



The Shopsteward

The official publication of the Congress of South African Trade Unions

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COSATU 2026 MAY DAY CELEBRATION

CELEBRATING 34 YEARS

The Shop Steward Magazine

The Shopsteward Magazine was first published around June 1992, as a voice for workers presenting the unheard thoughts of the working-class communities that are typically absent from mainstream media.



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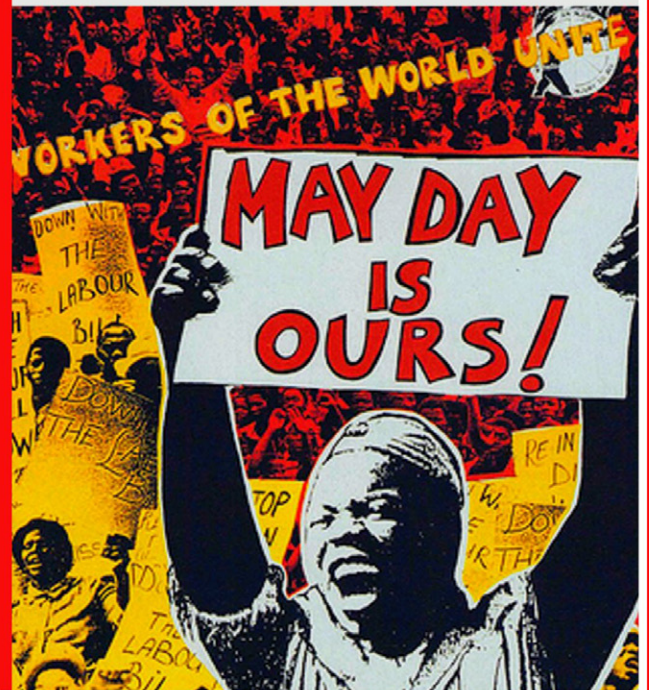
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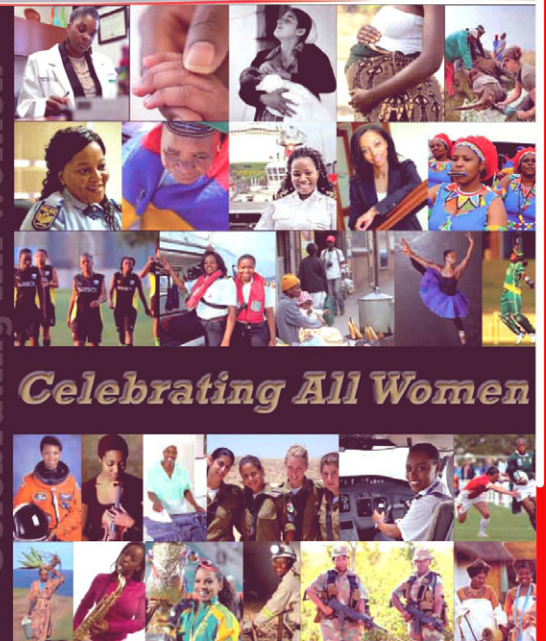
THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CONGRESS OF SOUTH AFRICAN TRADE UNIONS

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NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION

Celebrating All Women



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Editor in Chief

Solly Phetoe

It is shocking to note how much things have changed since the beginning of this year. On this very page, early this year, we celebrated the National Minimum Wage finally breaking the R30 barrier to R30.23.

We also rejoiced when during the state of the nation address, President Cyril Ramaphosa said government would hire an extra 10 000 labour inspectors.

In February inflation fell to 3% from 3.5% in January. The economy was expected to grow by 1.6% this year. This was positive news even though it was not the 3% we needed to create jobs in the country.

Now here we are, halfway through the year and the picture looks very different. The economy is now expected to grow by only

1%; inflation has gone up to 4%; and the price of fuel has escalated because of the war in the Middle East. The fuel price relief that government has provided since April is set to stop completely in July. Making a bad situation worse, the South African Reserve Bank has increased the interest rates.

Things are about to get a lot worse for the working class and the poor who have been battling the rising cost of living for years now. In the last five years electricity and fuel increased by 80%, water increased by 42%, health costs increased by 32%, medical aid by 58%, transport increased by 35%, primary and secondary school education increased by 38%, and food prices increased by 45%.

At the same time, unemployment is very high at 43.7% - meaning more than

four out of 10 people in the country do not have a job. For those who have a job, their wages have not gone up at the rate as the cost of the goods they need for everyday life. In fact, studies show that buyers are taking home almost half (47%) less than they did 10 years ago when taking inflation into account.

When families run out of money before the month ends, they are forced to borrow to make it to payday. They borrow to buy food, electricity and to pay school fees. In time the amount they owe grows and becomes difficult to pay off, putting them under more pressure.

It is for this reason that COSATU has decided to launch a cost of living campaign with a National Day of Action towards the end of June.

Included in the Cost of

Living demands will be the following:

- Lower food and fuel prices
- A cut in electricity and water prices
- Enforcement of the National Minimum Wage and a move towards a living wage
- Increase in social grants and introduction of Universal Basic Income Grant
- End to austerity and extension of the social wage
- Invest in public transport
- Implement the next phase of the Two-Pot pension reforms including tax relief for low-income earners

COSATU calls on workers to keep an eye on our social media platforms and website for the date and details of the National Day of Action against the rising Cost of Living. We urge you to join the activities and make your voice heard for a positive change.



Editor

Norman Mampane

Workers have played a huge role in working-class communities by shaping demands for a just society for years. We must admit that South Africa has experienced persistent poverty, inequality, and unemployment and stalled socio-economic transformation.

We must confront these daily realities. I totally agree with all those like-minded citizens who argue that 'we need to bridge intellectual work with activism to advance the public good.'

South Africa's inflation rose by 3.1% in March, while food inflation dropped slightly to 3.6%.

Let's take a pause and reflect: Challenges we facing as crises, are not as isolated events, but as the result of deeper structural conditions.

Decent jobs are the only reliable pathway to end poverty across the globe, but capitalists are destroying sustainable livelihoods of the masses for profits.

Nearly 3 out of 4 people living in extreme poverty are in Sub-Saharan Africa or in fragile and conflict-affected situations. By 2030, this could rise to 4 out of 5.

Whilst there are developments everywhere, the growing gap between

rich and poor remains a global challenge.

What's the true story?

According to the Sub-Saharan Africa Economic Outlook 2026, 'Sub-Saharan Africa is not moving in one direction in 2026.'

'Global growth is slowing to 3.1%, but Africa is still expanding faster at 4.1%.'

'The continent is splitting into different economic paths.

For example,' Kenya is holding strong at 4.9%. Nigeria is rebuilding toward 4.2%.

South Africa is gradually improving around 1.2%.'

According to Economists, 'South Africa's Gross

Domestic Product is expected to grow by 1.5–1.6% in 2026, slightly up from 1.4% in 2025, reflecting cautious recovery and improved investor confidence'.

South Africa's official unemployment rate rose to 32.7% in the first quarter of 2026, with youth unemployment reaching 45.8%, reflecting ongoing labor market challenges.

Ordinary citizens were hugely affected by the costs of living as a result of spillovers from the geopolitics and the Iranian war waged by the U.S. and Israeli regime.

The South African Cabinet Spokesperson,

Minister Khumbudzo Ntshavheni assured the citizens that 'Government continues to intervene to minimise the high cost of the price of fuel. Cabinet continues to intervene to minimise the high cost of the price of fuel as a result of the continuing US/ Israel war in Iran that

are a destructive engine destined to one day consume its masters.'

Marx furthered argued that it is shameful for the world's wealth to be in the hands of few elites at the expense of the toiling classes.

But his insightful

workshop with CNV Internationaal at Sandton to engage affiliates, government departments, mining companies, traditional leaders, mining community organisations, and other stakeholders on issues related to the critical minerals and metals strategy, the

The workshop utilised the intensive presentations and debates in fostering collaboration, co-creating solutions to strengthen the critical minerals and metals strategy, addressing today's challenges while preparing for a more sustainable tomorrow.



COSATU in partnership with CNV Internationaal unleashed a capacity-building workshop for unions in the critical minerals value chain and strategically focus on enhancing dialogue on high-criticality minerals and energy challenges within the South African Critical Minerals and Metal Strategy (CMMSSA).

The Chief Executive Officers of various companies in the mining industry shared their valuable insights the African-led solutions that are shaping South Africa's shared future.

They shared industry knowledge, strengthening problem-solving skills and cultivating confidence in mining, science, engineering and technology.

The session was used also to provide a platform for shop stewards to be clarified on some of the mining issues affecting workers.

has also impacted the Gulf region.'

Progressive trade unions and civil society unanimously agree: It's time for a new approach. Karl Marx alluded in the Das Capital that 'capitalist justice and inequality

remarks were ignored!

Just Energy Transition is not just without genuine consultation with all stakeholders!

COSATU National Climate Change Group convened a national

future of coal mining, environmental challenges faced by working-class communities, regulatory framework on mining licenses, industry's overall performance, and navigating geopolitics affecting economic growth and development.

COSATU and its affiliates noted the implementation of Social Labour Plans with the building of the Steelpoort River bridge at gaMalekane in Limpopo by mining companies such as Valtterra, Northam, Samancor Chrome, Glencore, Two

Rivers Platinum, Jubilee Metal Group, Rakgoma Mineral Resources, Booyseendal Platinum, Rustenburg Platinum mine, Tjate Platinum mine, Dwarsrivier Chrome mine in partnership with the Department of Mineral Resources and Petroleum, Sekhukhune District municipality and the Road Agency Limpopo.

All these efforts are part of the Sekhukhune District municipality's District Development Model to accelerate addressing of the socio-economic challenges affecting poor working-class communities, coordinate effective government programmes at the local level and ensuring the provision of educational and recreational facilities to improve the status of life of local citizens.

But the key question posed was that, is it enough in every affected mining community?

In the recent months, the organised labour and the Department has acknowledged the collaboration between the law enforcement agencies to enforce compliance with mining permits or mining rights in terms of the Mineral and Petroleum

Resources Development Act and also curb illegal activities of Zama zamas.

Organised labour and stakeholders have seen the Minister Gwede Mantashe officially opening the Exxaro Resources' expanded Matla Mine 1 operations in Mpumalanga, marking a significant milestone in advancing South Africa's energy security and extending the life of mine.

Exxaro's Matla 1 coal mine was undergoing an expansion project, which involved constructing a new decline shaft to access remaining coal reserves. The project was aimed to extend the mine's life and ensure continued coal supply to Eskom's Matla power station.

The Exxaro project comes after the Mpumalanga municipalities have struggled with energy transition as South Africa's primary coal-producing region.

Despite the country's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, local governments' reliance on coal revenue and limited financial resources hinder the shift to cleaner energy, threatening the province's economic

and environmental sustainability.

In this Edition, we are covering Constitutional congresses or conferences of affiliates as part of heightening class struggle.

We continue to congratulate all newly elected worker leaders to re-build working class power towards a socialist future. Congratulations to NEHAWU and SATAWU as they are celebrating their 39th and 26th anniversaries respectively.

Ahead of Africa Day celebrations, 'the government is calling for all Africans to work together in driving the development and progress of the continent and work towards 'realising the vision of the African Union Agenda 2063 for a united and prosperous Africa.'

Today, the US imperialists are waging economic wars in pursuit of super profits.

And with no consequences from the United Nations. Undermining of international law and multilateralism must come to an end!

Solidarity with the people of Iran, Cuba, Venezuela, Lebanon, Western Sahara,

Swaziland and Sudan!

Workers across the globe have a reason than before to reorganise their labour power and demand change against neoliberalism, capitalism and oligarchs who continues to undermine human development by chasing super profits.

Let's organise, educate and agitate for the primary interests of toiling classes across the globe!

Congratulations to former trade unionists, Ray Alexander Simons and Jack Simons for receiving the Order of Luthuli posthumously by recognising their dedication to a non-racial, non-sexist, and democratic South Africa.

Today, the SACP Jack Simons Party School is flourishing with ideological debates and COSATU has one of the largest board rooms named after Comrade Ray Alexander Simons.

Indeed, they made a mark on South African historiography with their work amongst marginalised communities during apartheid and contributed immensely to our peaceful transition to democracy.

Congratulations!



COSATU highlighted the adverse effects of unemployment, costs of living, the importance of decent work, labour rights and calls for a reconfigured Alliance to advance the National Democratic Revolution on the International Workers Day at the old Peter Mokaba Stadium, Polokwane.

Worker Issues

COSATU DECLARES

UNEMPLOYMENT

A NATIONAL EMERGENCY

Before the dawn of democracy in South Africa, workers led massive strikes, pickets, and demonstrations against the system of colonialism of a special type.

Apartheid capitalism had grown to entrench a system of colonial oppression, racial discrimination and of the financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the population of Africans.

Since 1994, South Africa has steadily built a progressive legislative framework to advance workers' rights, including protections for workplace safety, fair labour practices, and social security.

These gains reflect the country's constitutional commitment to justice and equality.

Yet, Workers' Day also compels reflection on whether these rights are being realised in practice and whether they are reaching those most in need.

This reflection is sharpened by current labour market realities. South Africa continues to face deep structural unemployment, with the official unemployment rate recorded at 32.7% in the first quarter of 2026.

Beyond this, broader measures reveal a significant number of discouraged

work seekers and individuals excluded from economic participation altogether.

Of particular concern is the persistent vulnerability of young people, many of whom remain outside employment, education, or training, signalling long-term risks to social stability and economic inclusion.

Happy May Day! Workers of the world, unite!

This year, 2026 the working class and people of South Africa came out in their thousands to mark the 140th anniversary of the International Workers Day across nine provinces and 13 venues.

We honour every worker, organised, or unorganised, employed or unemployed demanding a better world where the people and the planet comes first than profits.

All over the world, workers took to the streets, marching, protesting and demonstrating, demanding more control over their own lives – better working conditions, higher pay, more time for leisure and rest, and a stronger voice in their own workplaces as part of a broader agenda on building a powerful working class movement!

Workers are rejecting power of oligarchs, neoliberalists and billionaires who continue

to attack democracy across the globe and amass super profits.

The Federation has declared its intention to lead a massive Cost of Living Campaign against rising prices of household commodities such as food, fuel, electricity.

Thulas Nxesi, Madala Masuku, Joyce Moloi-Moropa, PJ Mnguni, Lechesa Tsenoli, Alex Mashilo, Yunus Carrim, Tebogo Phadu and Tinyiko Ntini were deployed to deliver the SACP's messages of support.

The ANC deployed Paul Mashatile, Nomvula Mokonyane, Snuki Zikalala, Khumbudzo Ntshavheni, Febe Potgieter-Gqubule, Dr. Gwen Ramokgopa, Dr Nobuhle Nkabane, Mmamoloko Kubayi and Gwede Mantashe delivered messages of support, reinforcing the Party's commitment to workers' rights, dignity and economic justice.

SANCO was represented by Richard Mkhungo, Judith Tshabalala, Chris Malemetja, SPD Skhosana and other members of the National Working Committee.

Key takeaways from the May Day rallies, particularly from the Vanguard Party and other Alliance Partners, highlighted the urgent need to reshape the Alliance modalities in a reconfigured manner, with a notable emphasis on moving forward together and with all partners validating

perspectives that advocated for unity.

Old Peter Mokaba Stadium in Polokwane

COSATU President Zingiswa Losi said, "Our unemployment crisis must be treated as a national emergency and command the same collective response we mobilised against COVID-19, including a mass economic stimulus and job creation plan of action. All spheres of government and employers must be mobilised and held accountable for their contributions to crushing unemployment".

Losi elaborated that 'It is in response to this and the cost-of-living crisis that is plunging millions of working-class families into debt and misery that COSATU is waging a mass campaign to provide relief and hope for workers.

We must ensure that the price of fuel and electricity are slashed and that we invest in public transport, that we challenge Government Employees Medical Scheme and other medical aids

who exploit workers and charge abusive prices, that government implement the next phase of the Two-Pot Pension Reforms and provide greater relief to struggling workers and reduce the tax burden upon working and middle class families, and defend the National Health Insurance.

The ANC Deputy President, Paul Mashatile said, 'Workers remain a powerful force in changing the face of society for the better, safer working conditions, transform the workplace and a living wage.

Mashatile elaborated that it was workers who marched when marching was forbidden.

It was workers who spoke when silence was demanded. It was workers who reminded the nation that freedom without justice and democracy without dignity, could never be complete.

Indeed, in 1994, South Africa underwent a significant transition to democracy, marking a major victory for labour.

This victory not only established the right to vote but also affirmed the right to organise, the right to strike, and the right to seek dignity within the workplace. Today, is not just a celebration; it is a call for continued action.

It is a reminder that the struggle for economic liberation continues. The struggle for a living wage and better working conditions remains part of the ANC national transformation agenda. Without workers, there is no economy.

Dr. Alex Mashilo announced that the SACP has decided to contest the coming Local Government Elections scheduled for November 4 this year.

Dr. Mashilo argued that the SACP, however, will not allow itself and the working class to be driven into political submission and political obscurity without pursuing a path for the rejuvenation of the struggle, the revitalisation of the revolutionary forces and the carrying out of an effective rescue mission

for our revolution.

SACP strongly condemned the escalating aggression against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, where repeated interference, illegal sanctions and destabilisation efforts by the US seek to undermine national sovereignty and reverse the gains of popular struggle.

Chris Malematja said that SANCO wishes COSATU and workers its unwavering support on the occasion of the International Workers' Day in South Africa.

Malematja urged the government and in particular the Department of Home Affairs and the Department of Employment and Labour to enforce regulation of labour migration to end exploitation of migrant workers by employers.

SANCO called for the unity of Alliance partners as the country is advancing towards the November 4 local government elections. □



COSATU President Zingiswa Losi

ADDRESS AT THE WORKERS' DAY

Old Peter Mokaba Stadium in Polokwane, 1 May 2026

**COSATU President, Cde Zingiswa Losi delivering the keynote address
at the National May Day Celebration in Limpopo.**

Programme Director(S), Deputy President Paul Mashatile, leadership of the Federation, the African National Congress, the South African Communist Party, the South African National Civic Organisation and the Mass Democratic Movement, distinguished guests, comrades and friends, most importantly workers from Limpopo and across South Africa, we are honoured to be here today at Peter Mokaba Stadium,

in Polokwane, Limpopo, a province that played an historic role in the labour movement and the liberation struggle and that continues to inspire the nation.

We were pained by the recent devastating floods in Limpopo and Mpumalanga.

We must continue to work together to rebuild our communities from Giyani to Bushbuckridge.

140 years ago today,

workers in Chicago stood up and rejected some of the most horrendous forms of exploitation, including child labour, and in demand of an 8-hour day.

Their struggles led to workers being killed.

Their example has served as an inspiration to workers ever since from the cold streets of Chicago to the hot farms of ZZZ in Tzaneen.

We celebrate 32 years of

liberation from the apartheid regime and the building of our internationally respected constitutional democracy and in defence of our transformation journey.

These victories are the product of countless giants of the labour movement led by the then South African Congress of Trade Unions and today COSATU, from John Nkademeng to Ray Alexander, and ordinary citizens from mineworkers in Thabazimbi

to municipal workers eThekweni.

We are proud of how far we have come as a nation from the dark days of apartheid when domestic and farm workers were treated little better than slave labour to today when workers' rights are enshrined in our progressive labour laws, from the right to strike to collective bargaining, from paid maternity and parental leave to the National Minimum Wage raising the salaries of six million retail, construction and other vulnerable workers.

Access to education, transport, healthcare and jobs must include persons with disabilities.

Whilst we are proud of these many advances, we dare not be complacent when the challenges facing the working class are immense.

We cannot celebrate 32 years of Freedom but keep quiet when four out of ten South Africans cannot find work.

What hope is there for the matriculant in Phalaborwa or the disabled bus driver in Makhado when jobs are scarce?

When we are battling this single greatest threat facing the nation, we must condemn those employers in both the public and private sectors who see nothing wrong with retrenching workers in this economy.

