

### Democracy and alliances: *a political programme for transformation*

#### 1. Establishing democracy

#### 2. Our political vision

#### 3. Recommendations

*This chapter assesses the current political situation. It recommends that COSATU actively commit itself to consolidating and extending democracy. It recommends measures to renew the Alliance and build a working bias in the ANC. It also recommends building a broad popular alliance against poverty, and consciously striving for moral leadership in society.*

## 1. Establishing democracy

Throughout its existence COSATU has defined its struggle as a struggle for national liberation, for democracy and for socialism. These objectives were all considered to be connected to one another. We have now formally achieved the institutional goals of our struggle for political liberation and democracy. These victories are enshrined in the new constitution. Our country is now governed by the first democratically elected parliament and executive in its history. Democratic provincial governments and local authorities have also been elected.

Our new democracy has gone beyond the setting up of elected institutions of government. Important new forums which institutionalise the participation of sections of civil society in political decision-making have been established. NEDLAC is primary among these, but there are a range of others, including regional and local development forums. Other important institutions such as the Human Rights Commission and the Gender Commission have been set up to ensure implementation of the constitution.

This is not to say that full democracy has been secured in our country. There are a number of critical problems which may limit or undermine democracy, especially the existence of powerful forces attempting to preserve apartheid privilege. In reality democracy still has to be consolidated and extended to all aspects of society.

### **1.1 Will our new democratic institutions succeed?**

There are numerous obstacles facing the democratisation process. The right-wing old guard in various centres of power continues to block progress. The legacy of apartheid in the public service is a serious

obstacle to any effective transformation. Crime is a threat to stability. We need to overcome these problems.

The trade union movement is a bastion of democracy. Most workers have learnt about democracy in trade unions. Trade unions can challenge and put pressure on employers and government to be democratic. In a young democracy such as ours, a powerful force for community and solidarity such as COSATU together with the democratic movement has a particular responsibility to make sure that democracy succeeds.

The government and the state need to be held accountable, transparent and generally 'kept on their toes'. COSATU must be the first to challenge any corruption, dishonesty and nepotism of the government or its officials. Equal access for all to institutions such as the courts, the media, especially in the form of a strong and properly-funded public broadcaster, and a public service that is efficient, effective and representative are central to making democracy work. We must fight for these.

Institutionalised participation in decision-making is also important for democracy, deepening the legitimacy of social institutions and increasing the influence of the working class. COSATU fought for NEDLAC with this in mind. Labour needs to develop a coherent, strategic approach to NEDLAC which helps to strengthen NEDLAC, increases its legitimacy, manages the relationship between NEDLAC and parliament, and involves the public in NEDLAC affairs in an organised manner. While, as a tripartite institution, NEDLAC is the site of contradictions, it is an institution which enriches parliamentary democracy and which labour should seek to advance and defend.

Democracy can be extended through a number of other measures, both in the political and economic spheres. This includes building a stakeholder society, increasing the size and role of socially or community-owned capital and community-controlled resources, and developing the role of the public sector.

## **1.2 A contested transition**

The transition to a fully democratic, united, non-racial, and non-sexist society is still contested by a range of different forces. The September Commission scenarios illustrate this point. The *COSATU Discussion Paper on the Alliance* characterises the current situation as being similar to "dual power" where the new democratic government "while fully legitimate, popular and apparently in full control, neither has its hands decisively on all the tillers of state power - including the security forces, bureaucracy, parastatals, reserve bank, judiciary etc - nor has it been able to strategically direct the economy of the country based on our own agenda... the government seems to have been confined to limited areas of governance...". The *Discussion Paper* goes on to identify a "popular bloc, with its representatives in government, parliament and other institutions, pitted against a minority bloc, attempting to use its access to economic and other power to abort the National Democratic Revolution..."



Mass struggles for democracy: the Alliance has a long history but needs to be revitalised around a common programme -  
*Photo: William Matlala*

The main forces for transformation are black urban and rural working-class (workers, the unemployed, the poor), the black middle-class (small business, professionals), and other groups of people who experience forms of oppression and exploitation, such as women, the youth, those employed in the informal sector, and those who have allied themselves with the progressive movement such as progressive intellectuals and students. By and large, these forces identify with the ANC. There are other significant sections of society that could be won over to this bloc.

The main opposing force to this popular bloc is the traditional white bourgeoisie, the mainly white middle-classes, elements of the security forces and civil service, and those elements who led and/or collaborated with the old regime. The strategy of this minority group under apartheid was to attempt to rule by force of arms, and by dividing the popular bloc, co-opting individuals and rewarding them for their services.

