

Regional congresses resolve to fight mine repression

Witbank

OVER one thousand Witbank mineworkers attended the NUM regional congress on Saturday, 11 February.

Opening the congress, outgoing chairman Andreas Nzima said the region was prepared to fight repression. "We will defend our rights, especially those taken away by the Labour Relations Act", he said.

Nzima said the region would be taking up NUM campaigns such as the Living Wage and Anti-Repression in 1989.

COSATU president Elijah Barayi was loudly applauded by mineworkers when he criticised low wages and the compound system.

In the regional report for the past two years, secretary C. Moni said repression in the mines had sharpened the awareness of workers and that the recruitment campaign was moving forward.

"We have seen how some of our comrades died and others maimed through management negligence in chasing high production for higher profits".

This led to the establishment of health and safety committees and some branches have already received management proposals for health and safety agreements. Comrade Moni said since the 1987 strike there had been a lot of disinformation propaganda to confuse members. It was necessary to establish committees to educate members on what NUM was all about, he said.

The region consists of 32 branches, twenty eight branches are recognised and two have an access agreement.

Workers had taken various actions in connection with ill-treatment and exploitation in the region. These included instructions to do jobs for which workers had not been trained, transfers which included wage cuts and unpaid compulsory overtime.

Workers had also taken some action in connection with unsatisfactory kitchen procedures.

He said during last year workers had celebrated May Day, that a number of branches had stayed away on June 6, 7 and 8 to protest against the Labour Relations Bill and that there had been a commemoration on December 16 to remember heroes.

Referring to the COSATU locals in the region, he said NUM had a role in building these. A chief task in 1989, he said, was to develop leadership. "Shaft stewards councils had to see that there was uniformity in the strategies formulated to fight the bosses".

Political education was very important, he said, and committees for all the NUM campaigns

campaigns against the LRA had to begin.

Leadership advancement: - The bosses have stepped up their attacks. Political education had to be made a priority at all levels to develop leadership and promote dedication. A campaign against repression had to be launched.

Training centre for unemployed NUM members: - The resolution

Constitutional dispensation: - NUM should start discussing the proposed constitutional guidelines of the ANC.

Anti-Apartheid coalition: - COSATU and UDF must form the core of an anti-apartheid coalition that can promote unity between different groups.



Witbank congress: speakers said racial discrimination was alive on the mines

had to be established in the region.

Witbank congress resolutions:

Women workers: - Workers resolved that NUM should make stronger efforts to promote participation of women in all structures.

Stop order deductions: Workers noted that some mines deliberately delayed sending union dues to head office and that union members were being put under pressure to cancel their membership.

The resolution called on NUM to protest to the Chamber, for tighter controls to be exercised at branch and regional level and that mines be forced to submit dues not later than 7 days.

Out of court settlements: - The resolution said that the union was being weakened by out of court settlements. Strategies to discourage the mining bosses from resorting had to be found, and

noted that mass dismissals and retrenchments were being used by bosses to counter the militancy of workers. The resolution called for the establishment of a training centre in trades such as carpentry and welding, and that bosses should be forced to fund such training.

Establishment of sports desk: - This resolution called for a sports desk within NUM to be established to promote non-racial progressive sport.

Release of political prisoners: - This resolution called for the launching of campaigns for the release of all political prisoners and the establishment of reception committees.

Wage increases from 1989: - This resolution called for the NUM to formulate strategies to break the Chamber's wage policies, for minimum wages, for the revival of the living wage committees and for action around the wage issue.

Lydenberg

Lydenberg congress resolutions

Living wage: - Wages earned are well below the inflation rate and it is difficult for workers to understand wage rises in percentages terms.

The region resolved that the minimum wage should be R600 a month and that wages should be negotiated in rands.

Casual workers: - Employers were hiring groups of casual powers which affected the workers bargaining power. The union should negotiate permanent positions for such people.

Defend our union: - The union is under attack by both the government and the employers.

The region resolved that structures in the union should be revived, that anti-repression

committees be formed and that the union should counter the onslaught.

Newcastle

Newcastle region held their congress on 5 March. In his regional report, secretary Abion Mavuso said the union had a presence on 18 mines, four of which were recognised and 3 collieries to which the union had access.

He complimented the dedication of comrades at Kilbarchan Opencast who, despite management's refusal to grant access, recruited secretly until sufficient people had joined for the union to achieve recognition.

He said there was an enormous task lying ahead "to organise the unorganised". The region was large, with little satellite mines which did not fall under the Chamber of Mines. He said branch and union structures had to be rebuilt.

Newcastle resolutions

Some of the resolutions put forward at the congress were:

Zulu speakers: - The union was operating in a controversial area where a Bantustan union (UWUSA) was also operating. Mass political education should be carried out so people understand the difference between tribal politics and the mass democratic movement.

Dismissals: - Members should be encouraged to support the needy who have been dismissed or retrenched.

Vryheid office: - That a sub-office be established at Vryheid as distances are great.

Detainees: - Workers should be mobilised around the issue of the hunger striker and detainees.

Education and culture: - That educational programmes be established for the children of today who are the workers of tomorrow.

Over the past two months the regions of NUM have held their congresses. Regions have assessed the past months and looked to the future. Hundreds and hundreds of mineworkers have participated, and voted on resolutions - some of which will be passed at National Congress.

Secunda

The Secunda regional congress was held on the 11 and 12 March.