Our unemployment crisis must be treated as a national emergency and command the same collective response we mobilised against COVID-19, including a mass economic

in Malamulele, the mining company in Rustenburg or the hospital in Mangaung, must buy locally produced goods. This is the most effective way to support local jobs and businesses and grow

price of fuel and electricity are slashed and that we invest in public transport, that we challenge Government Employees Medical Scheme and other medical aids who exploit workers and charge abusive prices, that government implement the next phase of the Two-Pot Pension Reforms and provide greater relief to struggling workers and reduce the tax burden upon working and middle class families, and defend the National Health Insurance.

We will never overcome our entrenched levels of poverty and inequality unless we can see unemployment falling by at least 1% each quarter.

We cannot celebrate 32 years of democracy when we are a nation scarred by horrific levels of crime and corruption.

We cannot be proud when a young learner in Polokwane is harassed whilst walking to school, when the cashier eGqeberha is sexually abused by her employer, when members of the LGBTQI+ community are victimised in Khayelitsha.

Parliament overhauled over criminal legislation to deal with this scourge, but we are failing collectively to defeat this cancer.

This must end now.

We appreciate progress being made to remove the cancer of corruption

“It is in response to this and the cost-of-living crisis that is plunging millions of working-class families into debt and misery that COSATU is waging a mass campaign.”

stimulus and job creation plan of action.

All spheres of government and employers must be mobilised and held accountable for their contributions to crushing unemployment.

All of us, be it the teacher

this economy.

It is in response to this and the cost-of-living crisis that is plunging millions of working-class families into debt and misery that COSATU is waging a mass campaign to provide relief and hope for workers.

We must ensure that the

across the state, in particular the South African Revenue Services. But more must be done.

The police require working vehicles, the National Prosecuting Authority requires skilled prosecutors, the courts require magistrates.

This is a war that we dare not lose. Politicians, employers and tenderpreneurs who steal, must go to prison.

The rebuilding of the Department of Home Affairs, the Border Management Authority and law enforcement and the cracking down on illegal migration must be ramped up.

Our state organs must have the resources needed to enforce our immigration laws and ensure that all persons here comply with the law.

We must never tolerate lawlessness.

We need more labour inspectors to go to all workplaces, from the farms of Mussina to the clothing factories of Newcastle.

Employers who break the law must be held accountable.

If we are to deliver this Better Life for All, then government must abandon the tried and failed policies of neo-liberalism and austerity.

Only a well-resourced state can provide the frontline public and municipal services that the working class and

the economy depend upon to survive and thrive.

Letaba Hospital needs doctors and nurses, schools in Mankweng need teachers and classrooms, police stations on the Cape Flats need modern computers and forensic databases.

There are no short cuts to fixing the state and delivering public services.

Urgent action is needed to fix local government.

We cannot sit idle whilst Ditsobotla and Matjhabeng Municipalities fail to provide basic services and pay their employees.

COSATU is a product of workers' struggles and the beneficiary of international solidarity during the darkest days of apartheid, from Angola to Mozambique and beyond.

We are firm in our solidarity today with the people of Cuba and Venezuela, Western Sahara, Palestine, Zimbabwe and eSwatini.

We are resolute in our condemnation of all wars of aggression from Sudan to Lebanon and Iran.

Whilst we have far to go, we have won many victories since the founding of COSATU in 1985.

We have secured these gains because of this historic and revolutionary Alliance with the ANC, SACP, SANCO

and the broader mass democratic movement.

COSATU remains the shield of workers at the workplace, the SACP the vanguard of the working class, and the ANC leader of the liberation movement, with each having a unique role.

This is an Alliance forged through stay aways, strikes, prison, exile and funerals. It is an Alliance built by such giants as Oliver Reginald Tambo, Joe Slovo, Chris Hani, Elijah Barayi and Helen Joseph.

As we head to the most contested local elections since the dawn of democracy, this Alliance must be united.

We are allies and not opponents.

We must work hand in glove as we engage and mobilise voters and ensure that on election day, this Alliance emerges victorious from Thohoyandou to Tshwane.

This Federation of Mark Shope and Nana Abrahams will unapologetically defend its unity. The Alliance must be radically reconfigured, lead the state and remain biased towards the working class and rural poor.

We must never allow our differences to divide workers.

We make this appeal to our Alliance Partners.

This leadership of the Alliance, you dare not fail Collins Chabane, Joyce

Mashamba, Ruth First and Winnie Madikizela-Mandela.

The challenges facing the working class from the unemployed mother in Mitchell's Plain to the petrol attendant in Kimberley and the taxi driver in Jane Furse, require COSATU and its Affiliates, be on the ground, at the workplace, united and vibrant, defending workers, securing wage increases and servicing members.

COSATU was founded upon the principles of socialism and the call for one industry, one union, one federation, one country.

We extend our hand in comradeship to all federations and unions.

We must work as one in defence of workers irrespective of our differences.

We have come from that day in 1985 when this militant giant COSATU was launched in Durban. We have won massive victories in defence of the working class. We have far still to go.

To win these battles, we must be united and on the ground. We dare not fail.

We are confident that this Federation and the Alliance will continue to lead these struggles.

Thank you. Amandla, Matimba, Matla, Maanda!

2026 COSATU MAY DAY - GALLERY



BULTFONTEIN STADIUM, BULTFONTEIN

COSATU 1st Deputy President, Mike Shingange said, "We honour the heroic struggles of workers who fought for the eight-hour working day, decent wages, safe working conditions and the right to organise. The occasion of International Workers' Day serves as a platform for workers to reaffirm their unwavering commitment to working-class internationalism, and as such workers across the world must unite, intensify class struggles for the fulfilment of their contemporary needs and that of the broader working-class."



TSAKANE STADIUM, BRAKPAN

COSATU 2nd Deputy President, Duncan Luvuno stressed the importance of the advancement of workers' rights in the labour market, the creation of decent jobs for all, ensuring that youth unemployment is eradicated through skills revolution, drive the agenda for decent work in all workplaces, the promotion of the dignity of workers and the acceleration of economic transformation in South Africa



CURRIES FOUNTAIN STADIUM, DURBAN

COSATU General Secretary, Solly Phetoe expressed support to the Madlanga Commission as part of eradication of corruption or state capture, ending austerity measures and budget cuts, the tackling of violent crime in working class communities, the eradication of gender-based violence against vulnerable groupings, the protection of whistleblowers, the full implementation of the National Health Insurance, the enforcement of the National Minimum Wage, the promotion of health and safety in all workplaces, the eradication of precarious working conditions suffered by domestic workers, Community Healthcare Workers, and EPW employees in municipalities.



KAMAGUGU STADIUM, MBOMBELA

COSATU Deputy General Secretary, Gerald Twala emphasised that 'COSATU is concerned by an increase on repo rates by the South African Reserve Bank because workers are struggling in South Africa. The Federation rejects the wage gap between high earners in State-Owned Entities and the poor workers on the shopfloor. COSATU supports the public service trade unions against the exorbitant Government Employees Medical Scheme's member contribution.'



MITTAH SEPEREPERE CONVENTION CENTRE, KIMBERLEY

COSATU National Treasurer, Freda Oosthuysen argued that COSATU must continue to advocate for health and safety in the workplace, considering the mining disaster that took place at Ekapa Mine in Kimberley. Oosthuysen pledged solidarity with the affected families and called for the Department of Mineral Resources and Petroleum and the Department of Employment and Labour to accelerate labour inspections and enforcement of health and safety standards.



NANGOZA JEBE HALL, GQEBERHA

COSATU Central Executive Committee Member and Nyameka Macanda, NEHAWU 1st Deputy President delivered the key message from the Federation. Macanda reaffirmed COSATU as a shield of workers in South Africa by advancing the interests of the working class. She applauded workers for displaying revolutionary conduct by delivering public services though under heavy shortages of staff, tools of trade and facing severe austerity measures. Other rallies were held at guKomo, Komani and Lusikisiki.



WORKER ISSUES

REAWAKENING WORKER Activism To Unite South Africa's Fractured Labour Movement - By Dr. Reneva Fourie

SACP leaders at the recent bilateral session with the African National Congress Officials at Luthuli House, Johannesburg.

International Workers' Day traces its origins to the 1889 gathering of the Second International in Paris, where labour and socialist parties called for a global demonstration to demand the eight-hour workday.

The date was chosen to honour the 1886 American general strike, when over 300,000 workers walked off the job, often working 12 to 16 hours a day amid dangerous conditions and low wages.

That strike led to the Haymarket affair, and the day soon became an annual

symbol of solidarity.

By 1904, the movement had grown into a worldwide call for workers' rights, social justice and enduring peace.

South Africa's History of Worker Struggles

In South Africa, it carries deep resonance rooted in earlier formations like the Industrial and Commercial Workers' Union (ICU) of the 1920s and later the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU), which, through organisations like the Communist Party of South Africa (SACP) after its banning, linked labour struggle to national liberation.

This tradition deepened in the 1970s–80s as militant shop-floor organisation and mass strikes challenged apartheid, uniting workplace and community struggles and reinforcing the belief that worker power is central to political and economic freedom.

Why 1994 Did Not Bring Economic Justice?

Yet the democratic transition of 1994 did not equate economic transformation. It transferred formal political power while leaving the economy's ownership and structural character intact.

The deep problems in South Africa's job market aren't accidental.

They are the natural result of an economy that benefits the rich and is tied to a global system where wealthy countries control poorer ones on unfair terms. That system now forces workers to confront new frontiers of precarity and technological displacement.

Impact of Unemployment

The Quarter 4 figures released by Statistics South Africa in 2025 place the unemployment rate at 31.4 per cent, with approximately 7.8 million people unemployed.

When discouraged work-seekers are included, the rate rises to 42.1 per cent. Youth unemployment at 43.3 per cent signals a generation excluded from stable participation in the economy.

These figures reflect both policy failure and the structural tendency of capitalism to generate a reserve army of labour, disciplining employed workers through the threat of replacement and depressing wages across the economy.

Employment growth remains negligible, with marginal gains unable to absorb new entrants to the labour market. Formal sector employment increased by 320,000 jobs in the last quarter of 2025, mainly driven by the Services, Construction and Finance industries.

However, the largest decreases in employment were recorded in the Trade, Manufacturing, and Mining industries, with the informal sector contracting by 293,000 positions.

Economic Restructuring

These figures reveal a deeper restructuring as production is reorganised to reduce reliance on stable employment.

Deindustrialisation has weakened manufacturing's contribution to the economy, compounded by instability in energy and water supplies and deteriorating infrastructure.

This process follows the logic that powerful companies move production to places where labour is cheaper while turning poorer economies into markets for finished goods and sources of raw materials. The result is a labour market defined by insecurity.

The Decline of Trade Union Power

Amid this crisis, trade unions have seen their influence wane. After the democratic breakthrough in 1994, the role of organised labour evolved. Trade unions became institutional actors within a legal framework of collective bargaining, and many leaders entered formal politics, as witnessed in other capitalist countries.

The Tripartite Alliance bound the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) to a governing party that pursued neoliberal policies, privatisation and fiscal austerity. Union leaders largely became administrators of class compromise rather than organisers of class struggle.

Union density in the formal sector has fallen to an estimated 25-27 per cent, down from roughly 45-50 per cent in the late 1980s and 1990s. Currently, fewer than one in three formal sector workers are unionised.

Casualisation, outsourcing and labour brokering fragment the workforce and limit

collective organisation.

At the same time, advances in artificial intelligence and automation are reshaping production processes.

Under capitalism, such technology serves to intensify the extraction of surplus value and to render workers disposable. The task is not merely to adapt to these changes but to challenge the class relations that determine how technology is deployed.

The Labour Movement's Internal Struggles

Compounding these structural pressures are internal contradictions within the labour movement. Internal divisions and leadership conflicts have weakened federations such as Cosatu and the National Council of Trade Unions, as well as newer formations such as the South African Federation of Trade Unions.

A stratum of union officials has also emerged, whose conditions of life resemble those of the petty bourgeoisie rather than those of the workers they nominally represent. Vigilance for the emergence of a labour aristocracy that benefits from class collaboration must therefore always be maintained.

The Path Forward: Unity First

The fragmentation of organised labour is a serious obstacle to worker power. Yet the foundations for renewal

remain strong. The first step towards revitalisation is unity.

A divided labour movement cannot confront the structural forces that drive unemployment and inequality.

The differences within and between federations should not obscure their shared interests in stable employment, fair wages and economic democratisation.

Union Investment Funds

Beyond the factory floor and the office block, workers must also turn their attention to the investment funds accumulated by their unions. The various investment arms of unions, such as NUM, NUMSA, NEHAWU and Solidarity, have portfolios worth several billion rand spanning financial services, property, renewable energy and healthcare.

It is important to note that investing workers' funds in capitalist enterprises does not challenge capitalist relations of production. The returns may fund social programmes, but they are derived from the surplus value extracted from other workers.

However, if coordinated and ethically managed, trade union investment vehicles could provide a meaningful foundation for expanding worker influence in sectors crucial to South Africa's future.

Five strategic steps for unions

Within the constraints of a capitalist economy, unions

can pursue several strategic interventions.

First, investment arms should prioritise stakes in productive enterprises rather than passive financial instruments, targeting sectors with potential for job creation and industrial development.

Second, unions must demand board representation and decision-making power commensurate with their shareholding, transforming investment into genuine leverage over corporate governance.

Third, union funds should support worker cooperatives and employee ownership schemes that prefigure alternative forms of production.

Fourth, federations must coordinate their investments to concentrate influence rather than dispersing resources across fragmented portfolios.

Fifth, unions should link investment strategy to broader campaigns for progressive industrial policy, using shareholder power to advocate for local procurement, skills development and decent work conditions.

These efforts will not abolish capitalist relations, but they can expand the terrain of struggle, build organisational capacity and demonstrate in practice that workers can manage economic resources.

The Role of the State and Fighting Corruption

The question of the state is equally central. The democratic order that workers helped to establish cannot be treated as external to their struggles. It is both an arena of contestation and a site of responsibility.

The post-apartheid state, despite universal suffrage and constitutional rights, enforces austerity and neoliberalism.

This form of governance is a breeding ground for corruption, particularly in peripheral economies where businesses depend on tenders rather than building productive enterprises. Workers, through their unions and through their own conduct on the job, must expose and resist corrupt practices.

Whistleblowers must be protected. Union officials who collude with corrupt managers or politicians must be expelled.

The working class has no interest in protecting the corrupt who treat public resources as personal property.

Defending Public Services is a Class Struggle.

Workers must also lead in improving public sector performance, as the working class and the poor depend most heavily on public services.

When electricity fails, less privileged households sit in darkness while the wealthy run generators. When water infrastructure collapses, it is poor communities that queue at standpipes.

When public hospitals deteriorate, it is the masses who wait in overcrowded corridors while those with medical aid access private care. When public transport is unreliable, it is the poor who arrive late to work and risk dismissal.

Progressive workers must therefore treat the defence and improvement of public services as a frontline of class struggle.

Why Workers Still Hold The Power?

The force that once toppled apartheid now faces a different adversary. An impersonal system of global capital and algorithmic control that values supposed efficiency over justice.

But history demonstrates that collective action can humanise even the most dehumanising systems.

Without the labour of millions, nothing would be built, nothing would be transported, nothing would be taught, nothing would be healed.

The working class creates all wealth, yet it is excluded from control over production and the state. The stronghold of capitalism depends entirely on worker submission.

A Call to Action this May Day

This May Day requires a reawakening of worker activism. Workers must flood trade unions and strengthen them.

Workers are called upon to unite across sectors and

organisational divides, to defend existing employment while shaping the future of work, to deploy their collective resources strategically, and to assert their role in the governance of the society they helped to create.

Beyond Unions: The Need for a Revolutionary Vanguard Party
However, meaningful change cannot be carried out by trade unions alone.

It requires a revolutionary vanguard party, grounded in the interests and lived realities of working people, to help translate workplace struggles into lasting societal transformation.

Stronger coordination between unions, community structures and democratic institutions can deepen worker influence over economic and political decisions.

The forthcoming Conference of the Left could lay an important foundation for advancing worker aspirations.

In this way, collective organisation can move beyond resistance, shaping a more equitable and inclusive system in which working people play a central role in determining the country's future.

Dr Reneva Fourie is the Member of the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party and a policy analyst specialising in governance, development and security. 



COSATU MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS



BRATION - 1 MAY 2026



The Economy

WORKERS AND FOOD struggles in South Africa

The food system — how food is produced, processed and distributed, and what it costs — is a crucial issue for workers. Everyone needs to eat, but too many workers struggle to afford a healthy diet, even when they work hard for long hours. Corporations and farm owners in the food sector continually try to squeeze more profits from workers through actions like casualising labour, investing in machinery and computerisation to allow them to retrench workers, and keeping wages as low as possible, even by evading the national minimum wage. From farm workers to supermarket cashiers, labour brokers are involved in organising casual workers with few rights. Seasonal and casual workers are paid only when absolutely essential for farms and businesses to operate, and are out of work and going hungry when the bosses don't need them.

The struggle for workers in the food system has three sides. First, is the struggle to get decent pay and working conditions. Second, workers and their families are affected by high food prices that make healthy eating unaffordable on low wages. Third, millions of unemployed workers simply don't have money for food, and government grants like the R370 Social Relief from Distress Grant are not enough to buy the food they need, let alone other essential expenses.

The situation is getting worse: government is allowing workers' rights to be undermined, leaving

corporations to set food prices in a globalised economy where prices and wars in other countries are impacting food prices in South Africa, and letting the buying power of social grants dwindle as they fail to keep pace with inflation. All of this is seen in the statistics. 63.5% of South African households are food insecure, and 8 million people are severely food insecure, which means they suffer from hunger and undernutrition.

More than one in four children have stunted growth due to poor nutrition, especially in the crucial first 1 000 days, from conception to two years old. Stunting means

that children are not growing up to reach their full potential. If pregnant people and babies do not have enough diverse and healthy food, the child does not develop as they should.

Worst of all, 10 000 children die every year because of malnutrition. These deaths and the negative impacts of stunting are tragic for the children and their families, and a loss of human potential for our country. This is also the clearest indicator that companies in South Africa are not paying for the full cost of reproduction; the cost of creating the next generation of workers. For full and healthy

lives, we all need balanced diets to meet our bodies' needs. It is not enough to have our stomachs full of pap or bread. It is not enough to have energy from sugar, which also gives us health problems.

While highly processed snacks and foods like Simba chips, instant noodles, biscuits and other fatty, salty and sweet foods and drinks can make us feel good for a short time, they don't build our bodies for healthy lives. Most fast foods, like KFC and McDonald's are highly processed and have far more salt and fat in them than is good for us. We need protein from foods like meat, fish, beans and milk.

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We also need fresh fruits and vegetables that have fibre and different vitamins. The rising tide of non-communicable disease maiming and killing our elders — diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, strokes — are a result of the unhealthy diets working class people are exposed to by the food industry, as they try to cope with low wages and unemployment.

Hunger and unhealthy eating in South Africa are caused by poverty, unemployment and inequality.

Neoliberal economic policies have allowed the rich and their companies to take over more and more of the economy. Investors and corporations can then take more of the income for themselves to increase their profits, while workers (including unemployed workers) are left with very little to live on.

The poorest half of the population in South Africa get less than 6% of all income in the country, while the richest 10% take over 65%. For example, in 2025, Shoprite paid its Chief Executive Officer R87 million.

They also paid out R3.98 billion in dividends to shareholders. At the same time, cashiers working full-time at Shoprite earned, on average, just R4 343 per month, or R52 000 for the year. The national minimum wage, working eight hours a day for 21 days a month, is now R5 078.64.

Even if the whole wage was spent on food, it is not enough to pay for a basic food basket that can meet the nutrition needs of a family of four. In reality, every family has other unavoidable expenses, such as transport, electricity or fuel for heating and cooking, soap and other toiletries, rent, phone calls, healthcare, and more. The Child Support Grant, now R580 per month, does not buy enough food

for one child.