Elements in this opposing group, particularly those in business, are now aggressively seeking to make themselves appear non-racial through promoting some black entrepreneurs and managers into the commanding heights of the economy. At the same time they seek to pressurise the ANC to adopt conservative policies that will limit transformation. Other elements aim to further weaken the ANC through various pseudo-political parties and movements. This grouping has not abandoned the structures set up to carry out dirty tricks against the democratic movement. It hopes to use these strategies to effectively frustrate transformation.

Having said this, the Alliance cannot be held hostage by exaggerated fears of 'counter-revolutionary destabilisation'. Failure by the democratic forces to assert leadership will lead to precisely the type of destabilisation of our society, which conservative forces in the Alliance attempt to use to induce passivity amongst the mainstream of the democratic movement.

In the democratic movement, two extreme views are expressed about the approach to the transition. One argues that the ANC is under attack from hostile forces and the movement should not rock the boat. The second argues that the ANC will inevitably be held hostage by the forces of global capital so it should not be expected to behave differently. Both these views capture only part of the truth. It is true that there are forces seeking the failure of the ANC-led government, and that instability and ungovernability are dangers. It is also true that international and domestic economic realities place certain constraints on what the ANC can do.

However, it is crucial for the working class to contest the nature and leadership of the transition. If it abandons leadership to other forces out of fear of rocking the boat, transformation will be stalled. The real threat to our society - poverty and inequality, and the crime and violence that this generates - will be left untouched.

Nor is it true that globalisation leaves the ANC and the government no space to adopt progressive economic and social policies. Constructing a developmental state, and driving transformation, are feasible strategies and necessary ones if we want to overcome poverty and build a stable, democratic society. If we fail, it will not be because of globalisation, but because we were unable to curb the domestic class forces that are more interested in acquiring their own wealth than in overcoming poverty.

Within this conjuncture the working class stands to lose the most if the country is diverted from the transformation programme. The decline of progressive organisations points towards the disintegration of our communities and the potential for increased conflict in society. The diminishing strength of the Mass Democratic Movement (MDM), the shift away from grass-roots activity in the Alliance, the widening gap between the ANC and those of its leadership in government, the declining influence of the Alliance in relation to policy-making, all suggest a move away from the politics of transformation, which the working class needs to be aware of and to counter. The culture of self-enrichment which is emerging during the transition is also a worrying feature that needs to be countered effectively.

### ***1.3 The ANC's role in the transition***

The ANC is the largest political organisation in the country. It has a tradition and track record unequalled in the struggle against apartheid. Because the ANC is a multi-class organisation it can come under different influences. Its main constituency in terms of numbers is the working class, who make up most of its key activists and leaders. There has always been a black middle class, however small. The transition is increasing the size and influence of this class. At the same time the ANC is coming under pressure from international and domestic capital. Further, policy processes are being driven by technocrats and bureaucrats in government departments, rather than politically by the ANC. This leads to inconsistency in ANC and government policies and positions, where they are sometimes very progressive, such as in relation to health-care reform, but take macroeconomic policy positions which mainly benefit established business, whether by default or design.

Taking into account the class forces within the ANC to have a working class bias in the ANC, therefore, requires a strong, coherent, working class presence in leadership at all levels of the organisation.

#### **1.4 The role of the SACP**

As the largest and strongest party of the working class, the SACP has an important role to play in asserting a socialist vision and programme and in developing working-class leadership and consciousness both in the Alliance and more generally in society. There is poor co-operation and there are few joint activities between COSATU and the SACP despite the fact that the two organisations share a socialist vision and the working class as a constituency. Since its unbanning, the SACP has often failed to provide clear leadership on issues facing the working class. This is due to a number of factors, some internal and others external to the Party. There is a perception that the Party has tended to lose its independent identity within its relationship with the ANC. Nor does it appear to have a clear programme for this period of transition to National Democracy.

#### **1.5 The Tri-partite Alliance**

The Alliance is a complex relationship between the ANC, COSATU and the SACP which exists in various forms at various levels. It is a relationship shaped by deep historical links and common struggles, but is not without its tensions and contradictions. The role of the ANC as government has added to the natural class and organisational tensions within the ANC and between the ANC, COSATU and the SACP. Managing these tensions is made more difficult when policies are adopted without proper or adequate consultation, such as in the case of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR). During negotiations, such as those in the public service or in relation to labour legislation, it is not always clear which side of the table the Alliance partners are sitting on. The politics of opposition, resistance and struggle made it easier to create a common platform between Alliance partners than current circumstances do. This raises the question of how the Alliance manages the natural differences that will emerge when the ANC has to exercise its role as government and how to ensure this is done broadly within a framework which is acceptable to all parties.

