiding document which reflects the aspirations and views of the majority of oppressed and exploited.

This came after the NUM adopted the Freedom Charter at its Fifth National Congress in February 1987. Since the NUM's resolution to adopt the Freedom Charter, CAWU, FAWU, CCAWUSA and NUMSA adopted the Freedom Charter. All other COSATU affiliates have had vigorous debates about the Freedom Charter.

The COSATU congress also resolved that we as workers must develop a coherent understanding of the demands of the Freedom Charter. This is now our important task.

We need to ask ourselves



10 000 members of our union attended the rally held after the National Congress in February this year.

what do we as workers mean when we say: "The people shall govern"? We are not referring to an election once every five years whereafter parliamentarians have a mandate to do as they please until the next election. Workers know how they run their trade unions. When they elect shaft stewards those shaft stewards cannot do as they please. They must constantly go back to the workers who elected them for mandates. Likewise when we elect our representatives to any body of government they must be accountable to the people who elected them. The people must be able to recall their representatives and give them fresh mandates. They must be able

to remove these representatives from their offices if they don't represent the interest of the people who elected them. We know the Freedom Charter says: that "all bodies of minority rule... shall be replaced by democratic organs of self-government" or, if put in the language of the eighties, "democratic organs of people's power".

These are the issues that we must debate to develop a coherent understanding of the Freedom Charter.

DEMOCRACY AND FREEDOM

Our resolution encourages the

fullest discussion of socialism and democracy in our structures and amongst all progressive organisations. It says that workers in our country are not only striving for better conditions in the mines, factories, shops and farms but also for a democratic society controlled by the workers and in which there is an equal distribution amongst workers of the country's wealth.

What is the nature of this society we are fighting for? How will we achieve this society?

The Freedom Charter lays a basis for the building of a non-exploitative society. Some intellectuals have been at

pains to point out that this is not so. This position however shows a lack of understanding of our struggle.

We are involved in a very bitter struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation. For miners in South Africa this is a crude reality. We live in the most miserable hostels, plucked from our homes and not even part of communities nearby the mines. We are forced to work in the worst conditions underground and for meagre wages. Black miners are victims of the worst racist practices.

Thus for us, as miners, the struggle against profit hungry bosses must take place alongside the struggle against apartheid. For us there is no conflict between the two. Capitalism and apartheid are two inseparable evils.

FORWARD TO A UNITED FRONT

COSATU alone cannot bring about a change in government. To build the society where workers will control the state we need to form alliances with progressive organisations. Because a few individuals can call themselves a progressive organisation it is necessary to

define clearly what progressive organisations are.

We believe that a progressive organisation is a mass based organisation with a constituency and a proven record in our struggle.

We do not need to fear the powerful organisations, because we will show them in struggle that the vision of a worker's future is a future for all who want a society that will be free from fear, hunger and poverty.

Our resolution also calls on us to build structures on which the united front will rest. This is an important task that we as workers must embark on. We must not attempt to draw these up on a drawing board, but through our day to day experiences. We must bring together our comrades in the Youth, Civic, Women, Unemployed and Political organisations in an alliance.

Finally we must remember that history is not made in resolution writing but in the actions that we take. Our task is great. History calls us as organised workers to provide leadership at this crucial moment in our townships, mines and factories.



These women came to Kliptown to bring their demands to be included in the Freedom Charter



The demands of the Freedom Charter were read from this platform

This is what we want!

THE Chamber of Mines knows what we want. Our demands are clear:

Wages — 30%

We are among the lowest-paid workers in the country, yet we do the hardest and most dangerous work.

Although we are only supposed to work 96 hours, we all know that we work much longer.

On gold mines, the minimum wage is R238 a month. On coal mines, it is R225 per month. On this pittance, the Chamber of Mines expects us to support our families.

The Chamber of Mines is only prepared to give us between 15 percent and 23,5 percent increases on gold and coal mines.

We say: Down with poverty and slave wages!

Leave Days - 30

Leave conditions differ in the mining industry. Some mining houses give 14 days, others 21 or 28 days.

The mining industry employs migrant workers who go home yearly after their contracts are finished. We demand the right to have more leave days to spend with our families.

June 16 as a paid holiday

The youth of our



country have been in the forefront of the struggle against gutter education. Many have died since June 16, which is an important day in the history of our country's struggle for liberation.

Danger pay

Every year over 400 of our comrades die in the mining industry. Thousands are injured, many permanently. Our workplace is very dangerous, and we

demand a danger allowance.

But, even though hundreds of our comrades die every year, the Chamber of Mines still considers safety to be an issue on which they make all the decisions.

Death benefit — to be increased to five years' earnings

At present, our families will only receive two years' earnings if we die — which is far too little.

The union's demands are reasonable. We have spent many meetings trying to win them, but the Chamber of Mines is big-headed, and says it has given enough improvements.

Let us make Sunday 9 August 1987 the day South Africa's mineworkers make their mark!

Let us make it a day of disciplined and united action!

Let us make it a day of unity!