The Old Age Pension, at R2 400, is less than half the minimum wage. This gap between what workers earn (or what the unemployed get in grants) and the actual cost of food and other necessities is what leaves so many people food insecure, hungry and unhealthy. Widespread food insecurity also ensures that people are willing to work under exploitative and dangerous conditions, keeping wages low and enabling corporations to extract greater profits.

Food insecurity benefits the corporate agrifood sector and its financial backers.

As well as wages and grants not being enough for healthy lives, South Africa has not achieved land reforms that could give more people the opportunity to grow food to support themselves. Town planning and regulations also fail to make space for public food markets and urban agriculture and, at the same time, restrict the space for people to make money for themselves with street vending and other small businesses.

This leaves workers dependent on large corporations for jobs and food under the conditions and at the prices set by these very corporations. And all of this is happening despite our Constitution saying that, “Everyone has the right to have access to sufficient food”.

To continue to have hunger in South Africa is a choice that is being made by companies, the government and us. We can choose to end hunger.

Other countries, including many with much smaller economies than South Africa, such as Senegal and Ghana, have less hunger. Countries like China, Brazil, Vietnam, Peru,

Ghana and Ethiopia have all significantly reduced the levels of hunger in their countries over the last 20 years.

Common features of success are political and government commitment combining multiple interventions. These interventions include: investing in agriculture, in particular small-scale farmers; social protection programmes such as grants; nutrition-specific interventions that ensure healthy food (not just full stomachs) such as those for pregnant people and babies and school feeding programmes; local and government procurement that benefits food producers and the hungry.

Workers can do a lot to ensure that we have a better food system that provides quality jobs and ends hunger. Workers need to organise to inform themselves about healthy diets and what is going wrong in the food system.

Workers can make better food choices by avoiding spending money on unhealthy food and drinks and demanding that companies they work for and their government do more to make healthy food affordable.

They can also join other initiatives, such as the Union Against Hunger.

By being part of movements and campaigns to end hunger, workers can ensure the costs of ending hunger do not fall on them alone. All people need to be able to afford the food they need; the cost of this should not fall on workers through low wages or retrenchments.

When negotiating wage agreements, unions need to ensure they take into account not only the consumer price inflation (CPI), but also food inflation which, for the last years, has been consistently higher

than CPI. This is essential because lower paid workers spend a large amount of their income on food.

Struggles over food can include other demands important to workers, such as for a universal basic income grant (UBIG), which must be at a level that enables people to buy enough healthy food.

Our current grants and any possible UBIG should enable people to have lives of dignity, which needs food, and not keep people in abject poverty. As with other parts of the economy, our food system needs fundamental transformation.

Steps such as requiring workers shareholding and representation in company boards have been found, in countries like Germany, to improve conditions for workers and reduce inequalities. Hunger and malnutrition are much worse than they should be in an upper-middle-income country like South Africa. Lack of money or food is not the problem. Instead, the root causes are inequality and inequitable access to food and resources.

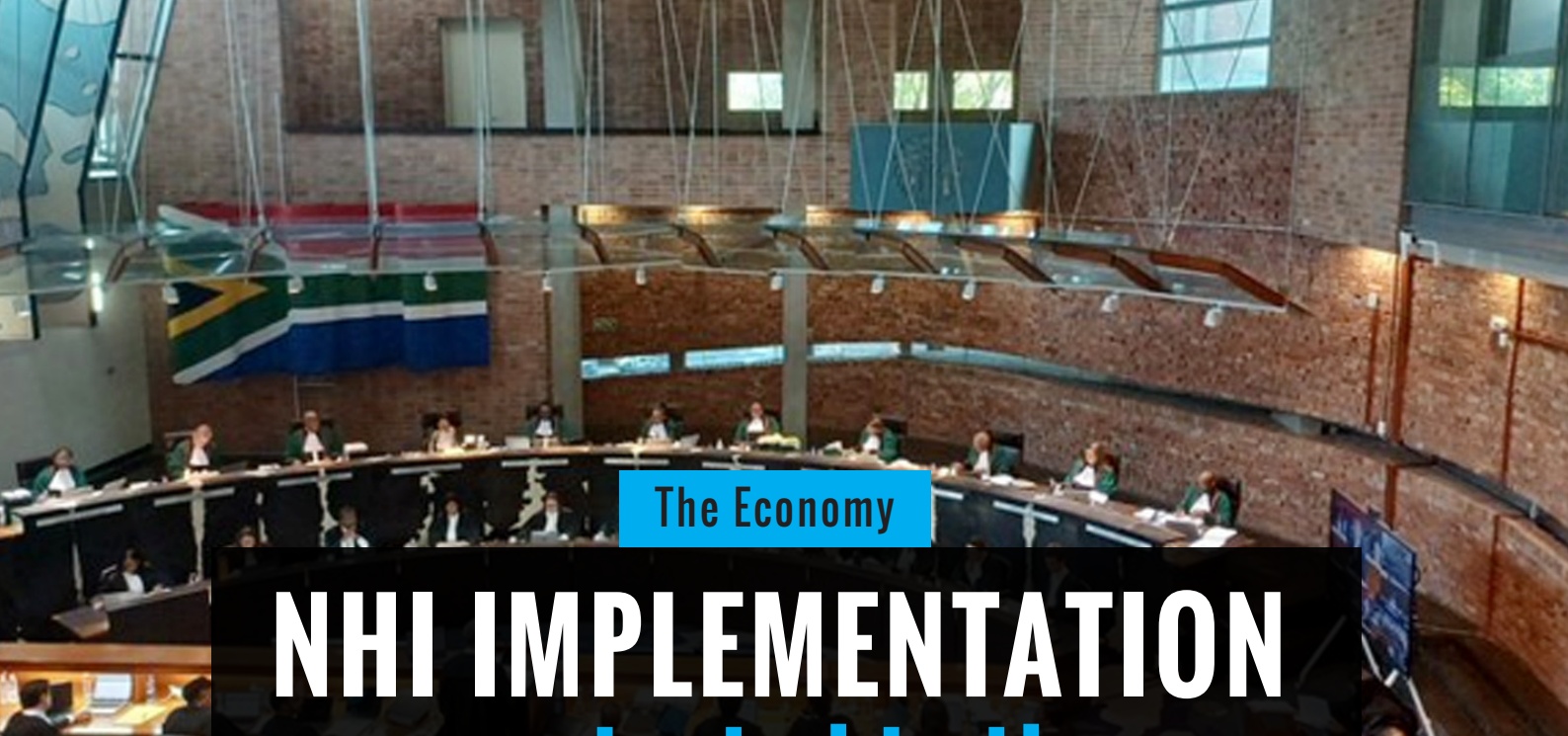
Workers are often overlooked because they are assumed to be working to support their families, which is why they receive very little support from government.

But millions of workers are low-paid, self-employed, part-time or seasonal, earning too little and with no access to unemployment insurance (UIF). Workers and their families have a right to food just like everyone else.

As we reflect on Workers’ Day, let’s remind the government, employers, and workers’ representatives that no worker should be going hungry in South Africa in 2026.

Article written by DSTI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security ¹.

¹ The DSTI-NRF Centre of Excellence in Food Security (CoE-FS) is a national research platform co-hosted by the University of the Western Cape and the University of Pretoria, and is the first CoE to be hosted by an historically disadvantaged institution. Since 2014, the CoE-FS has helped develop the next generation of researchers through postgraduate training and capacity development. Our work spans governance and policymaking, innovation and technology, and nutrition and food safety. Grounded in South Africa’s realities, the CoE-FS is committed to research that addresses real societal needs and contributes to improved food and nutrition security, food safety and equitable access to food.



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NHI IMPLEMENTATION contested in the ConCourt, in Braamfontein

The NHI court session was presided over by Chief Justice Maya alongside Deputy Chief Justice Mlambo, Justice Dambuzza, Justice Rogers, Justice Mathopo, Justice Tshidi, Justice Kollapen, Justice Savage, Acting Justice Nuku, and Justice Matjedi on the bench.

The South African Constitutional Court heard a challenge to the National Health Insurance Act brought by the Board of Healthcare Funders NPC v Speaker of the National Assembly and Others CCT251/25.

The group argued that ‘there were procedural flaws in the law’s adoption’ and further argued against the President’s decision to sign it.

The application brought by the Board of Healthcare Funders centres on whether there was meaningful public participation on the contentious legislation.

The Board of Healthcare

Funders (BHF) is challenging the process that led to the adoption of the National Health Insurance (NHI) Act in 2023 by President Cyril Ramaphosa.

President Cyril Ramaphosa has since 2018 reiterated ‘the commitment of the South African Government to overcome the current two-tier health system, its inequities and inefficiencies through the progressive implementation of the NHI.

The work of Government on NHI is guided by the core principles which were first laid out in the NHI White Paper in 2015. These core principles refer to universal health coverage on the basis of need rather

than ability to pay; greater social solidarity through cross-subsidisation; and the creation of a single common pool of funding through the National Health Insurance Fund.’

High costs of healthcare in South Africa

Recently medical aids have been increasing their subscriptions by up to 10% and more, with the Government Employees Medical Scheme (GEMS) increasing member’s medical aid contribution by 9.5% in 2026.

This fact was worsened by the expose by the retired Chief Justice Ngcobo through

the Health Market Inquiry initiated by the Competition Commission which further exposed the high costs of the private health sector. Its recommendations were meant to improve the feasibility and sustainability of the National Health Insurance (NHI).

The Commission was tasked, inter alia, to “implement measures to increase market transparency” and “advise, and receive advice from, any regulatory authority”. In order to fulfil these functions, and in line with the purpose of the Act, Chapter 4A of the Act enables the Commission to conduct market inquiries in respect of the “general state



COSATU and its Affiliates committed to continue to stand in solidarity with the Health Department, Minister Motsoaledi and government as they battle these unjustified legal challenges to the NHI Act.

of competition in a market for particular goods and services, without necessarily referring to the conduct or activities of any particular name firm”.

“A market inquiry is thus a general investigation into the state, nature and form of competition in a market, rather than a narrow investigation of a specific conduct by any particular firm. The Commission has initiated an inquiry into the private healthcare sector because it has reason to believe that there are features of the sector that prevent, distort or restrict competition.”

Alliance partners and civil society were present at the ConCourt to hear the arguments. The former Minister of Health, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma argued that the African National calls on all citizens to defend the National Health Insurance Act as the Constitutional Court hears challenges from the 5th -7th of May 2026.

Dlamini-Zuma said, “We must protect the gains of democracy and advance the right to quality, accessible healthcare for all. The National Health Insurance remains central to building a just and equal society, as outlined in the ANC Manifesto. We stand united to defend the gains of democracy. Quality healthcare is not for sale – it’s a RIGHT. The NHI is ANC policy. The NHI is social justice. The NHI is the end of two-tier healthcare.”

Dlamini-Zuma alluded that parties challenging the National Health Insurance (NHI) want to retain inequality.

The SACP Central Committee Member, P.J Mnguni reaffirming the Party’s unwavering commitment to accessible, quality healthcare for all.

COSATU General Secretary, Solly Phetoe said, “COSATU is in support for the full introduction of the National Health Insurance in South Africa to enhance the well-being of the citizens and to promote the provision of quality healthcare for all.”

Alliance partners unanimously declared that NHI represents a decisive and revolutionary step in giving practical expression to provide healthcare as a public good anchored in equality, solidarity and human dignity.

NHI is meant to dismantle the dual health system, one for the poor and the other for the rich. It serves to correct the historical distortion by pooling the nation’s resources to ensure universal and equitable access to quality healthcare services.

Arguments in the ConCourt

It is on record that the current South African health system has over the years resulted in disparities in how it is administered. It is based on both the private and public health system. 84% of the population receive their services through the public health facilities; which are inadequately resourced, while 16% of the population receive their health services through the private health system; which is highly resourced.

Former Ministers of Health, Dr. Zweli Mkhize, Dr. Joe Phaahla and current Minister of Health, Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi consistently argued strongly in the previous Budget

Speeches that ‘the National Health Insurance is about the provision of the universal health coverage in South Africa. Through the NHI, we envision that both private and public healthcare can equally share resources to accommodate all South Africans who are in need of medical care, without compromising the quality and service standards. It will draw in hospitals, clinics, doctors, specialists and dentists from across the health sector.

NHI will in a phased approach, tackle the unacceptably high levels of inequalities; particularly as they relate to the health care services in the country, argued Dr. Motsoaledi.

This is a challenge to the Parliamentary processes, argued Counsel to the Applicants in their head of arguments. NHI is meant to transform payment mechanisms for the provision of healthcare services, argued the respondent’s Counsel in their head of arguments.

NHI is introduced to accelerate healthcare efficiencies, argued Counsel for government. NHI will bridge gaps in the healthcare system and cut costs.

Advocate Bruce Leech SC, represented the Board of Healthcare Funders (BHF) while Advocate Ngwako Maenetje SC, represented Parliament.

It is not known how will the justices rule on this matter.

NHI judgment has been reserved.



The Economy

WORKING CLASS under siege – The rising cost of healthcare and the Gems crisis - By Thulani Ngwenya

Members of POPCRU, NEHAWU, DENOSA, SADTU, SAEPU, PAWUSA and SAMATU led a massive picket at the offices of GEMS at Menlyn, demanding the scrapping of the 9.8% increase in 2026.

The Government Employees Medical Scheme (Gems) was established as a social solidarity instrument – to provide affordable, equitable healthcare to public servants.

Today, that founding vision is under threat. When contributions rise beyond affordability, when co-payments increase, when members are forced to downgrade or exit the scheme, we are witnessing the erosion of that social compact.

Across the length and breadth of our country, Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (Popcru) members – those who dedicate their lives to policing our communities, guarding our correctional centres and ensuring public safety – are facing a deepening crisis of survival.

At the centre of this crisis lies a painful contradiction: those who serve the public are increasingly unable to afford their own healthcare.

There comes a moment in the life of any working-class

formation where silence becomes betrayal. That moment is now.

The recent increases in the Government Employees Medical Scheme (Gems) have pushed our members to the brink. In 2025 alone, contributions rose by 13.4%, followed by a further 9.8% increase in January 2026, later adjusted to 9.5% from April 2026. This amounts to a staggering 23.2% increase over two years.

Let us pause and reflect on what this means in

real terms.

In the same period, public servants received wage increases of around 5.5% in 2025/26 and roughly 4% in 2026/27. Inflation has hovered around 3–4%. The conclusion is unavoidable: medical aid costs are rising at more than double the rate of wages. This is not just a policy problem – it is a lived crisis.

It means a correctional officer must now choose between medical cover and putting food on the table. It means a police officer must

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think twice before taking a child to a specialist. It means a traffic officer must fear illness – not because of the disease itself, but because of the cost of treatment.

This is the brutal reality of austerity.

For years, workers have been told to tighten their belts. We have been told that the state must reduce spending, that wages must be contained, that benefits must be “rationalised”.

Yet, at the same time, the cost of living continues to rise relentlessly –electricity, food, transport, and now healthcare. Medical scheme costs have become one of the most aggressive drivers of this crisis.

Pressure on Gems

Even within Gems itself, the pressures are evident. The scheme now pays out approximately R180-million in claims per day, serving more than 2.3 million beneficiaries, with utilisation rates far higher than many private schemes.

This tells us two things.

First, workers are using healthcare because they need it – because of the physical and psychological toll of working in the criminal justice system. Second, the system itself is under strain, and instead of addressing structural inefficiencies, the burden is being shifted onto workers.

We must ask: why are workers paying for a crisis they did not create?

The broader medical scheme environment in South Africa paints an even more troubling picture. Healthcare has increasingly become commodified – driven by profit motives, administrative costs and private-sector pricing models that are detached from the realities of working-class households.

The very system that should guarantee dignity in times of illness is now reproducing inequality.

Gems was established as a social solidarity instrument – to provide affordable, equitable healthcare to public servants. Today, that founding vision is under threat. When contributions rise beyond affordability, when co-payments increase, when members are forced to downgrade or exit the scheme, we are witnessing the erosion of that social compact.

And the consequences are severe.

Members delay seeking care. Chronic conditions go untreated. Mental health deteriorates.

Families fall into debt. In the end, the cost is not only borne by individuals, but by society as a whole, through weakened public service delivery and declining morale

among frontline workers.

As POPCRU, we refuse to accept this trajectory.

More than a Gems issue

We are clear that this is not merely a Gems issue – it is a working-class issue. It is about the broader political economy of healthcare in South Africa. It is about the failure to align wages, subsidies and social protection with the real cost of living.

That is why we are strengthening our programme of action, not in isolation, but in unity.

As affiliates of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), we are working together with other unions across the federation. But importantly, we also recognise that these challenges cut across organisational lines.

Workers in the Federation of Unions of South Africa (Fedusa) face the same crisis. Their members, like ours, are confronted with the same painful reality of declining real incomes and rising healthcare costs.

This is why we must build a united front of workers.

Because whether you wear a Cosatu badge or a Fedusa badge, the debit order deduction does not discriminate. The burden is the same. The pain is the same.

Together, we must confront:

The unjustifiable escalation of medical scheme contributions above inflation and wage growth;

The failure of the employer subsidy to adequately cushion workers;

The lack of transparency and accountability in cost drivers within medical schemes; and

The broader commodification of healthcare in our country.

We must demand a system that places people before profit. A system that recognises healthcare not as a privilege, but as a right.

The struggle for affordable healthcare is inseparable from the struggle for economic justice.

It is inseparable from the fight against austerity. It is inseparable from the broader mission of building a society that values human dignity.

We call on all our members to remain vigilant, organised and mobilised. We call on all workers, across federations, to unite in defence of their livelihoods.

Because the reality is simple:

A worker who cannot afford healthcare is a worker under siege.

And a working class under siege must rise.

Now is the time.



INFRASTRUCTURE investments must drive local economic participation - President Ramaphosa

President Cyril Ramaphosa: 2026 National Local Economic Development Summit

President Cyril Ramaphosa addressed the 2026 National Local Economic Development Summit at Boksburg, urging social partners, investors and local government leadership to fast-track on re-engineering local economies growth, taking advantage of the R890 billion in investment pledges secured at the recent National Investment Conference at Sandton, to be implemented across all provinces.

He alluded that the District Development Model's One Plan is a binding economic transformation compact to be followed across the country.

And he called on businesses to partner with municipalities, develop local suppliers, invest in skills and open value chains.

He argued that regional economic partnerships must consider how small enterprise, township and village economies can be better integrated into markets and value chains. Such a development must include the broader African market, which we are unlocking through the African Continental Free Trade Area.

President Ramaphosa raised concerns regarding collapsing municipalities in some provinces, citing challenges related to 'weaknesses in delivery quality municipal services, financial mismanagement, wasteful expenditure, unreliable electricity, water,

poor roads, failure to maintain infrastructure and unsafe trading environments.

"Without fixing governance, we cannot fix service delivery and without fixing service delivery, we cannot unlock local economic development", alluded President Ramaphosa.

"The answer lies in professionalising our municipalities and ensuring that our governance structures are capable, accountable and inclusive. We must professionalise the local economic development function. Appointments must be made based on merit, relevant skills, experience and qualifications, while holding people to strong ethical standards."

President Ramaphosa reiterated that, "When investors build their business in our country, they don't set up factories or open call centres on the lawns of the Union Buildings or in front of the Houses of Parliament. This investment takes place in metros, cities, towns and villages. Just as local government is the engine room of development, metro, district and local municipalities must see themselves as incubators of economic activity. When an entrepreneurship culture is strong and supported in cities and towns, it contributes to job creation and small business development. South Africa has a burgeoning entrepreneurial sector that

continues to increase its contribution to economic activity and job creation."

"The first of these is to unblock service delivery constraints at local government level, especially with regards to basic infrastructure. Energy security, water provision, roads and rail lines are the foundation of growth.

We have made much progress in tackling load shedding and improving the efficiency of our logistics sector. This summit must now translate national progress into local success. Municipalities must be the frontline in unblocking infrastructure constraints, ensuring that the local industrial park has the power it needs, that tourists can enjoy clean and safe beaches, and that township businesses have streetlighting to trade safely beyond daylight hours."