These tensions are also made difficult by the failure of the Alliance to meet regularly, if at all, by the unilateral way of deciding policy in some instances, and by the lack of joint campaigns and activities.

This complex situation also creates confusion among COSATU's members. Some feel very uncomfortable when COSATU publicly criticises the ANC and wonder whether they are in the correct trade union movement. Others feel we are not critical enough. Some in the ANC even see COSATU as a threat to democracy and equate our protest action to those of the right wing, or counter revolutionary elements.

The complexity of the Alliance makes it difficult to evaluate as a whole. COSATU may have a powerful impact in one place, and be ignored in another. However, it is quite clear that in general the Alliance is not working.

- In most cases Alliance structures do not meet, and when they do meet it is formalistic. There is little or no joint formulation of policy or strategy.
- The Alliance partners are not operating as partners: they do not, in general, confront common problems together and work out joint solutions. This is the case at national level (Cabinet, the executives), at sectoral level (health, education or transport ministries, for example) and provincial and local levels.

- The gradual erosion of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), and the sudden adoption of GEAR as a "non-negotiable" economic framework have seriously undermined the Alliance.

COSATU must contest the character, leadership and direction of the transition. The Alliance is the engine for fundamental transformation. While we need to recognise that the forces of neo-liberalism locally and internationally are powerful, this does not mean there is no space to develop and implement progressive social and economic policies. We need as a country to assert our sovereignty in this regard, or our democracy will be reduced to a hollow shell.

Depending on how the situation develops, there are three potential scenarios for the Alliance:

- *'Skorokoro continues'* - the alliance remains semi-functional and lurches between agreement and crisis
- *'Into the Desert'* - the Alliance ceases to function, or self-disintegrates
- *'Pap and Vleis'* - the Alliance is regorganised around a common programme for transformation, and tight co-ordination

Clearly it is in the interest of COSATU and society to move in the direction of a society such as that depicted in the September Commission scenario **Pap, vleis and gravy**. In the Alliance discussion document COSATU proposed a Reconstruction Accord as a mechanism for revitalising the Alliance. This is one possibility. The Alliance partners need to engage in a fundamental review, as a collective, of the relationship between the organisations, their roles, responsibilities and interests. There should be a broad programme developed for the political arena, the economy, social policy and the transformation of the state and public sector.

### ***1.6 Mass formations of civil society***

The MDM was the organised expression of the popular bloc as led by the ANC during the 1980s. These mass organisations have declined, with some collapsing and others no longer as politically active as they were. One of the reasons for this has been the shift of their leadership into other political positions and government. However, the change in political conditions, and lack of direction from the Alliance is the main reason for the decline in the MDM. The role of mass formations is no longer as clear as it was and leadership is not being given around this issue.

The 'Tripartite Alliance plus one' (the South African National Civics Organisation (SANCO) exists largely on paper. The Alliance needs to meet with the civics, as well as other mass formations, which formed the core of the MDM, to discuss how to move forward under new conditions.

There are a number of formations other than labour which are organised and capable of mobilising. In addition to a wide range of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) now joined in the NGO Coalition, the civics are still functioning in some areas, students still have organisations, the churches still have massive constituencies, and cultural and collective economic organisations, such as stokvels and burial societies, flourish. The challenge to COSATU and the Alliance is to play a key role in mobilising these forces, rebuilding organisations and helping to give direction to the MDM.

## **1.7 Broad Alliances**

COSATU must build broad alliances around issues to win social support for the perspectives and struggles of working people and the poor. New forms of organising will have to be found, to address the changing conditions. COSATU should seek to build alliances around two central themes:

- overcoming poverty and inequality; and
- strengthening democracy.

A campaign against poverty and inequality could be organised by five key sectors of civil society: the trade union movement, the NGO movement, the community constituency at NEDLAC, the churches and religious organisations and progressive intellectuals. Each of these sectors has strengths and weaknesses but such a campaign could be an important catalyst for transformation. This would not be a campaign against government, but against the ravages of apartheid and minority privilege, and for a transformation programme to redress these imbalances. Government would be supported where it is working to deal with poverty and inequality and pressurised to do so where it is failing.

A campaign to strengthen democracy would involve struggling to strengthen existing democratic institutions, to access information and resources for organisations, networking amongst interest groups and, where necessary, utilising avenues opened up by the constitution to challenge those in power to extend basic democratic and socio-economic rights.