Secunda resolutions

Black officials: Delegates said black officials were being forced to participate in the white union, and discouraged from participating in the struggle of the workers. They said black officials should be allowed freedom of association and choice.

Rates per hour: The congress said it was difficult to calculate the travelling hours of underground workers per shift. The congress resolved workers should be paid per hour and not per shift.

Induna system: Delegates said the induna system and tribal representatives were not acceptable to workers. They resolved that workers must be allowed to elect and form democratic structures from the people around them.

Living wage: This resolution noted that workers were getting starvation wages while the bosses made large profits. The congress resolved that wages should be increased.

Orange Free State

THE ORANGE Free State regional conference in Thabong on Saturday 11 February resolved to build the union and resist repression.

In his speech, regional chairman Morebuli Selepe said the biannual congress took place at a time of severe repression. But repression would not stop our way to freedom, he said.

The mine bosses were relentlessly pursuing the policy of destroying NUM as shown by denying NUM access to workers. The state was fully behind the bosses. What was most important to the victory of workers was unity, he said.

Cultural activities such as sport had to be under the control of workers so that the bosses could not use these divisive tactics, he said.

Twelve branches out of 13 had attended the congress, one branch having transport problems.

In his regional report, secretary Kaneng Matlala covered legal cases, education, health and safety and events in the region.

He said the handling of branch subscriptions up to the region

had not been satisfactory. Branch structures were also weak, and meetings needed to be held more regularly.

Orange Free State resolutions

Capital punishment: - The death penalty in South Africa is being applied indiscriminately and trade union members are on death row. The region called for a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the death penalty.

Freedom of association and closed shop agreements: - The region condemned job reservation and closed shop agreements, and resolved to strive to make the bosses adhere to the principle of freedom of association.

Danger pay: - Workers work in unsafe and dangerous conditions. Workers should be paid danger pay in line with international standards.

centages and resolved that wage negotiations be conducted in rand terms, and that for 1989 wage negotiations all union members be offered a R190 increase.

Discrimination: - Job reservation was still alive and kicking. All forms of discrimination should be abolished in the mining industry and that workers be paid equal pay for equal work.

Health and safety: - Health and safety was a priority for the union: mine accidents were a daily occurrence. All mines should recognise health and safety stewards and that all mines should have health and safety agreements with the union.

Freedom Charter: - The Freedom Charter should remain our guideline in the struggle for political and economic liberation, and that members and others should be exposed to the concepts of non-racialism.

Every mineworker a NUM member: - Workers must organise other workers and not rely on full

Klerksdorp

The Klerksdorp regional conference was held on the 11 March.

The regional secretary said the main task of the congress was to re-assess and examine the position of the union in order to determine the way forward.

He said for the past year the region had concentrated on rebuilding union structures.

He suggested shaft committees should form the basis of the recruiting campaign.

He said 1988 had shown the region needed to do more spade work in preparing membership for national campaigns such as June 16 and the three day stayaway.

NUM, he said, as the biggest union in the region had a responsibility to lead the community.

Klerksdorp resolutions

Paraplegics: Delegates said paraplegics were not able to go



Worker delegate makes a point at the Witbank regional congress

Mechanisation: - The region noted that mechanisation increases unemployment and resolved that a commission be established to establish whether it is necessary to mechanise and how to protect jobs.

Constitutional amendments: - Union officials were constantly

being dismissed unfairly. The region resolved that branch, regional and national leadership should be paid by management, and kept their portfolios in the event of dismissal.

Migrant labour and house ownership scheme system: - The region noted that the migrant labour and compound system still existed that employers were using the home ownership scheme to divide workers.

It resolved that houses demanded by workers be built and that they should be for all workers irrespective of their country of origin or employee status.

Income of Security and Maternity Leave payments: - The region noted that the current payments are not adequate and that the period of payment should be increased.

Witwatersrand

Witwatersrand resolutions

Among the resolutions passed at the Wits regional congress were:

Anti-apartheid conference: - The region condemned the banning of the anti-apartheid conference and called to COSATU to try and ensure one takes place this year.

Locals: - The region noted increased repression and that the REC constitutionally had only to be convened once in three months. It resolved that local structures be established.

Wage negotiations: - The region noted that union members had a problem with understanding per-

time officials to do this. Every NUM member should be an organiser, and those who are unorganised must be organised.

Retrenchment: - Thousands of workers were losing their jobs. The region resolved there should be no unilateral retrenchments without negotiations, that the profits made by workers should

be used to create more job opportunities and the mining houses affected by retrenchments should negotiate with the union retrenchment packages and attempt to move the workers to other positions.

Recruitment drive: - All workers in the mining industry should be organised under the banner of NUM. The union should have recruiting facilities at agencies such as Teba.

Workers take control: - Any democratic worker organisation should have as its policy political agitation of the worker control principle.

home or attend union meetings as there was no provision for their transport.

The congress resolved that workers should put pressure onto management to provide transport so that paraplegics could go home. Delegates agreed all workers should arrange transport for union meetings.

Dismissals: The congress noted that many workers had been dismissed during 1986 and 1987.

They resolved NUM should set up a technical school where workers could learn skilled jobs.

Anti-repression campaign: Klerksdorp noted that the mine bosses had intensified their attack on the union. Racial abuse had increased.

They resolved the union should speed up the building of anti-repression structures and mobilise management repression. Media and education should be produced to highlight repression and educate members.