"The second set of actions I would like to see emerge from this summit revolve around the ease of doing business. Cutting red tape is crucial both to attract large scale investments and also to enable informal traders and small township entrepreneurs to succeed.

Some of our cities and municipalities have done well in improving the ease of doing business. They have systems and targets for zoning approvals, issuing construction permits, connecting businesses with water and electricity, issuing

trading and business licenses, including using e-registration systems. There is regulatory certainty. However, I worry that these municipalities are the exception rather than the rule. More often than not, bureaucratic delays at municipal level prevent local investments from getting over the line."

President Ramaphosa concluded by calling on state-owned entities to accelerate their infrastructure investments to drive local economic participation.'

"When infrastructure is built, we must see local suppliers, local contractors and local jobs. Our development finance institutions must help to de-risk municipal infrastructure and develop blended finance solutions that turn plans into bankable projects, and projects into delivery."

The National Local Economic Development (LED) Summit has concluded with a strong and unified commitment from government and traditional leadership to implement the summit declaration and accelerate inclusive economic growth across South Africa's municipalities and traditional communities.

The Summit unanimously stressed that accountability, skills, and effective governance are critical to ensuring that resources are utilised efficiently to drive sustainable local economic development.



The Economy

DRIVING REINDUSTRIALISATION and bringing back its manufacturing strength will create the most needed jobs

Deputy Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Zuko Godlimpi visited Tongaat Hullet sugar plantation as part of government's effort to save jobs threatened by liquidation of the company. Godlimpi has hailed the signing of the Phase Two of the Sugarcane Value Master Plan and declared it will focus on product diversification and securing jobs.

Prior to participating in the National, the Deputy Minister Zuko Godlimpi executed a site visit at the Union Co-operative Limited (UCL) Company, a company which has been operating for 100 years and specialises in wattle tannin extracts, sugar, and pine lumber. The company is employing

more than 900 personnel permanently and 200 seasonals. The visit came as a result of threats of erosion of jobs in the sugar industry.

Emanating from the National Local Economic Development Summit in Boksburg, the Deputy

Minister Zuko Godlimpi called for the revitalisation of the economy of regional Special Economic Zones (SEZ) by driving reindustrialisation and bringing back its manufacturing strength such as in the Vaal.

Siphe Macanda from the Department of Small

Business Development argued that 'by creating jobs, supporting businesses, and restoring economic activity, South Africa will directly address some of 'the root causes of crime. Economic inclusion is one of the most effective tools for building safer communities.'

The Department of Small Business Development (DSBD), in collaboration with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA), together with key ecosystem stakeholders, has reaffirmed its commitment to accelerating inclusive, sustainable, and enterprise-led local economic development following the conclusion of the National Local Economic Development (LED) Summit 2026.

At the summit, participants formally adopted the LED Summit Pledge and Declaration, which outlines a clear and coordinated programme of action to translate policy intent into measurable economic outcomes at local level.

The Declaration responds decisively to persistent challenges facing communities and municipalities, including high levels of unemployment, inequality, spatial disparities, infrastructure constraints, and limited institutional capacity.

The Declaration recognises that local economic development is a critical

lever for inclusive growth and positions municipalities as active drivers of economic transformation.

It further acknowledges the important role of Traditional Leadership as a strategic partner and enabler in advancing local economic opportunities, social cohesion, and community-based enterprise development.

Key commitments outlined in the Declaration include:

- Overhauling the business licensing system to reduce red tape and improve the ease of doing business through the establishment of one-stop service centres across all districts and metropolitan areas, supported by digitalisation, regulatory reform, and the expedited finalisation of the Business Licensing Bill.
- Repositioning Local Economic Development as a strategic, innovative and entrepreneurial system that actively supports enterprise creation, investment attraction, and sustainable job opportunities.
- Strengthening coordination and data-driven decision-making through the development of a comprehensive digital information and data-sharing platform to capture real-time economic development activities across municipalities.
- Introducing innovative financing mechanisms for LED and infrastructure-related projects, supported by dedicated technical assistance and project preparation to improve project bankability.
- Expanding access to finance for micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) by developing appropriate and scalable financing models across all spheres of government.
- Enhancing accountability and impact through a coordinated monitoring and evaluation framework, including clear indicators, regular reporting, and measurable outcomes.

Minister Stella Ndabeni of Small Business Development emphasised that the Declaration signals a shift from fragmented interventions to a more integrated, results-driven

approach to local economic development.

“This Declaration represents a collective commitment to act boldly and collaboratively to unlock local economic potential. By simplifying regulatory processes, strengthening municipal capability, supporting MSMEs, and improving coordination across government and key partners, we are laying the foundation for vibrant local economies that create jobs and opportunity for all,” said Ndabeni.

The Department of Small Business Development will work closely with national, provincial and local government, the private sector, development finance institutions, organised labour, Traditional Leadership structures, and civil society to give effect to the commitments contained in the Declaration.

Implementation will focus on practical reforms, measurable delivery, and transparent reporting to ensure that local economic development contributes meaningfully to inclusive growth, poverty reduction, and economic resilience across South Africa.



NUM REJECTS *the unbundling* of Eskom

The Minister of Electricity and Energy Dr. Kgosientsho Ramokgopa visited various mining areas to witness first-hand the immense potential that lies beneath the soil.

The Economy

Members of the National Union of Mineworkers marched on the 18th of April 2026, against the unbundling and proposed privatisation of Eskom.

The union argues that dividing the power utility into separate entities

will threaten jobs, make electricity unaffordable for working-class communities, and undermine national energy sovereignty.

The South African Communist Party and its youth wing, the Young Communist League of South Africa joined

the march in solidarity, with members of the Central Committee in support of the workers' demands for a publicly owned, affordable and developmental energy sector.

L i v h u w a n i Mammburu, NUM's National Spokesperson

argues against the selling of public goods to elites to pursue a system of capitalism for super profits at the expense of the poor working-class communities subjected to energy poverty through policy choices associated with neo-liberalism.

The Case Against the Privatization of Our Power

If the power were mine, the architects of Eskom's privatization would face a jail cell, not a boardroom.

You cannot take a national lifeline and gift it to a handful

of individuals.

In a nation where the majority already struggle to keep the lights on, privatization is not a "market solution"—it is a death sentence for the poor.

The logic of the private investor is profit, not people; their priority is the balance

sheet, not the shivering household.

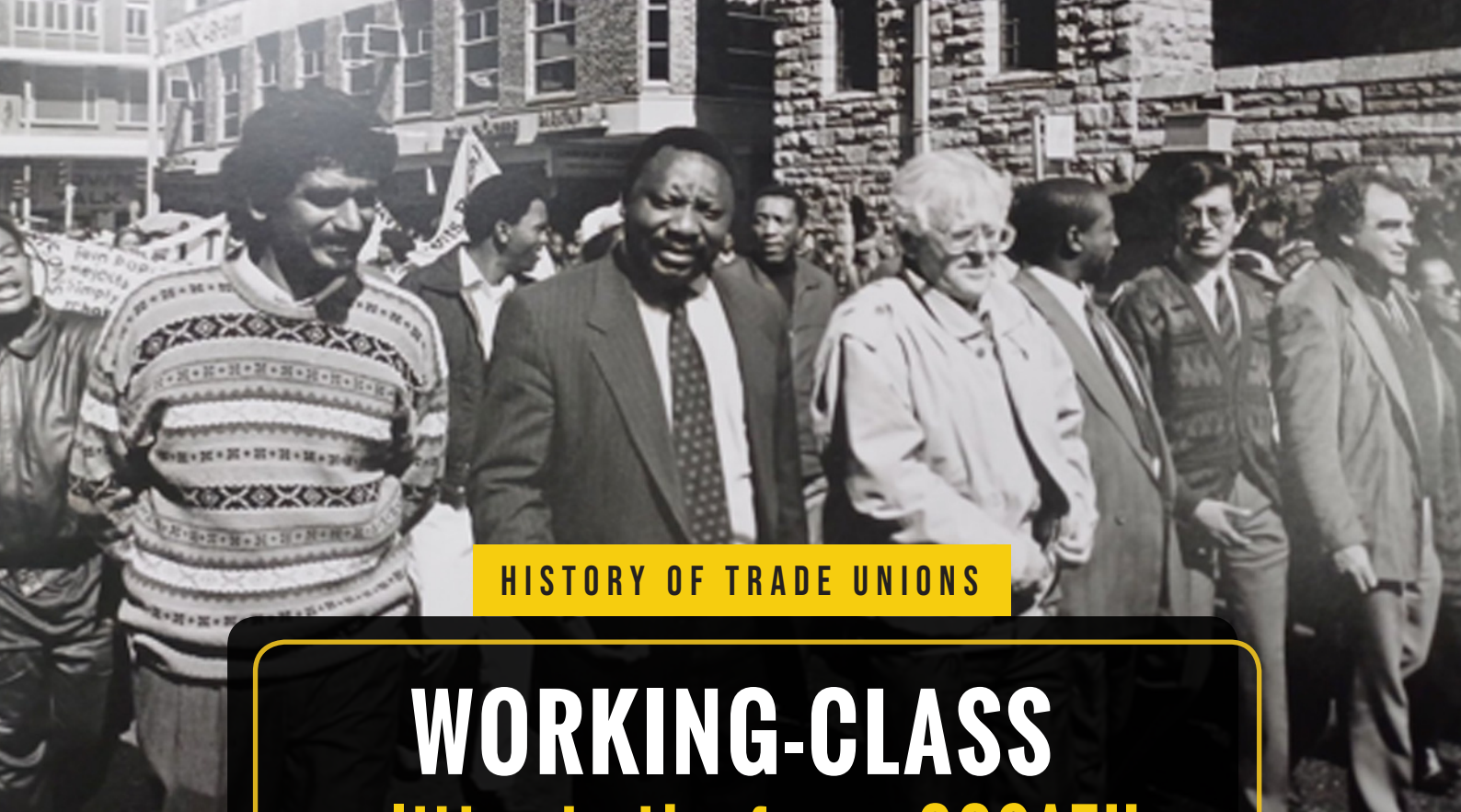
To privatise electricity in South Africa is to commit a crime against the collective.

Access to power is a fundamental human right, yet we are watching it be sold off by a shadow class of

"business-as-usual" gangsters.

The masses must rise. We must treat this theft with the gravity it deserves. It is time to stop the sale and start the arrests.

History will not absolve us.



HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONS

WORKING-CLASS politics to the fore - COSATU Gaining influence or losing power?

**COSATU Founding General Secretary, Jay Naidoo
leading a march with Alliance leaders.**

COSATU, in its early days of establishment, faced a lot of teething challenges that required leadership intervention to ensure that the organisation was propelled to greater heights.

The organisational machinery was set up to deliver more concessions for workers, galvanise workers to join trade unions, represent workers at the shopfloor level, and raise worker's issues internationally.

There were some

individuals or collective that played a huge role, deployed in various committees to cement the teething days to build a globally recognised federation of workers such as Jay Naidoo, Mbazima Shilowa, Chris Dlamini, John Gomomo, Godfrey Oliphant, Rinald Mofokeng, Rachmat Omar, Bangumzi Sifingo, Sallie Manie, Ibrahim Patel, Alec Erwin, Lisa Seftel, Enoch Godongwana, Mike Madlala, Mapeto Leeuw, Dorothy Mokgalo, Snuki Zikalala, Geno Govender, Bobby

Marie, Sakhela Buhlungu and countless others.

Tensions increasingly were evident in balancing national decisions with issues confronting workers on the ground. There was a danger of the Federation losing its militancy and democratic practices because of organisational contradictions and challenges of non-implementation of traditions and practices of Congress Movement. But on the bigger picture, workers

understood that the struggle against colonialism, national oppression and capitalism in South Africa will not be won in libraries but on the battlefields of the people's war for liberation.

Yunus Carrim, a member of the South African Communist Party Central Committee and Politburo, argued after the formation of South Africa's largest Federation of workers that 'its formation would provide an alternative to popular movement politics.

Carrim argued that “The recently-formed Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) is South Africa’s largest ever union federation.”

Carrim examined the union traditions that have come together in Cosatu, and concluded that ‘despite differences within the federation, its formation puts working-class politics firmly on the agenda.’

After four years of painstaking discussions, the majority of South Africa’s emergent unions came together in Durban from 30 November to 1 December last year to form the Congress of South African Trade Unions.

With 33 unions representing 449 679 paid-up members, Cosatu is the largest ever trade union federation in South Africa’s history. It is significant not only in size, but also because it represents unions in almost all major economic sectors, including mining, metal, automobiles, chemicals, textiles, food, transport, wood and paper, municipal services, and commercial and catering.

But its even greater significance is the enormous political weight it will have on the struggle for change in South Africa. As congress convenor Cyril Ramaphosa noted in his opening address: ‘The formation of Cosatu represents a tremendous

victory for the working class. Never before have workers been so powerful and united, and never before have they been so poised to make their mark in society. In this period of crisis, the question that echoes through every section of society – the state, capital and the democratic movement of this country – is how will the congress make its mark on South African society’.

That COSATU sees for itself an assertive political role was repeatedly stressed by the newly-elected representatives of the federation.

General Secretary Jay Naidoo said:

“Our members are demanding this. Wider political events directly affect them, and they want their unions to respond to this and put the stamp of workers on these struggles”.

This was necessary, he said, to ensure that ‘the wealth produced by the workers is controlled by them and shared for the benefit of all the people in a future South Africa.

COSATU president Elijah Barayi, speaking to over 10 000 people at the public launch of the federation, called for the nationalisation of the mines and other major industries, and in interviews with the press said that Cosatu would work towards the creation of a socialist

state in South Africa.

The inaugural congress, however, passed no specific policy on Cosatu’s general political direction. An enormous debate rages within Cosatu at present on how it should play a political role and what the substance of its politics should be. The emergence of a cohesive perspective and strategy depends crucially however on the extent to which COSATU is able to establish a synthesis of the two traditions of trade unionism that it brings together: industrial, more class-oriented unionism, and general, more popular-oriented unionism.

The two traditions

Each of these traditions varies widely, and their generalisation here is somewhat crude.

Industrial unions organise workers belonging to a specific industry. Most of these unions developed in the wake of the 1973 Durban strikes. They have concentrated mainly on recruiting members, securing recognition agreements, establishing strong shop-floor structures, winning workplace demands and providing workers with skills and experience to effectively assume control of their unions.

In creating powerful national industrial unions, they adopted a tactically flexible approach to official industrial relations

machinery, being prepared, for example, to register with the Department of Manpower in terms of the Labour Relations Act, or take part in industrial councils, if this strengthened their organisation.

For the most part, they have avoided overt involvement in wider political and community issues. They have taken up some wider issues directly affecting their members, but through their own structures as far as possible. Joint campaigns with other organisations have been on the basis of their strength on the shop floor and without affiliating to these organisations.

Among the reasons advanced by these unions for not affiliating to the popular movement have been:

- possible divisions in their ranks because members identify with different political organisations;
- differences in structure, organisational practice and politics between mass-based
- unions and activist-based political organisations;
- the popular movement is not fundamentally committed to working-class interests and would subordinate unions to ends not primarily in workers’ interests. The industrial unions have identified their main political task as developing worker organisation,

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creating worker unity and developing worker leadership as a basis for a working-class politics, which would provide an alternative to popular movement politics.

Some of the criticisms of this approach, labelled 'workerist', have been:

- it equates the trade union movement with the working class;
- as unions are not political parties, they cannot demand the leading role in the popular struggle, and though they want this role because of their organised strength, they are at the same time afraid of being subordinated;
- they have yet to spell out in what organisational form a working-class politics will
- be developed, especially as they have not as unions been able to give leadership to the wider political struggle.

Broadly, the industrial union approach has been identified in different ways with the unions in the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu), the General Workers Union (GWU), Food and Canning Workers Union (FCWU), Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union (CCAWUSA), Cape Town Municipal Workers Association (CTMWA), and certain unions in the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA).

The second tradition, general unionism, provides for the organisation of workers irrespective of the industries to which they belong into a single union. General unions sprang up overnight as a result of new legal provisions for African trade unions in 1979, the economic boom and an upsurge of township struggle. Some of them signed on huge numbers of workers, often through strike waves and mass township meetings.

But they have not been able to consolidate themselves on the shop floor in terms of significant paid-up membership, recognition agreements or shop steward structures, as they do not organise along industrial lines.

This has not been helped either by their refusal in principle to register or take part in industrial councils.

Most general unions are based in one region. Some have branches elsewhere, but these operate somewhat autonomously, with links at leadership level rather than from factory to factory.

The general unions have explicitly committed themselves to wider political and community issues, and most affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF). They have tended to blur the distinction between community and workplace as forums for organisation, arguing that 'the workers are the community and

the community the workers'. Weak shop-floor structures and constant state harassment have reinforced their 'community orientation', which in turn has reinforced their weakness on the shop floor.

Among the reasons these unions have offered for affiliating to the UDF have been:

- the need to overcome the limitations of trade union activity and prevent a slide into economism;
- the organised participation of workers through their unions will serve to give the popular struggle a working-class content and direction;
- other classes and strata outside the union movement are indispensable to the wider political struggle, and working-class leadership of these can only be ensured by waging struggles together with them in the popular movement.

This approach, labelled 'populist', has been subjected to various criticisms:

- its abstract political approach to trade unionism, which does not recognise the
- specificity of the trade union terrain, has prevented the development of unions on the shop floor;
- as it does not organise workers specifically as workers and has not been

able to develop strong, national industrial unions, it has not been able to give workers a sense of their organised power;

- as it does not have a powerful organised base, it is not able to give the popular movement a working-class content and leadership.

Broadly, this tradition of unionism is identified with the South African Allied Workers Union (Saawu), General and Allied Workers Union (Gawu), National Federation of Workers (NFW), and the recently disbanded Municipal and General Workers Union (MGWU), among others.

Essentially, the two traditions of unionism differ over how to link economics and politics and what the content of the politics should be. This reflects itself in the differences over how to create working-class leadership and the role of trade unions in this process.

The tensions between and within these traditions were reflected in four years of 'unity talks' aimed at bringing the unions together into one federation. Thirteen meetings were held between August 1981 and June 1985.

Debates raged over issues of registration, industrial demarcation, participation in industrial councils, when the federation should be launched, its form and voting

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structure, financing, affiliate voting strength, the role of paid officials, relations with the international trade union movement, and the role of whites.

But the unions drew closer in a context of deepening recession, increasing industrial monopolisation and sophistication of management strategies, tightening state repression and dramatic escalation of township struggles. As industrial unions came under increasing pressure from their memberships to take up political issues, so general unions, with considerably shrunken bases, have been pressured to establish a strong shop-floor presence.

There are still tensions between the unions.

But COSATU has brought most of them together. Now it has the enormous task of welding these unions into a powerful and effective federation.

Mergers crucial

Fundamental to this task is the merging of unions to create one union per industry. Jay Naidoo stressed that it is absolutely essential that we achieve the mergers as soon as possible. We can only be a powerful force on the shop floor and in the struggles outside if we are based in national industrial unions'.

COSATU's inaugural

congress demarcated industrial sectors and set March 1986 as the deadline for mergers. If progress is not satisfactory by then, a special mid-year national congress will be convened to assess developments. The mergers will have to triumph over past hostilities and differences in organising

Themba Nxumalo, general secretary of NFW: We accept that Cosatu must be based on industrial unions. That's where the power is. We have already begun merging workers in the municipal and railway sectors ourselves. We only accepted general unions because of the

about losing this working-class constituency?

UDF spokesperson Billy Nair says, 'No, we have urged our unions to go into COSATU.

Union unity is paramount at this stage. We are fully behind COSATU and look forward to working closely with them. The unions are not our only working-class constituency.

"Union unity is paramount at this stage. We are fully behind COSATU and look forward to working closely with them. The unions are not our only working-class constituency."

The UDF is a force in the townships – and who is the majority there if not workers?'

The most successful merger talks so far have been between industrial unions. GWU and Transport and General Workers Union, and Sweet, Food and Allied Workers Union and FCWU are negotiating mergers. Talks are relatively advanced in the motor and metal industry between the Metal and Allied Workers Union, National Automobile and Allied Workers Union, and the United Mining, Metal and Allied Workers Union of South Africa.