## **2. Our political vision**

Our political vision focuses on:

- the consolidation and strengthening of democracy
- the extension and deepening of democracy into all spheres of social and economic life
- the strengthening of working class and popular organisation and perspectives at all levels of our society
- building a society based on a culture of community and solidarity

In short it is to lay the basis for socialism under current conditions.

### **2.1 Consolidating and extending democracy**

Democracy is of absolute importance to the working class. Through democracy, the masses of workers, the poor, and all citizens can participate in political life, make their views and needs known, hold their elected leaders accountable, and shape our new society.

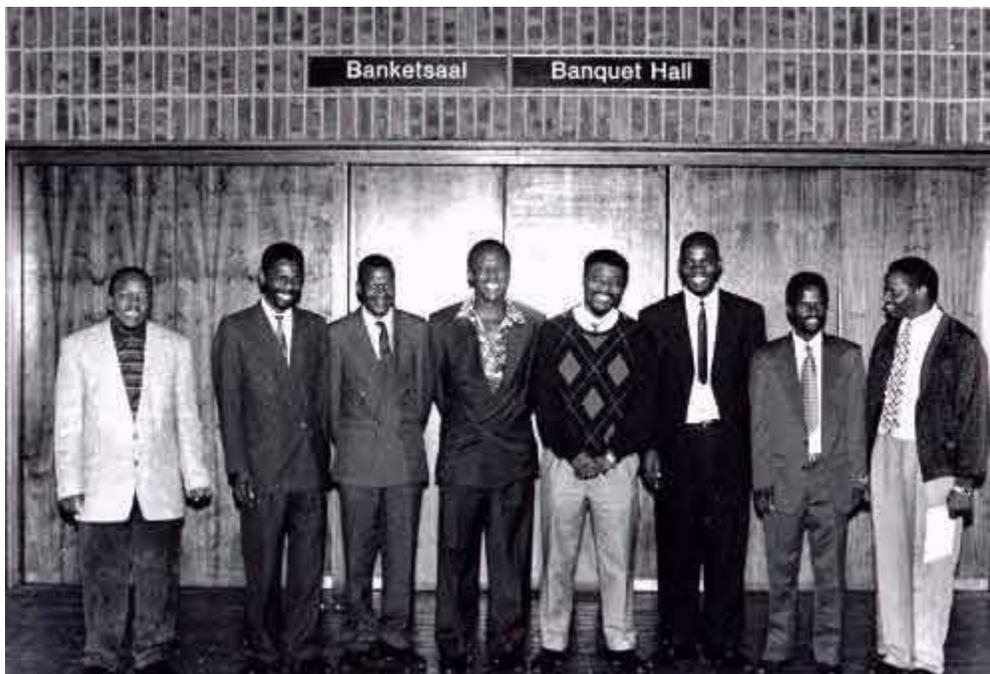
Our political vision of democracy is integrally linked to our economic vision. COSATU needs to reclaim *redistribution* as the central economic thrust for overcoming the legacy of apartheid and driving development in South Africa. By redistribution we refer to the redistribution of wealth, income, services, skills, opportunities and powers. This is what the RDP refers to as the *reconstruction* of South Africa. Democracy is a way of redistributing power, so that the people can ensure their economic and social needs are met.

The most immediate challenge is making sure that our new democratic institutions are alive and working. COSATU needs to ensure that the rights entrenched in the constitution are delivered to the citizens of South Africa.

COSATU should, through a wide range of activities, strive for the accountability and transparency of parliament, provincial legislatures and town councils. Members of parliament (MPs), members of provincial legislatures (MPLs) and councillors are elected as representatives to serve the people and should conduct themselves accordingly. COSATU should be the first to challenge arrogance, corruption, dishonesty and nepotism, whether by elected representatives or officials.

Through engaging consistently with the parliamentary portfolio committees, COSATU has helped both to deepen public debate on significant issues, and to begin shaping policy and legislation. This has also strengthened the role of the committees in consolidating a vibrant parliamentary democracy. We need to intensify this engagement, both at national and provincial levels.

But our vision of democracy does not stop at making the political institutions of democracy work. It is as important to *extend* the democracy, citizenship rights and commitment to justice that we have won in the political sphere, into the economic and social spheres. Economic democracy strengthens political democracy.



Trade unionists elected as ANC town councillors in Witbank: COSATU's commitment to building democracy - *Photo: William Matlala*

Democratic rights in the workplace entail the rights to: organise; obtain information; be heard and consulted; contribute to the formulation of policy at sectoral and national level; and access the resources that make these rights meaningful.

Citizenship rights should be extended to mean that every citizen has the right to earn a livelihood, to live in a decent dwelling and surroundings, and to have access to good education and decent health care.