Two UDF unions, the Johannesburg-based Municipal and General Workers Union and the Durban-based Municipal Workers of South Africa, merged on the eve of the COSATU launch, and are to meet the Cape Town Municipal Workers Association to form a single municipal workers union.

If the mergers are

methods, structures, politics and personalities, and splits within COSATU over this cannot be discounted.

The UDF-aligned unions stressed their commitment to merging into industrial unions. Said spokesperson

specific conditions we faced, and as an initial strategy in organising workers.

The UDF will lose most of its union affiliates when larger industrial unions absorb general unions.

Is the UDF not concerned

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successful, Cosatu will have large national industrial unions in excess of 100 000 in mining, 70 000 in metal, 60 000 in commerce, 50 000 in food, 30 000 in transport, 25 000 in textiles and 20 000 in both chemical and municipal sectors.

Workers outside COSATU

While Cosatu is the largest trade union federation in the country, there are substantial numbers of workers organised outside it and a considerably greater number still to be organised.

The black consciousness-oriented CUSA and the Azanian Confederation of Trade Unions are believed to have 180 000 and 70 000 signed-up members, respectively.

Their paid-up membership is believed to be substantially less, with the vast majority of these in CUSA. CUSA, a loose federation of 11 industrial unions, is strong in the chemical, construction, food and transport sectors. Azactu is also a loose federation of nine general and industrial unions.

Both these union groupings refused to join COSATU because of their opposition to its non-racial policy and their commitment to anti-racism instead. There may be practical differences between non-racialism and anti-racism in community organising – for example, the Natal Indian Congress would not

be acceptable to anti-racists. But practical differences for union organisation between these two approaches are less clear.

An anti-racist approach, as understood by CUSA, means that white workers can join the unions as members and even assume leadership roles if elected by workers, but white organisers cannot be superimposed as leaders on the unions.

However, workers usually appoint organisers, whether white or black.

Moreover, the involvement of white intellectuals in the union movement does not necessarily negate black working-class leadership, any more than the involvement of black intellectuals necessarily promotes it.

Differences between the black consciousness groupings and Cosatu are more abstractly ideological and seem to reflect a concern to maintain individual and organisational identity – and appear to be at leadership level rather than between groups of workers.

AZACTU and CUSA have meanwhile established a close working relationship and are exploring a possible merger, but at present Azactu appears more enthusiastic than CUSA. Cosatu, for its part, has stressed that the door remains open to these and other unions to join it.

The other significant grouping of organised workers is in the Trade Union Council of South Africa (Tucsa). Tucsa suffered a loss of over 120 000 members in the last two years, and now has about 340 000 paid-up members in 43 industrial unions. Half of these are coloured and Indian, a quarter African and a quarter white.

More importantly, there are several large unions which recently left Tucsa because of its conservatism. Cosatu representatives say there are 'indications' of support for COSATU from some of these unions, but 'internal organisational problems' prevent them from joining at the moment. COSATU will probably attempt to win some of these unions over in the near future. Talks are under way with one of them.

The federation is weak in the building, domestic and state sectors and has no organisation in the crucial agricultural sector. The inaugural congress decided to establish national unions in construction and agriculture. The organising of farm and domestic workers will take place despite the lack of legal recognition of unions in these sectors.

COSATU also resolved to intensify its efforts to organise in the bantustans: 'We shall not hesitate to exercise our rights to

organise in plants based within the bantustans and we are fully prepared to defend ourselves against repression by whatever effective means at our disposal. A decision was also taken to form an Unemployed Workers Union as part of a broader campaign against unemployment that will include support for co-operative schemes set up by retrenched and dismissed workers.

COSATU will be addressing itself to tasks that the union movement has not tackled before on an organised national basis. It will be interesting, for example, to see how unions of farm, domestic and unemployed workers are fitted into a federation of industrial unions based on strong shop-floor structures.

Democratic structures

Cosatu's structure is based on its five principles of worker control, non-racialism, one union per industry, representation according to paid-up membership and national co-operation between affiliates. COSATU intends to function as a tight federation. Jay Naidoo: 'There's the onslaught from the state and management. The recession is getting worse. So, we must have massive unity to act decisively'.

The structure of the new federation provides for this unity through democratic national, regional and

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local structures. The major decision-making body is the biennial national congress, made up of delegates from all affiliates represented in proportion to their paid-up membership. The main tasks of the congress are to adopt federation policies, to consider constitutional amendments and elect office bearers.

Elected at the inaugural congress were:

- **President:** Elijah Barayi (NUM)
- **First Vice-President:** Chris Dlamini (SFAWU)
- **Second Vice-President:** Makhulu Ledwaba (CCAWUSA)
- **Treasurer:** Maxwell Xulu (MAWU)
- **General Secretary:** Jay Naidoo (SFAWU)
- **Assistant General**

The last two are paid full-time posts. The central executive committee (CEC) will appoint two other national full-time office bearers – education officer and newspaper editor. No paid official has voting rights, and workers must constitute a majority in all federation structures and meetings.

Between national congresses the CEC will run the federation. The CEC consists of national office bearers, regional area chairpersons, two delegates from unions of 15 000 or less, and four delegates from unions with more than 15 000 members. The CEC meets at least four times a year. It will consider applications for membership, set up sub-committees, establish regional areas,

time employees. In between CEC meetings the executive committee, which has very limited powers, will meet at least once. It comprises the national office bearers and four members elected from the CEC. The executive assists the general secretaries and carries out CEC instructions.

The federation will also have regional structures. A region will be established where three or more affiliates have a significant presence. The congress determined these regional areas: Northern Transvaal, Witwatersrand-Vaal, Highveld, Western Transvaal, Northern Natal, Southern Natal, Orange Free State, Northern Cape, Western Cape and Eastern Cape.

Each regional area will have a regional congress comprising affiliates in the region represented in proportion to paid-up membership.

While subordinate to the federation's CEC, it will elect office bearers, appoint full-time officials and pass policy concerning the region.

Meeting once every four months, its main task will be to encourage

co-operation among affiliates and coordinate regional activities.

Between regional congresses, the regional executive committee (REC), meeting at least once a month, will manage the affairs of the region. The REC is made up of two delegates per affiliate in the region and regional congress office bearers.

Shop stewards councils will bring together all shop stewards in a particular locality and will give workers their most immediate sense of identification with the federation.

The regional structures are crucial to workers' sense of control over the federation.

Through these structures they will be able to develop a greater sense of unity and the power of being organised into a large federation. The success of these structures in the coming months will be an important barometer of Cosatu's success in welding the different unions into an effective federation.

Unity in struggle

Union unity could also be facilitated by struggles waged together. Cosatu has taken some bold resolutions which, if implemented, could draw the unions closer. The resolution on unemployment called for concerted unity against retrenchments and factory closures.



Unemployment is one of our biggest problems and we can't fight it without the community organisations. Both COSATU and UDF collaborated to tackle community struggles.

Secretary: Sydney Mafumadi (GAWU)

settle disputes between affiliates and appoint full-

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COSATU stated its intention to launch a campaign for a legally enforced national minimum living wage – ‘one of the strongest points for organising the unorganised.

COSATU decided to launch a campaign for the right to strike – to ‘continue a relentless campaign which will allow workers full freedom of association, assembly and picketing for strike action. This requires that all forms of security legislation that deny these rights be removed’. The right of unions to strike in ‘essential services’ and to establish strike funds was also called for.

COSATU resolved to fight for the end of the migrant labour system and threatened national strike action if migrant workers were repatriated to the ‘homelands’ or the neighbouring states.

Resolutions were passed opposing the state of emergency, bantustans and federalism as a solution to the country’s problems, and a call was made for the unconditional release of political prisoners and the unbanning of organisations as a ‘prelude to the creation of a democratic South Africa where all shall live in peace and prosperity.

While supporting disinvestment, COSATU committed itself ‘to ensure

that the social wealth of South Africa remains the property of the people of South Africa for the benefit of all and further commit ourselves to the principle of international working-class solidarity action as the most powerful form of solidarity action with our struggle’.

COSATU also committed itself to a vigorous campaign against sexual inequality at the workplace, in the wider society and in the federation itself. Progress is to be monitored by a worker - controlled sub-committee of the federation’s education programme.

It was resolved to set up a strenuous education programme that politicises, mobilises and organises the working class so that it plays the leading role in the liberation of our society and its transformation into an economic, social and political system that will serve the needs of those who are now oppressed and exploited’.

A resolution urged COSATU affiliates to seek links with other progressive unions in Southern Africa. Another called for the boycott of the Johannesburg Centenary Celebrations and the organisation of an alternative programme ‘to highlight the 100 years of oppression and exploitation in Johannesburg and in particular the mining industry.

Support and opposition

COSATU was welcomed by a wide range of organisations internally and internationally.

Amid the flood of support messages was a message from the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). In a press statement, a Lusaka-based SACTU spokesperson said, We don’t see any antagonism between SACTU and the new federation.

SACTU has always had a very positive attitude to the new federation and believes that a federation like COSATU has to exist to unite the trade unions, to unite the working class’. He also called upon CUSA, AZACTU and unions that have left TUCSA to join COSATU.

At a conference in Harare a few days after COSATU’s launch, Jay Naidoo had informal talks with representatives of the ANC and Sactu who approached him. He reported that they welcomed the federation ‘as a progressive step in the struggle for workers’ rights and as part of the struggle for freedom in South Africa’.

He said they agreed that COSATU should unite all workers while remaining independent and accountable to the needs and aspirations of the working class as expressed through its leadership and the structures of COSATU.

Naidoo told the ANC/SACTU delegations that we do not want superficial changes – black faces replacing white in parliament, or black bosses replacing white – where the repressive machinery of state and capital remains intact, used in the service of different masters’.

He expressed Cosatu’s commitment to a society ‘not only free from apartheid, but also free from the exploitative, degrading and brutalising economic system under which black workers in particular suffer. This means a restructuring of society in order that the wealth of the country is shared equitably among the people.

COSATU’s overt political stance has been broadly welcomed by organisations inside and outside the country. Inkatha, however, has vociferously condemned COSATU. Buthelezi accused it of being a ‘new front’ for the ANC and of declaring war on Inkatha. Inkatha secretary general Oscar Dhlomo said, ‘We have all along tried to steer clear of politicising labour.

Therefore, we have encouraged our own members to join existing trade unions. We feel trade unions have to do with the rights of workers. We do not want to hijack their agendas for our own selfish rights.

But Inkatha has since resolved to reserve our

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right to mobilise the full strength of Inkatha's workers to find alternative means of negotiating for worker rights if any particular trade union abandons this prime responsibility in favour of playing a party-political role. Inkatha members were also urged to report any hostile reference to Inkatha by trade unionists.

Attacking unions which put politics before employees' rights and prey on workers' benefits at an Inkatha central committee meeting in early January, Buthelezi suggested Inkatha set up branches in every factory, open a labour office and train organisers to deal with workers.

He stressed that workers should recognise that unions were vital to workers and to the country as a whole, but unions had never liberated an African country and would not liberate South Africa.

Replying to Buthelezi's claim that Cosatu was directed against Inkatha rather than Pretoria, Sydney Mafumadi, COSATU assistant General Secretary, said, COSATU is committed to the struggle against economic exploitation and national oppression.

We have never stated that we're gearing all our energies to fighting one particular bantustan leader. If he is hysterical about our

formation, then we are not answerable to him.

Jay Naidoo dismissed as rubbish claims that Cosatu is an ANC front. We are a front for the workers, but in the present political climate you cannot separate workers' demands from politics.

On COSATU's attitude to Inkatha, he said: COSATU has a definite political profile that it will state very boldly and if this comes into conflict with certain organisations that do not agree with our interests then there will be conflict.

We will try our utmost to avoid conflict in the interests of building unity among the oppressed, but we will not tolerate anti-working-class activity from any organisation that exists outside the federation.

He said that if COSATU was attacked by any organisation for any decisions or initiative taken with a mandate from its membership, 'that organisation will have to place itself in the camp of the enemy and those that are opposed to the liberation of our people.

Tensions between Inkatha and Cosatu will be most intense in Natal, where substantial numbers of Cosatu workers also belong to Inkatha – though what meaning Inkatha

membership has for them is difficult to say.

On 19 January, a group of workers met in Empangeni and decided to set up an alternative federation of trade unions. Spokesperson Philemon Gumede said it would unite workers who 'believed in free enterprise and opposed disinvestment'. It would be linked to Inkatha since our objectives are the same.

At a special congress, COSATU has 'strongly condemned' this as divisive. It has warned employers, who sponsored buses to the meeting, against supporting these potential company sweetheart unions.

Cohesive politics

The issue of Inkatha will have to be dealt with sensitively, but it re-emphasises the need for COSATU to forge maximum unity and the workers' firm commitment to Cosatu and to the struggle against both racial oppression and economic exploitation. To do this, Cosatu will have to develop a more cohesive politics and strategy.

What the content and form of this will be is difficult to say. One has to guard against any instant analysis, as the situation is much too fluid and there are processes unfolding that have yet to congeal. Crudely, there would seem to be three

general perspectives overall within COSATU.

The first, probably the least significant, entails uncritical support for the popular movement, of which the trade unions are seen as no more than the industrial arm. In effect, unions must affiliate to the popular movement, as would student, women, or other organisations, without setting any specific terms to this.

Since the popular movement automatically represents worker interests, there is no need to develop a specific working-class politics. Union power should be used to boldly confront the state and complement the struggles in the townships. This perspective may be identified with the most conservative shades of the populist tradition in trade unionism.

The second perspective also sees the involvement of unions on the terrain of popular politics but from a distinct working-class position. The popular movement is not necessarily socialist but is a site of class struggle. The power of the trade union movement should be used to give it working-class content and direction.

This has become crucial since, in the dramatic upsurge of township struggles over the past 18 months, the

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youth and the radical petty bourgeoisie, rather than the workers, have been in the forefront determining its pace and direction.

To ensure working-class leadership of these struggles, unions must enter an alliance with the popular movement on terms favourable to workers, on the basis of their organisational strength on the shop floor and without sacrificing their independence.

Working-class politics will be developed and the popular movement won over to it through struggles facilitated by this alliance. This perspective can be crudely identified as developing from industrial unionism in a way that avoids the extremes of populism and workerism.

The third perspective sees the popular movement as being unable to represent the interests of workers primarily, and therefore as a whole it cannot be won over to working-class politics. Differences in structures, dynamics, practice of democracy and class interests preclude this.

Greater emphasis should be placed on using union structures to develop working-class politics.

The unions' politics should not be determined by the momentum of the popular movement.

The unions have painstakingly developed organisation on the shop floor which will be weakened and divided if the unions are pushed by a momentum that they cannot primarily determine.

aimed at containing them and using them to serve ends not in the interests of workers specifically. The unions should therefore develop their politics independently of the popular movement as far as possible.

This overall perspective can be identified as a more politically assertive development of the workerist tradition in trade unionism.

There is no simple correspondence between particular Cosatu unions and each of these perspectives. Most are presently heaving with debate, and perceptions are often influenced by regional conditions.

Tensions between the latter two more important perspectives were reflected in differing interpretations of the validity of statements issued by the newly-elected federation's representatives. Adherents of the third perspective expressed concern that the office bearers were expressing views for which they had no mandate.

The president's speech at the public rally was criticised, particularly his statement that COSATU would call for a pass-burning campaign if apartheid was not dismantled within six months.

It was pointed out that even if there was general agreement within COSATU, such decisions had to develop organically out of shop-floor struggles and through the carefully nurtured democratic practices so crucial to the development of a working-class politics.

The office bearers concerned stressed they

“The organised strength of the union movement should be used to develop working-class organisations outside the shop floor.”

However, this does not mean being aloof from the wider political struggle. Nor does it preclude tactical alliances with the popular movement over issues.

An extreme shade of this perspective, however, sees the populist movement's interest in the unions as

The organised strength of the union movement should be used to develop working-class organisations outside the shop floor.

Some adherents of this perspective see this process culminating in the formation of an independent working-class party in the long term.

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were reflecting the views and aspirations of rank-and-file members. The statements issued had not deviated radically from the resolutions drafted for discussion at the congress, even if all of these were not finally tabled because of time constraints.

They pointed out that what they had said was consistent with the general political direction provided in the constitution, the preamble of which begins:

We the trade union representatives here, firmly commit ourselves to a unified democratic South Africa free of oppression and economic exploitation. We believe this can be achieved only under the leadership of a united working class. They said too that the turmoil conditions of the launch of a large federation like Cosatu could not be approached in terms of an abstract, mechanistic concept of democracy.

The tensions within Cosatu could lead to splits and hamper unity to some extent, but overall, a significant degree of unity is likely to emerge. Jay Naidoo said that in a federation as large as ours it's natural that there will be differences, especially in the initial stages but also because of the dynamic situation we find ourselves in.

There's lots of debate going on at the moment and

COSATU wants to encourage that. But make no mistake, we have enough common ground within Cosatu, despite our differences, to be a very powerful and effective force in this country.

It is not yet clear how this power will be used. It is clear that Cosatu will use its organisational strength on the shop floor to pursue the interests of workers in the wider political struggle. COSATU is unlikely to affiliate to any political organisation at this stage. It is more likely to seek alliances with other organisations on terms that are favourable to it.

This could mean joint campaigns around issues like the state of emergency, the effects of the recession, May Day and the ethnic education system.

The UDF will welcome this, according to Billy Nair. Although the UDF has not met yet to formally discuss this, we are quite keen to co-operate with Cosatu. They are talking of fighting unemployment and the pass laws and campaigning for minimum wages.

We too are committed to this. One thing we should think about is the formation of an even broader front of the UDF, COSATU and other organisations to take up campaigns together.

Themba Nxumalo, NFW

general secretary, said, 'We need the support of community organisations. Unemployment is one of our biggest problems and we can't fight it without the community organisations.

We also need their support for other issues we decided to fight at the Cosatu launch. But we must also give support to the struggles in the townships. It is the workers who are mostly affected there and who must be in the leadership.

The alliance between unions and community organisations will be significantly influenced by regional conditions.

At a local level, the shop stewards councils are likely to play a more assertive role in issues affecting workers beyond the shop floor. One strand of thinking within COSATU is that another structure should be formed that brings together local shop stewards and representatives of community and political organisations on an organised basis, to jointly take up economic and political issues but on certain clearly defined terms.

The extent to which Cosatu will be able to determine its alliance with other organisations will depend on its strength on the shop floor. COSATU has yet to consolidate itself.

It will have to invest considerable energy in tasks including: creating one union per industry; setting up federation structures; launching the education programme; trying to organise unorganised workers; defining relations with other unions; developing international ties; fighting retrenchments and dismissals; taking up struggles to extend worker control of the labour process; campaigning to extend the industrial relations terrain; organising support for unemployed workers; and taking up a campaign for a national minimum living wage.

COSATU's presence is likely to transform not just the industrial relations terrain but the entire political terrain. Cosatu clearly has the potential to give the wider political struggle for change a specifically working-class content and a much more radical thrust—to make, as Cyril Ramaphosa said, 'the politics of the working class the politics of all the oppressed people in this country.

One thing is clear, though. The formation of COSATU puts working-class politics firmly on the agenda.

The article has been retrieved from The African Communist -The Journal of the South Africa Communist Party. □



HISTORY OF TRADE UNIONS

PSCBC'S COSATU 40th Anniversary Message to Advancing Workers' Power Through Collective Bargaining and Dispute Resolution

The PSCBC continues to advocate amongst all parties through structured and institutionalised mechanisms by protecting collective bargaining and strengthening dispute resolution,” in South Africa.

The PSCBC has long been, and continues to be, a key stakeholder within the broader labour movement led by COSATU, particularly through its public service-affiliated trade unions.

This enduring relationship has enabled the Council to meaningfully contribute to the advancement and protection of workers' rights through structured

and institutionalised mechanisms of collective bargaining and dispute resolution.

As COSATU marked its 40th Anniversary celebration on 06 December 2025 at Dobsonville Soweto, under the theme of honouring the legacy of workers' power while building a shared future, the PSCBC reflected on its role in strengthening labour relations within the

public service over the past 27 years.

The Council took this moment to commend COSATU for its unwavering commitment over the decades to improving the lives and working conditions of workers, particularly within the public service.

Over the past 27 years, the PSCBC had positioned itself at the forefront as a neutral

and credible secretariat, facilitating constructive engagement between the State as the employer and organised labour.

Through its collective bargaining processes, the Council had provided a platform for trade unions to negotiate fair working conditions, equitable remuneration, and progressive collective agreements ensuring

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that the voices of public servants were not only heard but translated into meaningful outcomes.

Equally, the PSCBC's dispute resolution function had played a pivotal role in promoting labour stability.

Through conciliation and arbitration services, workplace disputes had been addressed efficiently and fairly, reinforcing trust and strengthening labour relations across the public service.

This work had been made possible through strong

collaboration with COSATU-affiliated unions. NEHAWU had championed workers' rights across key sectors such as administration, healthcare, education, and social development.

DENOSA has continued to advance the interests of nurses and healthcare professionals, ensuring their critical role was recognised and protected.

POPCRU been steadfast in advocating for workers within the safety and security sector, while SADTU had remained a powerful voice in advancing the rights and

development of educators.

Together, under the leadership and vision of COSATU, these unions had utilised the PSCBC as a strategic platform to drive worker empowerment, equity, and transformation within the public service.

As COSATU marked this significant milestone, the PSCBC extended its heartfelt congratulations and best wishes on its 40th Anniversary.

The Council acknowledged and celebrated COSATU's enduring legacy of advancing workers' rights,

strengthening collective bargaining, and shaping a more just and equitable public service environment.

We look forward to the continued partnership with COSATU and its affiliates, building on a strong foundation to further advance the interests of public servants.

In honouring the past and embracing the future, both institutions remained committed to fostering a public service that upheld dignity, fairness, and the collective power of workers.



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Politics

Reversing South Africa's Neoliberal Agenda for Economic Reconstruction: The Legacy of Chris Hani

By Dr. Sithembiso Bhengu

UNVEILED BY THE PREMIER OF THE EASTERN CAPE PROVINCE HONOURABLE
MS. NOXOLO KIVIET ON THIS DAY OF THE 27 APRIL 2013

CHRIS THEMbisILE HANI

BORN 28 JUNE 1942

DIED 10 APRIL 1993

"I HAVE LIVED WITH DEATH MOST OF MY LIFE.
I WANT TO LIVE IN A FREE SOUTH AFRICA EVEN
IF I HAVE TO LAY DOWN MY LIFE FOR IT"

A CLARION CALL IS MADE TO ALL AND SUNDRY
TO EMULATE CHRIS HANI BY REDEDICATING
OUR LIVES IN BUILDING A NON RACIAL NON
EXIST, DEMOCRATIC AND PROSPEROUS
SOUTH AFRICA.

Lala Ngoxolo Tshonyane

This week marks the 33rd commemoration of the assassination of Chris Hani. At the time of this callous act, Hani was the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party (SACP) and had emerged as the most popular member of the ANC NEC from its 48th National Conference in 1991.

The 33rd commemoration of Chris Hani's demise coincides with the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the South African constitution, promulgating South Africa's constitutional democracy.

This constitutional democracy was to ensure not just a simplistic majoritarian rule, but one anchored on humane principles and the rights of all people.

Nelson Mandela captured these principles during his 1994 Presidential Inauguration speech, when he said, "Never, never and never again shall it be that this

beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world".

At the adoption of the constitutional order, every section of freedom-loving people of South Africa, including organised labour, faith-based organisations, progressive traditional structures, and other organs of civil society, celebrated the promulgation of the South African constitution, as providing legislative and institutional infrastructure to advance freedom and a distributive future that is redressing the imbalances of centuries of colonialism and apartheid.

The ideals consolidated in the South African Constitution represented the freedoms for which Chris Hani struggled and sacrificed his life, and which had been concretised in the SACP's triple H campaign to address housing, health, and hunger.

It is an unfortunate irony that in the year that ended

with the adoption of the South African constitution, the governing '1996 Class Project' abandoned the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), replacing it with the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR).

The adoption of GEAR, along with a slew of other governance interventions, saw a significant shift in government policy towards a neoliberal agenda, which curtailed fiscal commitment to developmental reconstruction and social programs, while introducing the utilisation of private (for-profit) provision of public goods and services through a tender-based procurement system.

Preceding his death, Hani had made some instructive statements, both outlining the practical application of the national democratic revolution (NDR), in particular what socialism should look like for South Africa.

Hani also warned the liberation movement and society about the possible

pitfalls of elitist transition and corporate capture of politics by selfish bourgeois interests.

On the NDR and socialism, Hani presented a practical definition of what socialism should look like, arguing, "Socialism is not about big concepts and heavy theory. Socialism is about decent shelter for those who are homeless.

It is about water for those who have no safe drinking water. It is about health care; it is about a life of dignity for the old. It is about overcoming the huge divide between urban and rural areas. It is about a decent education for all our people. Socialism is about rolling back the tyranny of the market".

While the democratic dispensation has changed the lives of many of our people, especially in the area of collective and individual freedoms and rights, the majority of working-class households and communities, which Chris Hani was speaking about as motive forces and direct beneficiaries of the South African struggle, remain on the margins of

democratic breakthrough, with persisting crisis-levels of unemployment, poverty and inequality.

These predominantly African poor continue to live with very little or no access to basic services, their humanity and dignity made elusive by failures of the government's protracted neoliberal trajectory since GEAR.

While the promise of South Africa's constitutional democracy was meant to transform the lives of our people and undo the long history and legacy of oppression, discrimination, and exclusion, thirty years of neoliberalism and austerity have only served to reproduce the contours of our past and have certainly not liberated our people, nor 'rolled back the tyranny of the market'.

Three decades of neoliberalism also enabled and produced a proliferation of the hollowing of the state, corporate capture of the state, and corrupt arrangements that have only become endemic,

permeating almost all institutions and spheres of government.

Hani had warned about the elitist pacts, tendencies of capture of the national democratic revolution by bourgeois interests, what he called allure for 'black Mercedes-Benz', presently labelled as 'blue light brigades', and the use of political office for class formation and aspirational social mobility.

Not only did neoliberalism entrench macro (fiscal and monetary) policies that have consistently undermined the transformation agenda, but it also hollowed the capacity of the state, bringing private procurement of public services through the tenderpreneurship, which has become the bane of our democracy, producing and reproducing all kinds of excess, capture, corruption, and rot at the centre of our politics.

How then should we commemorate and re-member transformative ideals that Chris Hani espoused for a future

of South Africa that is progressively addressing our most basic class contradictions of racial capitalism?

First, we must call for an end to neoliberal austerity and push for monetary, fiscal, taxation, and public investment interventions that stimulate growth and create employment.

Second, we must oppose private wholesale of state assets and the private procurement of public services through tenderpreneurship.

This means the proposed conversations, both the government-led National Dialogue and more importantly the Conference of the Left spearheaded by the SACP, should culminate at an alternative blueprint for economic reconstruction, undoing the 30-years of a failed neoliberalism that has entrenched racialised inequality, produced crisis-levels of unemployment, and produced a hollow democracy in which mostly African women and children are most

vulnerable to worst forms of gender-based violence and femicide.

This, we owe to ourselves as a people, as workers and the poor, to produce a South African economy and society that belongs to all of us.

In the spirit of Chris Hani, we must strengthen institutions of democracy, i.e., people's participation, activist democracy in our communities.

This year, let us not commemorate Chris Hani as a statue, but revisit his ideals, reenergise them, rebuild institutions to strengthen democracy, and organs of people's power to advance the kind of democracy that produces concrete meaning to human dignity and freedom.

Dr. Sithembiso Bhengu is the Executive Director of the Chris Hani Institute based at Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

Poem

'A DECEIVED CLASS'

The class that endures untrustworthy leaders,
Leaders who contradict words and deeds.
Leaders who fool workers and the poor,
Leaders who raise high slogans of freedom,
But denouncing the struggle for freedom,
Denouncing driving force weapons of revolution.

Working Class, a deceived class!

Looking back into the past and testing the present,
Philistine and corrupt leaders stampeding for power,
Who say one thing and do another?
Who claims to represent the cause of the working class?

Working Class, a deceived class!

These Leaders,
Their words are full of fat fiction without facts,
They believe that they are everything and the people are nothing.
They are irreconcilable enemies of the masses too,
They have no vigilant eyes to discover and correct mistakes.

Working Class, a deceived class!

These leaders are afflicted by disease,
Sometimes they are disregarding and fear the masses,
They diminished of conscious strength belief on masses,
They take themselves as liberators and messiahs,
They take themselves as directors of the revolution.

Leaders! Tell the people!

What road are you supporting and defending?
Is it a Socialist or a Capitalist Road?
Working Class, a deceived class!

Composed by Thobile Maso



Education

SASCO AND COSATU on the Launch of the Fourth Pillar of Struggle Petition

SASCO members in partnership with COSATU affiliates were mobilising students for Student Representative Council election at UNISA Sunnyside Campus, Pretoria.

The South African Students Congress (SASCO), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), and several other stakeholders, including the Progressive Youth Alliance, and several camp-based Palestinian Solidarity Organisations, jointly announce the Fourth Pillar of Struggle Petition, a national campaign aimed at mobilising Students, Workers and progressive forces to defend the historic tradition of international solidarity and to oppose the complicity of South

African institutions of higher learning in global systems of oppression. South Africa's liberation was not achieved in isolation.

Our struggle against apartheid was strengthened by the principled solidarity of the Peoples of the world, including through academic, cultural and economic boycotts that isolated the apartheid regime.

Today, as inheritors of that tradition, South African Students and Workers carry a responsibility to stand with oppressed Peoples everywhere

and to oppose injustice wherever it occurs.

SASCO and COSATU are deeply concerned by the continued academic, financial and institutional relationships maintained by some South African universities, TVET colleges and private higher education institutions, with states and entities implicated in grave violations of human rights and international law.

These include the ongoing genocide and apartheid against the Palestinian people,

the devastating war in Sudan, the occupation of Western Sahara, and the suppression of democratic rights in eSwatini.

Institutions of higher learning must not be neutral spaces in the face of injustice. Silence and so-called "strategic ambiguity" in moments of genocide, occupation and repression amount to complicity. Universities that claim to be centres of critical thought and ethical leadership must act consistently with those values.

Worker-Student Solidarity in the Struggle for Justice

Central to this campaign is the historic and principled alliance between Students and Workers. Throughout South Africa's liberation struggle, the unity of organised labour and progressive Student movements played a decisive role in confronting apartheid and advancing democratic transformation.

Today, that alliance remains essential in confronting both local injustice and global systems of oppression.

Worker-Student solidarity is particularly vital in international solidarity struggles because the same global economic and political forces that exploit Workers and commodify education are often the very forces that sustain war, occupation and colonial domination elsewhere.

Universities and Colleges are not isolated from these global dynamics; they are embedded within economic systems through financial investments, corporate partnerships, outsourced labour and international institutional relationships.

Workers and Students therefore confront a shared reality. Workers experience exploitation through precarious labour, outsourcing and declining social protections, while Students face rising costs, exclusion and the commodification

of education. These struggles are interconnected and rooted in the same structures of power that benefit from global inequality and conflict.

By uniting Workers and Students in solidarity campaigns, progressive forces strengthen their ability to challenge these structures.

Organised labour brings the power of collective action in workplaces and communities, while Student movements bring political energy, intellectual engagement and the ability to mobilise campuses as centres of critical thought and activism.

For this reason, the Fourth Pillar of Struggle Petition is consciously built as a joint effort of Students and Workers, recognising that international solidarity is strongest when it is rooted in broad social movements.

The Fourth Pillar of Struggle Petition

Therefore, the 4th Pillar of Struggle campaign calls on universities, colleges, private higher education institutions and relevant government bodies to take a clear ethical position against injustice.

The petition calls for institutions to:

Publicly and unequivocally condemn:

- The genocide and apartheid perpetrated by the Israeli state against the Palestinian people.

- The occupation of Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic by the Kingdom of Morocco.
- The war crimes and humanitarian catastrophe in Sudan, including the role of the United Arab Emirates in fuelling the conflict.
- The suppression of democratic rights by the Mswati regime in eSwatini.

Furthermore, the petition demands that institutions of higher learning:

- Sever all academic, financial, research and institutional ties with entities complicit in these injustices; and
- Adopt clear ethical policies guiding international partnerships, rooted in principles of justice, decolonisation and respect for international law.

For COSATU, this campaign reflects the historic principle that Workers' struggles are inseparable from the struggles of oppressed peoples globally. Workers in South Africa understand that exploitation, colonial domination and war are interconnected features of the same global system that undermines the dignity of working people everywhere.

For SASCO, the campaign reaffirms the role of Students as an important motive force in the struggle for social justice. Campuses have

historically been centres of political consciousness and mobilisation, and Students must once again rise to defend the moral authority of the South African liberation tradition.

Together, SASCO and COSATU call on:

- Students
- Workers and trade unionists
- Academics and university staff
- Parents and broader civil society

to sign and promote the Fourth Pillar of Struggle Petition and to participate in campus and community mobilisation programmes across the country.

This campaign is not simply symbolic. It is a concrete step towards ensuring that South African institutions do not participate, whether directly or indirectly, in systems of apartheid, occupation, war profiteering and repression.

In the spirit of internationalism and in honour of the solidarity once extended to the South African people, we affirm that the struggle for justice anywhere is inseparable from the struggle for justice everywhere.

Issued jointly by:
South African Students Congress (SASCO)
Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)



MILLIONS OF WORKERS across the globe reject capitalist exploitative system on May Day

The South African delegation participating in the May Day Cuban march against US imperialism in Havana, Cuba on May 1.

The International Workers Institute led by George Mavrikos, the WFTU honorary President and President of the International Workers Institute held various engagements with Osnay Miguel Colina Rodriguez, member of the Central Committee of the Party and president of the Organizing Commission of the XXII Congress of the CTC, who stated that 'defending Cuba implies working together from the grooves, the factories, classrooms and hospitals.'

World Federation Trade Unions delegation included NEHAWU General Secretary, Zola Sapetha,

Panagiotis Palmos, Vice-President of the TUI of Retired Workers of the WFTU, Yaisel Osvaldo Pieter Terry, member of the 22nd the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), and other representatives from India, Turkey and Italy.

International Federations activities on May Day

WFTU

The World Federation of Trade Union's General Secretary, Pambis Kyritsis reaffirmed the firm and practical solidarity of the international class-oriented trade union movement with the struggle of the Cuban people against imperialism and in

defence of the path they have chosen to follow.' Kyritsis said, 'The international class-oriented trade union movement, workers, and militant trade unions around the world honor, through struggle, the 140th anniversary of the workers' struggle in Chicago in 1886. We honor the heroic May Day of the working class, symbol of the relentless struggle against capitalist barbarity, with new class struggles, determination, and internationalist solidarity. The crisis of capitalism is deepening and generalizing. Social inequalities are dramatically widening. Democratic freedoms and trade union rights are under attack across the world, while imperialist wars and

interventions are on the agenda.'

'International developments confirm that global geopolitical and economic antagonisms continue to directly threaten world peace and security, including the danger of nuclear catastrophe. Imperialist wars, interventions, sanctions, and blockades continue and intensify. Health and safety in the workplace are being systematically degraded. Protective measures are treated as a "cost" by employers, leading to the increase of accidents in workplace and fatalities. Every day, workers are injured or lose their lives on the altar of profit, revealing in the most tragic way the priorities of the system. state



Members of the European Transport Workers' Federation led massive demonstrations in Cologne alongside ver.di, EVG and DGB under the slogan: "Menschen vor Marge — People before profit," in Germany.

and employer repression against struggles is intensifying. Trade unionists are persecuted, strikes are criminalized, and democratic freedoms are restricted. Migrants and refugees are targeted, used as cheap labour, and become victims of racism and exploitation. Faced with this reality, the response of the working class cannot be submission.

Members of WFTU demanded 'wage increases and collective labour agreements with full rights, effective measures to protect against high prices and inflation, public and free healthcare, education, and social security for all, reduction of work-time, permanent employment with stable working hours, abolition of flexible forms of labour and protection for workers on digital platforms.'

ITUC

Luc Triangle, International Trade Union Confederation's General Secretary said, 'ITUC is calling for urgent action to rein in extreme wealth, including higher, fairer taxes on the richest and binding limits on

CEO pay. The latest analysis reveals that the average CEO earned \$8.4 million in 2025 and it would take a worker 490 years to earn the same. Nearly \$79 billion was paid to billionaires in dividends — around \$2,500 per second.'

Triangle elaborates that 'this analysis exposes the billionaire coup against democracy, and its costs for working people. Companies promise us a virtuous cycle, but what we see is a vicious cycle led by mega corporations - they undermine collective bargaining and social dialogue while billionaire CEOs capture the wealth created by productivity gains. The super-rich then use enormous resources to fund anti-democratic political projects.'

"On this May Day, workers are calling for a fairer economy — where wealth is shared, rights are protected, and no one is left behind," stressed Triangle.

ITF

The International Transport Worker's Federation led marches under the slogan #WeMoveTheWorld demanding

fair wages for workers.

Stephen Cotton, the ITF General Secretary denounced trade union bashing in Nepal.

Cotton said, "Today on every road, every rail line, every port, every runway on the planet — transport workers are keeping the world moving — and we are moving it forward. Today is our day, solidarity to transport workers, our trade unions and the working class everywhere." In Germany, workers proudly

celebrated May Day in Cologne alongside fellow comrades from ver.di and EVG at the DGB rally under the slogan: "Menschen vor Marge / People before profit."

Workers stressed on the need for robust public finances, effective collective bargaining, codetermination, and highlighted the need for international solidarity. 'Together, we stand united for workers' rights, fair conditions, and a future where people always come before profit.' Workers headed the call for example in Pakistan, chanting:

"This May Day, we don't log off. We log in to solidarity. For fair pay. For social protection. For the right to say, no to unfair ratings. Platform workers of Pakistan, unite. Platform workers of the world, connect."

EI

David Edwards, the General Secretary of Education International applauded all workers in more than 180 countries, who assembled demanding public funding for public education across the globe. Davids said: "In our classrooms, in

our schools and universities, in our communities, we stand together for public education, for our profession, for people and planet. This May Day and every day, we are rising up against billionaires who see our labour as a "tax" on their productivity, who exploit and avoid paying their fair share in a spiral of endless greed."

"We are rising up against authoritarians and oligarchs who want to rig our democracies and starve our education systems and public services in order to lock billions of people into cycles of poverty and powerlessness. We are rising up against arms dealers and warmongers who have bottomless budgets for wanton destruction with no accountability to international law and no respect for human life and dignity."

UNI Global Union, International Domestic Workers' Federation and IndustriALL led marches, pickets and demonstrations to mark the 140th anniversary of May Day.

Meanwhile, informal economy worker's Federations, StreetNet International Alliance of Waste Pickers - GlobalRec International Domestic Workers Federation Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing - WIEGO representing over 3.5 million workers in the informal economy, we stand united to defend democracy, advance justice, and push for decent work for all workers — including home-based workers, domestic workers, waste pickers, and street vendors.'

Happy Workers' Day to every gallant worker across all continents!



#LaPatriaSeDefiende

A massive rally at the Anti-Imperialist Tribune to celebrate 1 May in Havana, Cuba.

Half a million Cubans gathered at the Jose Martí Ant-Imperialist Tribune opposite the U. S. Embassy for the International Workers' Day under the slogan, 'The Homeland is Defended'.

Cubans have already collected 6 million and 230 000 signatures through the 'My Signature for the Homeland', demanding respect for international laws, sovereignty of countries, peace, against the economic blockade and against imperialist wars.

Cubans took to the streets to denounce the continuing economic embargo against Cuba by the United States of America. The Cubans

appealed to global citizens to reject the illegal economic blockade.