Economic and social justice point to the legitimacy and necessity for redistribution of wealth and economic activities from those who benefited from apartheid to those who were oppressed by it.

These ideas are supported by the new constitution. The Bill of Rights in the constitution:

- affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom
- recognises the need for intervention by the state to redress historical imbalances
- states that everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected
- gives everyone the right of access to adequate housing, and obliges the state to take reasonable measures to achieve the progressive realisation of this right
- gives everyone the right of access to health care services, sufficient food and water and social security, and obliges the state to take reasonable measures to achieve the progressive realisation of this right
- gives all children the right (amongst other things) to basic nutrition, water, basic health care services and social services
- gives everyone the right to a basic education and further education which the state is obliged to take reasonable measures to make progressively available and accessible
- gives everyone the right to any information held by the state, and any information held by another person that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights
- gives everyone the right to administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair.

Taken together, these clauses promote the vision that citizens have rights, not only in the political sphere, but in the social and economic spheres as well.

The challenge for us is to translate the promise of the constitution into a reality in the lives of our people.

## ***2.2 Working-class leadership***

Fundamental transformation depends on the extent to which the working class exercises its leadership. Building working-class leadership means:

- strengthening the voice, organisation and programme of the working class at all levels of society and winning broad social support for its vision and perspectives
- asserting and building a culture of community and solidarity
- implementing the economic policies outlined in Chapter 4 that ensure redistribution as a means to promote growth, equity and social justice
- uniting the Alliance behind a progressive programme for transformation

This does not mean that the middle class or the emerging entrepreneurs have no role to play in transforming our society. Their skills and energy are vital to rebuilding our country, and mobilising resources for development. The key issue is whether the direction of social development will be towards overcoming poverty and inequality or towards creating islands of non-racial wealth surrounded by a sea of poverty.

### **2.3 Transformation and the developmental state**

Taken together, our political and economic visions are a programme for transformation. Such transformation necessarily involves struggle and contestation, primarily between different class forces. The state is both a major site of struggle, and a key engine for transformation. Our programme for transformation relies on a particular type of state, a strong, democratic state acting as an agent for transformation, for democratisation, redistribution and development.

### **2.4 Social stability and solidarity**

The new South Africa emerging out of transition is a fragile, unstable, and rapidly changing society with a range of forces undermining national cohesion. Elements of the old elite seek to retain power and privilege through instability. Political warlords, criminals and gangsters, remnants of the Third Force and a continuing culture of corruption threaten to undermine our democracy. Racism, ethnicity, crude power struggles and exploitation of these divisions all undermine the process of nation-building.

Against this stands a culture and tradition of solidarity, sacrifice and community that are at the heart of the democratic movement and the trade unions. Although the regime tried to crush these during the 1970s and 1980s, they were the resources with which the new nation was forged. However, these traditions and this culture are currently in danger of being eroded. A culture of entitlement, self-enrichment and careerism is gaining ground in the national liberation movement as a whole. This threatens to weaken not only organisations but the very fabric of our new society.

We seek to build a new society based on *community* and *solidarity*. By this we mean a society whose citizens take their responsibility to their communities seriously and accept making sacrifices out of solidarity for others. In terms of this morality it is unacceptable for millions to live in terrible poverty while a few enjoy extreme wealth.

Such a society is only possible where there is some social stability. This requires a vision and a programme which unites society. In this respect COSATU is an agent of social cohesion and solidarity. While there is a need for struggle and aggressive contest over the direction of the transition, this should be done in a way which does not feed into the agenda of those promoting disorder and instability as a means to oppose democratisation, and even provide an excuse for authoritarianism.

### **2.5 The link to socialism**

The struggle to make democracy work, and to extend it, is linked to our idea of socialism. Forging a culture of community and solidarity, and building our new society on this foundation, is also a contribution to socialism.

The goal of socialism is to make the economy accountable to society, so that the material needs of all its people are met and every citizen has the opportunity to fully develop their human potential. A far-reaching democracy can provide the means to define the social and material goals of society, and harness the economy to these. It can provide citizens, residents and working people with the means to collectively gain control over their lives and assert the primacy of their needs and interests over the markets and the interests of capital. A culture of community and solidarity provides a way to work together for these goals.

Through forging such a radical democracy conditions for socialism are created. These are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for socialism. Further struggles and transformations will be necessary to bring socialism into being.

## **2.6 A political programme to implement the vision**

This programme seeks to:

- revitalise and strengthen the Alliance with a common programme for transformation
- build an ANC-led Alliance with working-class leadership and with a working-class bias
- build the SACP as a party of the working-class
- build alliances with the churches, NGOs, other formations and progressive intellectuals to struggle against poverty and inequality
- ensure that the democratic institutions of our country work
- extend democracy to all social and economic spheres

The recommendations that follow are aimed at securing these objectives.

## **3. Recommendations**

### **3.1 Revitalising the Alliance**

3.1.a. An Alliance process to define a common programme

COSATU should propose to its Alliance partners that an extended Alliance summit be held to work on defining a common programme for the Alliance. The meeting could explore the following:

- goals of the Alliance
- the current reality in South Africa and internationally
- the relationship of the Alliance partners
- the agenda of the Alliance
- an Alliance programme, or national agreement, for achieving the agenda
- ongoing monitoring of the programme and consultation between Alliance partners

COSATU should strive to persuade its partners in the Alliance to adopt a co-ordinating framework in the form of an Alliance Agreement based on a common vision, as outlined in the *Discussion document on the Alliance*. Such a framework should be comprehensive and include an economic programme and a programme for public-sector transformation. It should also provide for regular Alliance meetings at the highest level to ensure proper partnership, information-sharing and co-ordination. If the Alliance partners agree to adopt such a joint programme, the results could be a co-ordinated, coherent and powerful Alliance based on a commitment to democracy, development and overcoming poverty.



Leadership goes to parliament: COSATU needs to strengthen the links and build working-class leadership in the ANC -  
*Photo: William Matlala*

### 3.1.b If the Alliance fails to define a common programme

If this happens then COSATU will have to consider the options available to it, including the possibility of leaving the Alliance with all the consequences. But it could also continue in the Alliance in a different manner. COSATU should then:

- i. Target specific, critical policy areas where it needs to strengthen or shift ANC positions. A number of these policy areas are highlighted in this report
- ii. Develop a programme for making progress on these strategic issues. The Federation would have to be flexible, and it could use a variety of strategies.
- iii. Attempt to build a partnership with elements in government and the ANC on specific issues or policies.
- iv. Mobilise an alliance of popular organisations in a campaign for specific policies or demands, or a campaign to resist government policies.

### 3.1.c Flexible independence

- i. COSATU should build on the strategy of flexibility and independence which is already established within the Alliance. It should:
  - o support the ANC when it adopts progressive policies.
  - o seek to influence ANC policies wherever possible.
  - o respond with bold and outspoken opposition where the ANC adopts socially disastrous, conservative or anti-worker policies.

The balance between support for, independence from, and opposition to the ANC will differ depending which scenario prevails. If we are able to develop a common programme and move towards **Pap, vleis and gravy** then there will be more support, co-operation and joint strategising. If **Skorokoro** prevails we will zigzag between support and opposition. If **The desert** scenario prevails we will find ourselves much more in opposition to, than in support for, the ANC.

- ii. In order to maintain this strategy of flexible independence, COSATU will need to continue building strong organisation and improve its capacity. Its influence in society, in the popular bloc and in the Alliance will depend on its power on the ground.

#### 3.1.d Annual assessment of the Alliance

- i. The COSATU CEC should hold a rigorous annual assessment of the Alliance, based on a report from the COSATU secretariat. The assessment should consider the following:
  - what has been achieved through the Alliance
  - in what respects the Alliance has failed
  - how satisfactory the relationship between Alliance partners is, whether it is a partnership and whether the structures are functioning effectively
  - how COSATU members view the Alliance
  - whether COSATU is being held captive by the Alliance
- ii. The CEC should then consider whether the Alliance is proving successful, or whether it is disintegrating, and decide on appropriate action.

#### 3.1.e An electoral pact

COSATU should develop focused and concrete proposals for an electoral pact before the 1999 elections.

- i. If a comprehensive agreement on a common programme is in place the electoral pact should be framed in terms of it.
- ii. If there is no such common programme, the electoral pact should focus on a number of issues that are identified as most important for COSATU (as suggested in recommendation 3.1.b above), and that appeal to the broader public.
- iii. To avoid a repeat of the problems experienced with the RDP, a detailed implementation strategy should be agreed as part of the electoral pact. If COSATU cannot reach agreement with the ANC on an electoral pact either, it may signify that the Alliance is disintegrating.
- iv. As part of its contribution to a joint election campaign, COSATU should consider the setting up of an Elections Fund, to which workers could contribute.