Cuban President Díaz-Canel stressed for the unity of all its citizens.

President Díaz-Canel alluded:

"Let us march united: workers, farmers, students, intellectuals, artists, athletes, all Cuban men and women, against the genocidal blockade and the crude imperial threats against our country."

"The U.S. government must listen to this just call and immediately lift the blockade."

The World Federation of

Trade Unions (WFTU) argued that 'Democratic freedoms and trade union rights are under attack across the world, while imperialist wars and interventions are on the agenda.'

WFTU General Secretary, Pambis Kyritsis further said, "International developments confirm that global geopolitical and economic antagonisms continue to directly threaten world peace and security, including the danger of nuclear catastrophe. Imperialist wars, interventions, sanctions, and blockades continue and intensify.

The genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza and the unimaginable brutality by the

Israeli state, the unprovoked and murderous attack by the United States and Israel against Iran, the invasion of Venezuela and the abduction of the country's legitimate president, the terrorist threats against socialist Cuba and the attempt to strangle its economy and its people through the criminal energy embargo, have once again exposed, in all its magnitude, the hypocrisy, cynicism, and inhuman nature of imperialism."

Global Labour Federations have vowed to assist Cubans with humanitarian aids and other necessities to eradicate hunger and tackle the energy crisis. [\[Link\]](#)



International

THE IMPORTANCE of Cuba's revolution, and what Cuba needs from us today?

**The people of Cuba marching on the streets of Havana against US imperialism
and in defence of the Cuban Revolution in 2026 Background.**

In 1961, a mercenary brigade armed, trained and transported by the CIA landed at Playa Girón – the Bay of Pigs- as part of Washington's plans to defeat the Cuban Revolution.

The Cuban revolutionary forces, led by Fidel Castro, defeated the invasion within three days. The breakthrough gave socialist character of the Cuban Revolution a facelift and influenced many countries to aspire to follow the socialist pathway and adopt the socialist character against imperialism.

Fidel Castro's gave a speech on 16 April to honour the seven Cubans killed during the attack. During the speech he talked publicly for the first time of the socialist character of the Cuban Revolution.

"...What the imperialists

cannot forgive is that we are here. What the imperialists cannot forgive is the dignity, the firmness, the courage, the ideological integrity, the spirit of sacrifice, and the revolutionary spirit of the Cuban people.

This is what they cannot forgive: the fact that we are here right under their very noses. And that we have carried out a socialist revolution right under the nose of the United States!

And we are defending this socialist revolution with these guns!

We are defending this socialist revolution with the same courage that our anti-aircraft artillerymen showed yesterday in riddling the attacking planes with bullets! We are not defending this revolution with mercenaries;

we are defending this revolution with the men and women of our nation.

Who has the weapons here?

Perhaps it is the mercenaries who have the weapons? Perhaps it is the millionaires who have the weapons?

Perhaps mercenaries and millionaires are one and the same thing. Perhaps the little boys with rich daddies have the weapons? Perhaps the overseers have the weapons?

Whose hands hold the weapons here?

Are they the hands of playboys? Are they the hands of the rich? Are they the hands of the exploiters?

Whose hands hold the weapons here? Are they not hands of workers and peasants? Are they not hands that have

been hardened by work?

Are they not hands that create? Are they not the hands of our humble people?

And who are the majority of our people?

Millionaires or workers? Exploiters or exploited?

The privileged or the humble? Do the privileged have the weapons? Or do the humble have the weapons?

Aren't the privileged a minority? Aren't the humble a majority? Isn't a revolution democratic when it's the humble who have the weapons?

Compañero workers and peasants of our country: Yesterday's attack was a prelude to a mercenary aggression. Yesterday's attack, which cost seven heroic lives, aimed to destroy our planes on the

ground. But it failed.

They only destroyed two planes while most of the enemy planes were damaged or shot down. Here, before the tomb of our fallen compañeros; here next to the remains of the heroic young people,

children of workers, children of the humble, we reaffirm our resolve that just as they exposed themselves to the bullets, just as they gave their lives, we too, all of us, proud of our revolution, proud of defending this revolution of the

humble, by the humble and for the humbler shall not hesitate, whenever the mercenaries come, no matter who is against us, to defend it to our last drop of blood."

Long live the working class!
Long live the peasants!

Long live the humble!

Long live the martyrs of our country! May the martyrs of our country live forever!

Long live the socialist revolution! Long live a free Cuba!

On the 17th of April 2026, workers participated in the public debate held at The Forge, Braamfontein to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the United States' attempt to invade Cuba.

A former uMkhonto we Sizwe operative, and former South African's Minister for Intelligence Services, Ronnie Kasrils and Jesús Perz, the Minister Counsellor on Political Affairs for the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in South Africa led the public debates on exposing the revolutionary resilience by Cuba against the imperialist US regime's attempt to invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, and intending to destroy the People's Revolution.

The seminar was one of the ongoing internationalist programme to mobilise against imperialism and stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine, Cuba, Iran and Venezuela.

Both they argued that 'as the global landscape is increasingly defined by the rise of far-right ideologies and aggressive US-led imperialist hegemony', revolutionaries across the globe must re-organise themselves to re-assert class solidarity as

a necessary platform for re-constructing anti-imperialist unity, solidarity and resistance in action.

US President Donald Trump issued warnings of a Cuban invasion and accelerated an economic boycott against Cuba through the tightening grip on oil supply and plunged the island into darkness as a result of insufficient energy security.

Cuba's President Miguel Díaz-Canel warned that 'Whoever tries to take over Cuba will collect her blood-soaked soil if he does not perish in the struggle.'

International solidarity demonstrations, pickets and marches ensued across the globe condemning US imperialism.

Kasrils argued that 'Today, Cuba faces a criminal oil blockade while the world witnesses escalating imperialist aggression against Palestine and Lebanon to Iran and Venezuela. These are not isolated events; they are the desperate gasps of a fading hegemony turning toward naked fascism.'

"Fascism thrives on isolation, fear, and the erasure of history. To counter the "hybrid warfare" currently targeting the Global

South—and Cuba in particular—our solidarity must be more than symbolic. We meet to transform historical lessons into unity in action, proving that our socialist internationalism is the ultimate antidote to imperialist aggression," elaborated Kasrils.

"The April 17 Bay of Pigs anniversary is the time to intensify pressure to break the blockade and confront US warmongering everywhere.

Cuba needs our practical support and unwavering solidarity. Let's continue to mobilise humanitarian aid, facilitate medical assistance and other commodities to assist the people of Cuba to survive the economic embargo.

Let's rally our governments to demand the immediate uplifting of the illegal blockade and an end to imperialist interference, destabilisation and political subversion.

Cuba's solidarity with South Africa, for example, has persisted in the post-apartheid era, with poor students afforded an opportunity to study medicine in Cuba and Cuban doctors spread all over the rural areas in South Africa promoting primary healthcare.

The Cuban soldiers played

a pivotal role during the dark days of apartheid in the Cuito Cuanavale War of 1987 until 1988 where the Angolan and South West African Peoples Organisation Forces repelled the South African Defence Force.

uMkhonto we Sizwe were hugely assisted by the Cubans to master intelligence work against the apartheid regime then.

South Africans owe their liberation to the Cuban Revolution.

Cubans made the independence of Namibia, Angola, and South Africa possible.

Let's reaffirm our continued solidarity with the people of Palestine, eSwatini, Sudan, Venezuela, Western Sahara, Iran, Lebanon and Cuba," concluded Kasrils.

Meanwhile, Alliance partners, the ANC, SACP, COSATU and SANCO with the South African civil society organisations led a massive demonstration at the US Consulate Office on Sandton to express their displeasure against the onslaught against Venezuela, Iran, Lebanon, Palestine and threats against Cuba.



International

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE is supreme, declares the International Court of Justice

The International Court of Justice session during the reading of the advisory opinion of the ICJ on the Right to Strike in light of ILO Convention No. 87 at the Hague, Netherlands.

South Africa joined global labour Federations in welcoming the historic International Court of Justice judgment reaffirming the right to strike as a fundamental human right protected under international law.

The right to strike remains an essential safeguard in the fight for fair pay, safe working conditions, dignity at work, and stronger labour relations systems across the globe.

By a decisive majority, the world's highest court confirmed what workers and trade unions have always known: 'the right to withdraw labour is inseparable from worker dignity, collective bargaining, and freedom of association. These rights

cannot be separated.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has confirmed what workers and trade unions from the shopfloor have bargained for the right to strike to be protected under freedom of association in their country's Constitution and also in compliance with the international labour standards.

During the repressive, apartheid years in South Africa, workers fought to join trade unions and to regulate labour power, strikes were a necessary power valve to regulate employment relations.

The International Court of Justice has upheld the long-established interpretation

that the right to strike is part of the International Labour Organisation's Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise.

The ruling has confirmed that workers cannot have meaningful freedom of association or collective bargaining without the right to strike.

COSATU commends the global labour Federations such as the International Trade Union Confederation for presenting a compelling case on behalf of the toiling classes.

Reactions from labour Federations-Historic win for workers everywhere.

IndustriALL Global Union reiterated, "It is a big day for the world of work."

Industrial general secretary Atle Høie said, "IndustriALL has been fighting for this since 2012. We joined global days of action, mobilized affiliates across the world, launched a petition and kept the pressure on through years of deadlock. Today, it paid off."

"This ruling sends a clear message to employers and governments: the right to strike is not up for debate. It is a fundamental workers' right and now it's confirmed under international law."

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) General Secretary Luc Triangle said, "This is a historic victory for the global trade union

movement and for every worker who has organised, resisted intimidation, and taken collective action despite repression.”

This is a long-awaited confirmation that the right to strike is an integral part of the freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively as defined in the ILO Convention 87, as ‘actions’ the trade unions have to defend their rights and promote social justice and social progress for millions of workers in Europe and in the world.

“We welcome this landmark advisory opinion, as a significant victory and a positive signal for workers! The remarkable advisory opinion carries a most significant legal and political weight, that will strengthen the role of trade unions in all sectors and in all parts of the world. It will also set the doctrine in national and international law. The International Labour Organization is expected to consider the matter and any follow-up at its 358th session in November.”

The World Federation of Trade Unions, General Secretary, PAMBI KYRITSIS said: “The ICJ advisory opinion reaffirms the WFTU position that without the right to strike, there can be no effective implementation of freedom of association, the right to organise, and the right of workers’ organisations to organise their administration and activities and to formulate

their programmes.”

“The World Federation of Trade Unions, whose role was decisive in the creation of Convention No. 87 in 1948, condemned from the very first moment the attack on the right to strike and participated actively in the process, submitting a written statement to the International Court of Justice and taking part in the advisory proceedings through Lawyer Augusto Praca, a member of the WFTU Democratic and Trade Union Rights Committee.”

The Public Services International (PSI) General Secretary Daniel Bertossa said: “Our freedom to withhold our labour, if and when necessary, has always been part of our freedom to organize. Today, the world’s highest court has affirmed our right to strike”. The decision provides international support for union everywhere to fight back when rights are attacked nationally.

“PSI will support our members to use the protections of the ILO when our freedom to associate and our right to strike is under attack. Today’s ruling shows that workers will stand up and be heard, and that we have international law on our side.”

Dr. David Edwards, General Secretary of Education International declared: “The confirmation that the right to strike is protected under Convention No. 87 of the ILO affirms what education unions and Education International have long defended: freedom of association is meaningless without the power to act collectively, without the right to strike. Education International has stood at the forefront of efforts to defend and advance the right

who organise, mobilise, and, when necessary, strike to defend their students, their professions, and their communities.”

Christy Hoffman, General Secretary of UNI Global Union said: “As any trade unionist will tell you, there is no right to organize without the right to strike! The two are inseparable foundations of any functional and fair industrial relations system. Congratulations to the many



The International Court of Justice has ruled that the right to strike is protected under International Labour Organization Convention 87, the cornerstone convention on freedom of association.

to strike.

From classrooms to national capitals to the ILO itself, education unions have consistently demonstrated that the ability to take collective action is essential to protecting quality public education, good working conditions, and the dignity of the profession.

This ruling validates not only legal arguments—but the daily struggles of educators

advocates who argued the point so brilliantly before the ICJ, and to the ITUC for its steadfast commitment to this case.”

Global labour organisations unanimously agreed that ‘the ruling strengthens international legal protection for workers everywhere and reinforces the legitimacy of collective bargaining struggles in Kenya and across the globe’.



International

REPEAL OF THE 12 APRIL 1973 Decree, Leading to the Unbanning of Political Parties - Key to Our Liberation Struggle

Workers and members of the Communist Party of Swaziland celebrating the International Workers Day at the Salesian Sports Grounds, Manzini.

The struggle for political emancipation in Swaziland against the Tikundla system led by a despot, King Mswati is facing heighten strength from the Communist Party of Swaziland, especially after its successful 6th National Congress convened under the Theme:

“Building Revolutionary Consciousness, Mobilising the Working-class and Masses and Creating Conditions for Democratic Victory,” during the month of April 2026.

Global citizens have raised their concerns about the brutality by Swaziland authorities in handling marches by political activists, strikes by trade unions and zero freedom of association by the working-class communities.

And members of the South African Development Community (SADC) and international bodies such as the International Labour Organisations (ILO) have called for meaningful

dialogue with no success.

The failure to address legitimate civilian concerns has complicated the political conflicts to date.

King Sobhuza II, ruler of Eswatini (then Swaziland), suspended the country’s constitution in 1973, dissolved parliament, and banned all political parties, effectively consolidating power under an absolute monarchy that remains in place as of 2026.

Since then, all legislative, executive, and judicial

powers were subsequently vested in the king, marking a decisive shift away from constitutional rule.

Thokozani Kunene, the newly elected general Secretary argues that the political system in place in Swaziland remains undemocratic and undermines the development of Swazis as a nation and enriches the royal elites with worsening cases of unemployment, poverty, underdevelopment, and burden of diseases.

Fifteen years ago, on 9 April 2011, the Communist Party of Swaziland (CPS) was founded with a singular, revolutionary aim: to smash the absolute monarchy of King Mswati III and build a democratic, socialist Swaziland for the working people. From that day forward, the regime responded not with dialogue, but with continue to ban, forcing our Party to operate in clandestine conditions.

Yet, repression has not broken our resolve. Instead, it has forged the CPS into one of the most vital and organised forces in the struggle for national liberation.

Over the last fifteen years, the CPS has been the unyielding, militant voice of the oppressed. We were not mere spectators during the 2021-2023 uprising; we were a central force, helping to transform mass discontent into a political insurrection that permanently put the dictatorship on the defensive.

Our cadres have organised the working class, mobilised the youth, and built international solidarity against a regime that criminalises dissent and rules through terror and the brutal Tinkhundla system of exploitation.

Today, we salute all political

prisoners languishing in the regime's dungeons, all exiles forced from their homeland, and all fallen comrades who have sacrificed their lives for freedom.

Swaziland is among the top ten worst violators of workers' rights globally. The monarchy has banned protests, unleashed its security forces to gun down peaceful demonstrators, and even resorted to labelling pro-democracy advocates as "terrorists".

But the people are no longer afraid. The growing participation of the elderly and the organised working class in the streets of the majority towns shows that the masses are rising.

The next five years must be the decisive period in our long struggle.

The regime is isolated, internationally condemned, and increasingly delegitimised. The criminalisation of political opposition has failed to halt the emergence of a multi-stakeholder forum, including pro-democracy discussions within certain sections of the regime, who are actively discussing the formation of an interim transitional government.

Now is not the time for

reformist illusions. Now is the time for the final assault.

The Communist Party of Swaziland therefore calls upon all revolutionary forces, the working class, the peasantry, the progressive intelligentsia, and all democratic organisations, to unite under a single, uncompromising slogan:

End the absolute monarchy and establish a People's Democratic Republic.

We reject the fraudulent "monarchical democracy" advanced by Mswati as a smokescreen for continued tyranny. We will not participate in any sham tinkhundla electoral process.

We demand:

- The unconditional dissolution of the absolute monarchy and the establishment of a democratic, secular republic.
- The immediate, unconditional release of all political prisoners and the safe return of all exiles.
- The unbanning of all political parties and trade unions, and full rights to organise, protest, and strike.
- The expropriation of the royal family's vast wealth and the redistribution of land to the landless peasantry.

- We further call on the Southern African Development Community (SADC) to stop propping up this dictatorship. By appointing the autocrat Mswati to regional posts, SADC has disqualified itself as a champion of democracy.
- We call on the South African government to close the Swaziland embassy and consulate and consign the regime to the diplomatic isolation it deserves.

The enemy is weakened, but he remains dangerous. The coming period will require sacrifice, discipline, and revolutionary violence to defeat the regime's mercenary forces.

The CPS is ready to lead the insurrectionary seizure of power to achieve democracy now.

The next five years will be the years of victory. Forward to the final defeat of the monarchy!

Forward to the Democratic Republic of Swaziland!

Long live the international working class!

"For Freedom, Democracy and Socialism"

DIGITAL CONNECT

Another Cosatu Initiation

WHY JOIN A LABOUR UNION

A labour union is an organized group of workers who come together to collectively bargain with employers in order to protect and advance their rights, interests, and working conditions. Unions represent workers across various industries and sectors and work to ensure fair treatment for employees. Here are some key reasons why joining a union can be important:

- Improved Wages and Benefits
- Job Security
- Workplace Safety
- Stronger Voice in the Workplace

Just to name a few...



Img:Application form by Cosatu Media

Labor unions can also engage in political and legislative activities to advocate for policies that benefit workers, such as fair wages, improved labor laws, and protections against discrimination or exploitation.

COSATU DOCUMENTS

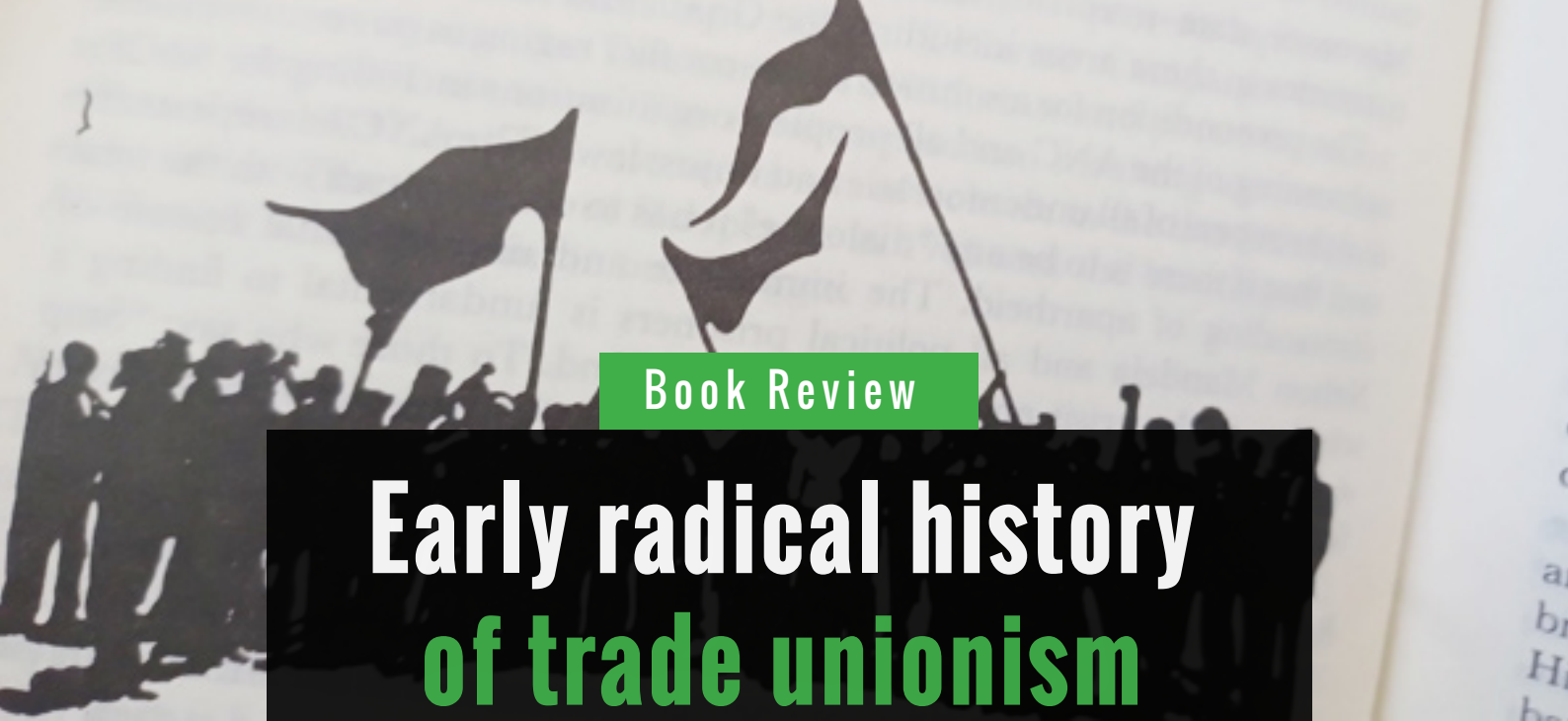


COSATU NATIONAL CONGRESS RESOLUTIONS



UNIONS CONTACT DETAILS





Book Review

Early radical history of trade unionism

has been deliberately neglected,
argues Evangelos A. Mantzaris

**The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles
- Communist Manifesto**

A truly inspiring book about labour, named 'Labour Struggle in South Africa: The Forgotten Pages, 1903-1921', is valuable for learning about the history of class conflicts.