#### 3.1.f Regions and locals

- i. COSATU structures at regional and local levels should strive to revitalise the Alliance. The Alliance at these levels is likely to follow the pattern set by the Alliance at national level. If the proposed Summit to agree on a common programme is successful, similar meetings could be convened at provincial/regional level and at local level, to discuss the implications of the common programme for the Alliance, and map out a plan for enriching and implementing it.

Whichever way the Alliance relationship develops, COSATU structures at regional and local levels must be empowered to engage with it. Proposals to achieve this are discussed in Chapter 10, *Building the engines of COSATU*

### **3.2 Building the ANC with a working-class bias**

There are a number of options to ensure a coherent working-class presence in the ANC. Trade unionists and worker leaders can play their role in the ANC as individuals. But the possibility also exists for trade unionists and worker leaders to have a formal position in the ANC as representatives of COSATU. The

optimal situation is for a combination of these options. All workers should be encouraged to join the ANC, and take up leadership positions in their own right. At the same time COSATU could have organisational representation on ANC structures. We propose that both these options be pursued to build working-class leadership and ensure that the class character of the ANC leadership reflects to a large degree the composition of the organisation.

COSATU representation on ANC structures, more active participation by COSATU members in ANC activities, continuing links between COSATU and members or former members who become political representatives, and a revitalised Alliance based on a shared programme for transformation, should be seen as a combination of strategies for building working-class leadership in and through the ANC.

### 3.2.a COSATU seats on ANC structures

The ANC Lekgotla in January 1997 proposed that the ANC consider setting aside seats on ANC constitutional structures for COSATU. This would have the advantage of ensuring that COSATU leaders on such structures were seen to be directly representing organisational positions. This formula has been implemented in a number of countries with alliances between progressive parties and trade unions.

- i. COSATU should have positions set aside for a specified number of office bearers on the ANC NEC and NWC. COSATU would decide who would occupy those positions, although it may be agreed that particular office bearers (eg president and general secretary) would have to be among these. COSATU should raise this in the programmatic discussion of the Alliance outlined above.
- ii. COSATU should have representation at all levels - national, regional and branch, as well as ANC conference.

These measures will enable COSATU to participate in ANC deliberations *before* they are concluded, rather than being consulted after decisions have been made. This will allow the ANC to understand and consider COSATU's viewpoints in the process of making decisions. It is also a preferable arrangement as far as the senior national and regional leadership are concerned. If, for example, the COSATU president is elected to the ANC NEC as an individual, does he or she take responsibility for all decisions of the ANC? Such a situation would create doubts in the minds of COSATU members as to whether their president represents them or the ANC. This ambiguity would be removed if the president occupied a seat on the ANC NEC *as the president, and representative, of COSATU*. If the president differed fundamentally with an ANC decision, this could be made known.

### 3.2.b Building the ANC as individuals

- i. COSATU should continue to encourage its members to participate in and build the ANC at all levels. This includes standing for election to leadership structures in the ANC. If the proposal in 3.2.a is accepted, some COSATU national office bearers (NOBs) would be COSATU delegates to ANC structures in their capacity as representatives of the Federation. There should be a similar arrangement at regional level.

### 3.2.c Representation in ANC election lists

- i. COSATU should debate the pros and cons of continuing to seek representation on ANC lists for election to local, provincial and national government, both via the Alliance and as individuals. ;

- ii. If COSATU continues to seek representation on ANC lists, it should seek a much more fruitful and dynamic relationship with those who are elected, using the following mechanisms:
  - COSATU should convene workshops and training courses for its members who are standing for election, to prepare them for an active political role, and to discuss and clarify what COSATU expects of them and how their relationship to the federation should be maintained.
  - COSATU should convene regular consultative meetings at national, provincial and local levels where the Federation leadership can meet with it's) MPs, MPLs and town councillors that come from labour or are supportive of labour to consult and discuss developments in government, in labour, and in general.

### **3.3 Relations with the SACP**

- i. COSATU must ensure it builds the SACP and assist in clarifying the role of the Party. Worker leaders must be active in its structures and must seek to build the Party into a strong organisation that will help lead the struggle for socialism through developing policies and articulating a clear vision and programme for socialism.
- ii. The Party and COSATU must convene a joint Summit to discuss:
  - the role of the Party and COSATU in the transition
  - the role of the working class
  - ensuring working-class leadership of the national democratic revolution
  - building the ANC and strengthening the Alliance
  - developing socialist policies and unity of socialist forces
  - jointly developing and implementing a programme for the transition and for socialism

### **3.4 Alliances in civil society**

- i. COSATU should hold a series of meetings with organisations and groupings in civil society, as outlined in Section 1.7 above, to discuss a campaign against poverty and inequality. The content of such a campaign is discussed in the Recommendations in Chapter 4, *Reclaiming redistribution*. These discussions serve to explore the content of a campaign, and how an alliance, or series of alliances, should be structured.

### **3.5 Making democracy work**

#### 3.5.a The state and government

- i. As its contribution to making democracy work COSATU should:
- ii. insist that parliament adopt a combination of constituency-based and proportional representation, both for national parliament and for provincial legislatures, so as to ensure that MPs and MPLs are accountable to their voters. This will give the trade union movement, as a major organisation of voters, and other organisations of civil society, increased access to, and influence over, representatives
- iii. continue its engagement and interaction with parliament, via its parliamentary office and federation and affiliate leadership, with the goal not only of pursuing its own interests but also of strengthening the parliamentary committee system and of enhancing transparency and accountability

- iv. empower its regional leadership to interact with similar goals and effectiveness with the provincial legislatures and governments
- v. empower its locals to interact with similar goals and effectiveness with local authorities in their areas
- vi. generally encourage its members to understand their rights and to participate as active citizens in the governing of our country
- vii. where its members experience unjust administrative actions, support, as the trade union movement, their ability to make use of the constitutional provisions for just administrative action
- viii. take active measures to transform the public sector, public service and local government administration so that it is accountable, transparent, fair and efficient (as discussed in Chapter 5, *Transforming the public sector*)
- ix. defend the freedom of the media and equal access to media resources, and fight for access to information, for greater working-class participation in the media and improved coverage of working-class issues and perspectives
- x. take an active interest in the transformation of the SABC, and do all we can to ensure government provides it with adequate resources to fulfil its mandate as public broadcaster
- xi. speak out where the courts make unjust decisions, and defend the courts against any attack on their impartiality and independence
- xii. take a strong public stand on corruption, dishonesty and nepotism, and insist that the Alliance take a similar stand.

### 3.5.b Making NEDLAC work

NEDLAC is a new institution. Its legitimacy and role is not yet clearly established, and is contested by different social forces. There are those in business and government who would prefer not to negotiate economic and labour market policies with the trade union movement. At the same time, there are many in the trade unions who have an ambivalent attitude to NEDLAC. Labour's lack of capacity - exacerbated by lack of commitment by some leaders - has weakened its participation in NEDLAC and so threatened to undermine NEDLAC itself. If the labour movement does not demonstrate a strong commitment to NEDLAC, and willingness to defend it, there is a real danger that NEDLAC could be seriously undermined or closed down, robbing labour of a critically important forum for influencing government, business and society in general.

One of the criticisms of NEDLAC is that it undermines the sovereignty of parliament by arriving at decisions that it is very difficult for parliament to amend - as was alleged with the LRA. However, we need to learn from tensions and conflicts that may have arisen. We believe that NEDLAC and parliament should mutually reinforce each others' role in subjecting the actions of the executive to scrutiny and fostering public debate - and so deepening democracy. For example, both the parliamentary finance committee and the NEDLAC finance chamber have been frustrated by the lack of progress in reforming the national government budget process. By engaging the finance ministry, and working on reform together, they can reinforce each other's efforts.

- COSATU should convene a workshop of senior leadership to assess the performance of NEDLAC, develop a long-term vision of the role of NEDLAC and a strategy for realising this vision. Chapter 4 contains more recommendations about how COSATU should engage with NEDLAC;
- On the political relationship between NEDLAC and parliament, the following should be considered to improve co-ordination:

- Where possible, representatives of parliamentary portfolio committees should attend NEDLAC debates where these affect their portfolios. NEDLAC should also regularly brief portfolio committees of progress in discussions that affect them.
- Parliament should not wait for NEDLAC to finish deliberations before holding public hearings on issues under deliberation. NEDLAC negotiations and parliament's hearings can mutually enrich each other.
- Parliament and NEDLAC should recognise that agreements reached at NEDLAC have differing status: parliament should be cautious before altering agreements reached after protracted and difficult negotiations, such as the LRA. On other issues agreements may be less comprehensive, or NEDLAC may simply have been consulted.

### ***3.6 Extending democracy***

Most of Chapter 4 discusses our vision and recommendations for extending democracy.

### ***3.7 Moral leadership***

- i. As argued in this chapter, our society lacks strong moral leadership and cohesion. It is important for the trade union movement to assert its moral leadership and see itself as a factor for cohesion in our society. COSATU should seek to assert and build a culture of community and solidarity through its demands, its ideology, and its activities.
- ii. COSATU should fight consistently for equality, democracy and the accountability of public representatives.
- iii. COSATU should launch campaigns against corruption and against crime.