Mantzaris argues that 'many strikes such as the Musicians' strike of 1918 in Cape Town, the Indian Tobacco Worker's strike of 1920, the Denver Engineering strike of 1920, the Cigarette-Maker's strike of 1906-1907 have been 'thrown in the dustbins' of history of class struggles in South Africa because they were 'not significant' in the minds of publishers, researchers to make it in academic journals or publications because of

being 'too academic', 'too polemical', 'too political', 'too long' and so on.'

Who can deny that these strikes had real political significance in the arena of the South African social set-up?

He argues strong about the dialectical relationship between history and sociology and re-emphasise that these strikes nurtured ideological orientation of the toiling classes in their struggle against exploitation by capitalists.

Mantzaris argues that 'early South African social scientist wittingly or unwittingly neglected severely the existence, evolution and activities of the early labour

movement in general and the radical groups, associations and parties representing it, in particular.

History of the Labour Party in 1921 is quite significant where radical groupings split and the Cape Town based Industrial Socialist League adopted the name of the South African Communist Party, as part of identity politics to represent their organisational, political and ideological principles.

Mantzaris takes us back to the 1914 Labour Party split which led to the formation of the International Socialist League as a turning point in the history of radical trade union movement. They

propagated that unions must be established not on the basis of racial lines, but as instruments to mend working-class solidarity.

Mantzaris argues that strikes were the most reliable form of resistance against existing capitalist supremacy on the shop-floor which shook the oligarchs but also challenged the reformist and bureaucratic trade unions to join the struggles. It was the recognisable open and direct form of a method to confront factory power structures, leading to short-term victories for workers.

He records that the Denver Engineering strike of 1920 was

Book Review

such an amazing example. He elaborated that 'the engineering division of the metal industries group had its roots in the inception of

the Dutch India Company.

The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and the gold-fields in de Kaap, Barberton and gave Lydenburg gave a new impetus to the industry as did the opening of the Witwatersrand gold-fields.

Relatively crude engineering facilities had to be created to keep engineering equipment in operation, as the practical difficulties of replacement of the machinery were enormous because of the high import prices. Mangolds was established in Port Elizabeth, Hudson and Hopkins in Cape Town, the Umgeni Iron Works in Durban and Wright Boag and Rowe Jewell in Johannesburg.

The founders of these companies were traders or practical men who served their time in particular trades and were craftsmen. They were in a monopolistic position for a while until after the First World War. Shipping expensive machinery from England and Germany became difficult due to acute problems in operations and could no longer capitalise on the demand of the services.

These establishments were employing 23 617 workers around 1916 and the number

doubled in that period.

For example, in Witwatersrand, there were 233 establishments, employing 13 716 workers.

Mantzaris uncovers the struggles and tribulations of various sections of the working-class against exploitation and poverty.

For example, Mantzaris argues that the Denver Engineering strike of 1919 until 1920 was a breakthrough for seventy labourers, who challenged existing capitalist supremacy and the oligarchs during those years.

The strike started in January 1920, when Denver Engineering Works production was halted in the factory floor. The engineering division of the metal industries group had its roots in the inception of the Dutch India Company.

The discovery of diamonds in Kimberley and the gold-fields in de Kaap, Barberton, and Lydenburg gave a new impetus to the industry, as did the opening of the Witwatersrand gold-fields.

These industries were given financial assistance by the state by the South African Federated Chamber of Industries and also the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Industries Advisory Board ensures that there were high standards of engineering set up, including the code of

professional ethics.

According to Matzaris, 'there were rejuvenated efforts to establish better labour relations between employers and employees. But the stubbornness of the oligarchs remained, which displayed the dialectical relationship in the productive process between labour and capital.

On November 1919, 70 workers in the Denver Engineering Works stopped selling their labour power!

According to Matzaris, Denver Engineering strike was sparked by victimisation of fellow workers, Whiteside and Ted Morgan, who were leading workplace committees. All workers, fitters, iron-moulders, pattern-makers, boiler-makers, blacksmith, all of them white, skilled workers, downed their tools.

Organisations of the workforce were still based on racial lines. Approximately 110 black workers were employed on the premises as unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The strike was led by white workers, and unfortunately, the black workers did not participate.

The factory closed down due to the absence of skilled workers.

Their demands were very clear:

Workers demanded reinstatement of the

dismissed workers before work could resume, all shopstewards and trade must be recognised, no person should be engaged in the workshop unless a shopsteward is satisfied with his standing in the union, only managers must deal with all negotiations with shopstewards, all disagreements between the managers and shopstewards must be settled by the union concerned, there shall be no victimisation of workers and that the settlement of the strike shall in no way interfere with the holiday leave.

There was sympathy for the strikers such as the Building Workers Industry.

Denver Engineering Works was forced to introduce the 'liaison office' between the senior managers and the shopstewards.

'The factory managers thought the strike was a blackmail and resorted to false claims that productivity was very low and imposed retrenchments with the intention of destroying the shopstewards movement.'

It was the initial efforts by oligarchs to smash the worker's movement in those early days.

Management refused to reinstate the two militant workers and deepened demands for the establishment of the worker's movement. Capitalist press

Book Review

suppressed coverage of the Denver Engineering but its impact spread like wildfire in surrounding areas. It is fascinating that the Construction Workers' Union and other unions were inspired by what Denver Engineering workers achieved by rejecting management's threats and forms of intimidation.

Denver Engineering workers used mass meetings,

India workers led strikes under the India Workers' Industrial Union. The workers had just got a good grip of the class struggle after the union's inauguration in 1917, with a membership of approximately 300 members.

The most organised trade union opposed to local capitalists was the Tobacco Workers' Union.

Other unions which

factory led a massive strike, demanding the opportunity to use more sophisticated techniques in the making of cigars, better working conditions and pay increases.

The First World War had affected global citizens severely!

The cost of living in Durban had risen enormously which affected the lower paid workers. The price of bread

had risen by 120 per cent, potatoes by 100 per cent and rice by 120 per cent. Boots and shoes cost 100 per cent more and clothing prices fluctuated.

Rent and housing had also increased drastically from 120 to 150 per cent. The working conditions in the factory were appalling.

Chetty easily found 'scabs' to replace the striking workers but the workers assaulted the scab labourers with the Natal Criminal Investigation Department alerted about the incidents. Many unions participated in solidarity strikes with workers until a sensible negotiated settlement was agreed by the parties.

In the following years, there was a spontaneous wave of strikes that began in Durban, led by dockworkers in 1973, which led to the renewal of union activity in South Africa.

Strikes became a powerful tool to fight against barbaric capitalist exploitation during those days.

Today, class struggle is about fighting for decent jobs, enhancing labour productivity, and building cohesive and inclusive societies and influencing climate change, urbanization, digitalisation, and artificial intelligence policies.

And strikes are still prevalent!

Please grab Mantzaris's book. It's a fascinating account of how Marxist ideas shaped the early phases of radical trade unionism in South Africa. These foundations were necessary pathways towards proletarian movements in Africa.



African workers being chased by police during one of the earlier strikes against exploitation

picketing and public opinion manipulation to win over the working-class communities. Another worker's organisation was established on the Rand.

Mantzaris's book covered the 1920 Tobacco Industry strike in the Natal area in which it 'exposed how African workers were treated as 'cheap labour, and how

mushroomed were the Indian Shop Assistants' Union, the Sugar Mills Workers' Union, the Natal Shop Assistants' and Commercial Workers' Union, the Durban Hotel Employees' Union, the Bakers' Van Union and Indian Dockworkers' Union.

Mantzaris articulates how Indian workers at Chetty's

'There was no lavatory for female workers and males had only two lavatories. Chetty used to call its workers to work from seven o'clock in the morning and finish work at approximately 7h15 in the evening, with half an hour lunch time.

Cutters, packers and machine operators joined the strike.



Nurses expose staff shortages, inadequate salaries, **UNSAFE WORKPLACES DURING** International Nurses Day

Nurses at the International Nurses Day national event
in KuGompo, Eastern Cape.

Millions of healthcare workers across South Africa celebrated the International Nurses Day on May 12, 2026.

Nurses remain the backbone of the healthcare system doing immeasurable work in hospitals, mobile clinics, prisons, the military and in emergency settings.

The trauma of losing fellow workers during the devastating pandemic Covid19 still haunts many nurses.

Nurses are still subjected to work long hours, suffering from fatigue, mental health issues, experiencing insufficient danger

allowances, high fees to register in the health councils and crippled by the cost of living worsened by the Government Employees Medical Scheme's exorbitant member's medical aid contribution were cited as worrisome.

The World Health Organization recommends 'a minimum threshold of about 44.5 doctors, nurses and midwives per 10,000 people to achieve universal health coverage. South Africa remains below what is required in many provinces and facilities, especially in rural and

underserved areas.'

The nursing union, the Democratic Nursing Union of South Africa (DENOSA) and the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (NEHAWU) led the celebrations in various health centres.

The National celebrations were held under the Theme: **"Our Nurses. Our Future. Empowered Nurses Save Lives."**

DENOSA President, Simon Hlungwani addressing the national celebrations at KuGompo City, Eastern Cape said, "Nurses in the country

continues to experience ongoing challenges in the healthcare sector, which affects the them greatly such as severe staff shortages; low production of nurses by the colleges and universities, poor remuneration, lack of safety in the workplace, few continuous professional development opportunities, few opportunities at leadership roles, fewer opportunities for the nursing voice to be heard; and poor psychosocial support for the nursing workforce."

Hlungwani exposed the 'lack of development of nurses in South Africa with

less enrolment numbers at nursing colleges or universities.'

"The big challenge with the failure to adhere to increasing production levels is that communities are deprived of access to healthcare, and diseases pandemics are spiralling out of control mostly due to the shortage of primary healthcare nurses. This tends to cost the government billions of rand to manage post-outbreaks. Killing the healthcare systems even further is the accelerated brain drain where foreign trained nurses are migrating to Europe in alarming numbers since 2014, a phenomenon that has seen more than 257 000 nurses from the fragile economies moving to OECD countries."

NEHAWU in a statement indicated that 'The union recognise and appreciate the critical role of nurses as the backbone of our healthcare system and the sterling role they play in promoting health and wellbeing of our people. We take this moment to pay tribute to the gallant nurses across the country, we salute their relentless, combative and brave contribution to the noble cause of saving and preserving the health and lives of our people.'

As we observe this day, it is important to highlight the plight of nurses particularly under capitalism and imperialism, and to honour the generations, who have fought against oppression

and exploitation. As we celebrate this day, we must acknowledge and recommit ourselves to continue with the struggle of nurses and fight all forms of oppression and the social systems that breeds oppression. We reiterate our long-held position as the union that it is imperative for government to invest in the nursing fraternity to address major challenges encountering our healthcare system. This investment would contribute in improving and strengthening the healthcare system ensuring that it provides access to quality health services for all in line with the principles of universal health coverage.'

'No healthcare will ever survive without nurses'- Health Minister Dr.



The Minister of Health, Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi and Members of the Provincial Executive Committee of Health and Wellness wished workers a joyous day.

Motsoaledi

Dr. Motsoaledi noted that 'nurses play an important role in strengthening health systems and in keeping the citizens healthy and safe in

healthcare centres.'

Dr. Motsoaledi alluded that 'The Department of Health on the International Nurses Day recognises the challenges faced by nurses and appreciate the care that goes beyond treatment.'

"They have helped improve child health and strengthen healthcare systems, and their serves as essential services are highly appreciated. Nurses serves as frontline workforce and provides their knowledge which is key to shaping better services for our communities", elaborated Dr. Motsoaledi.

Other celebrations were held by DENOSA at Secunda, Kimberley, Polokwane, Sun City, Rustenburg and Cape Town.

Institutional celebrations are scheduled to continue across the country.

These celebrations took place as healthcare workers are fighting

against hantavirus which is threatening lives.

The unions have vowed to fight against austerity measures, budget cuts, lack of tools of trade and advance the struggle for improved working conditions, safe workplaces and the development of healthcare with new knowledge and expertise to save lives and promote citizen's wellbeing.

Meanwhile, the World Health Organisation (WHO) Director General, Dr. commented healthcare workers for continuing to promote quality healthcare for the citizens and enhancing the well-being of the masses.

WHO has released interactive health inequality country profiles showing the state of health inequality in countries based on the Organization's principal global health strategy, the Fourteenth General Programme of Work (GPW 14).

'GPW 14 aims to promote, provide, and protect health and well-being for all, while advancing health equity and building resilience. The impact of GPW 14 is measured through a set of outcome indicators, which reflect progress towards the triple billion targets (ensuring that 6 billion people will enjoy healthier lives, 5 billion people will benefit from universal health coverage without financial hardship, and 7 billion people will be protected from health emergencies).'



AFADWU rebuilding UNION'S **STRUCTURES** IN GAUTENG

Sibongile Ndlovu facilitating AFADWU's Branch Congress as part of organisational work in rebuilding union's structures in Gauteng.

South Africa's agricultural and food processing sectors have been dealing with economic challenges related to growing cost of seeds, fertilisers, extended droughts, unpredictable rainfall, heat stress, financial constraints imposed by high prices of fuel and the spread of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD) which has disrupted livestock farming and export markets, leading to significant financial strain on farmers and agribusinesses.

The Agricultural Food and Allied Democratic Workers Union (AFADWU) have been crisscrossing

the length and breadth of the country organising workers in the agricultural and food sectors at various workplaces such as Nutri Feeds, Nestle, PepsiCo Cereals, McCain Foods, Bowman's Ingredients, Rainbow, Frimax Epping, the South African Fruit Terminal, Pioneer Fishing, Tiger Milling and wineries, engaging with members on sector challenges and finalising mandates for wage negotiation with employers.

In Gauteng, AFADWU Provincial leaders facilitated the convening of the first Gauteng Branch Congress in Gauteng to strength the union as a

shield of workers.

The following AFADWU Branch leaders were duly elected:

- Branch Chairperson- Ntokozo Mathebula
- 1st Deputy Chairperson- Baldwin Marindi
- 2nd Deputy Chairperson- Mduduzi Zwane
- Branch Secretary- Mphumzi Mbebe
- Branch Treasurer- Alex Sibuyi

The conclusion of the Branch Congresses will culminate in the convening of a national congress later in 2026.

Meanwhile, AFADWU wrapped the first round of national wage negotiations at Nutri Feeds on behalf of its members.

Thulani Klaas, AFADWU Free State Provincial Secretary said, 'the union presented a 13% wage increment to the employer.'

Other demands were Health insurance coverage, housing allowance support, long service recognition and Christmas vouchers.

'AFADWU remains committed to securing better working conditions and benefits for its members,' Klaas concluded.



SATAWU agrees to 5.5% wage agreement IN THE **BUS PASSENGER** SECTOR

The South African Transport and Allied Workers ' Union (SATAWU) has concluded a wage agreement in the Bus Passenger sector.

Jack Mazibuko, SATAWU General Secretary has confirmed that the union has signed a one-year wage agreement with employers in the Bus Passenger sector agreement to be implemented with effect from the 1st of April 2026

The wage agreement was concluded on the 23rd of April 2026.

The union will continue to engage with the employer on outstanding substantive matters affecting workers in the sector.

The new agreement in the Bus Passenger Sector consists of the following:

- 5.5% wage increment Across the Board
- 5.5% increase on the minimum wage

The following allowances will increase by 5.5%

- Double Driver
- Night Shift (hours to remain unchanged)
- Tool allowance
- Subsistence and Travel (S&T) rate

Both parties concluded the wage negotiations under the auspices of the South African Road Passenger Bargaining Council.

"The union will continue to engage with the employer on outstanding substantive matters affecting workers in the sector. The agreement is valid until the 31st of March 2027," concluded Mazibuko.



SADTU starts holding provincial CONFERENCES WITH KWAZULU-NATAL

SADTU KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Conference held at Greyville Convention Centre for the 11th SADTU Provincial Conference.

Teacher's union, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) has resumed convening ordinary Provincial Conference, with KwaZulu-Natal being the first to start.

SADTU KwaZulu-Natal held its Provincial Conference at the Greyville Racecourse in Durban from the 30th March

until the 1st April 2026. Close to 438 delegates converged to heighten class struggle under the Theme: "Mobilising the Consciousness and Uniting Revolutionary Professionals in Strengthening Foundational Learning and Functional Skills, to Advance Inclusive and Sustainable Growth in Pursuance of a Socialist Society."

According to SADTU General Secretary, Dr. Mugwena Maluleke, Provincial Conferences are held in terms of the union's Constitution as amended in 2024 and are attended by Provincial Office Bearers, one Branch delegate for every 200 paid up members or part thereof, and shall meet at least once every four years and shall elect Provincial Office Bearers, assess the

implementation of union's programmes, evaluate implementation of the decisions of the National Congress, the National General Council and also the National Executive Committee.'

"The Provincial Conference shall have the powers and duties as may be assigned to it by the National structures and shall include:

- (a) The election of Provincial Office Bearer's; namely the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Treasurer and Portfolio Convenors as determined by the General Meeting.
- (d) The formulation of policies and programmes of action for the province," elaborated Maluleke.
- The Provincial Conference celebrated
- took place amidst class struggles waged by education workers across the country against the commodification of public education, tackling of government's insufficient supply of learning materials, confronted by
- The workers' parliament debated issues related to the role of education workers in strengthening South Africa's public schooling system, tackling violent crimes committed in various schools, the eradication of the brutal



Delegates in attendance at SADTU Mpumalanga Provincial Conference concluded at Forever Resort in Emanzana.

- National Congress.
- (b) The supervision and co-ordination of the Branches and Regions in the Province. of any decision of the Provincial General Council, Provincial Executive Committee and Regional Triennial
- the establishment of the student Chapter aimed to conscientise education students to participation in trade unions and organise them as future professionals into trade unionism.
- The Conference
- overcrowded classrooms, collapsing infrastructure, relentless administrative burdens, and the daily psychological weight of teaching learners hugely affected by hunger, poverty and social dislocation.
- killing of teachers, the insufficient allocation of norms and standards funds to run effective public schools administration, and intensification of progressive efforts in building of strong fronts to defend quality public education and intensify

resistance against austerity and the erosion of the capacity of the state and the public sector to provide public services to the masses.

SADTU KwaZulu-Natal condemned the interference by the US in the internal affairs of other countries such as in Venezuela and the aggressive imperialist wars waged against the people of Iran, Palestine, Lebanon and others.

The union registered its displeasure with the ongoing genocide taking in Palestinians by apartheid Israeli regime.

Key Provincial resolutions were:

- The revolutionary professional in the education sector reaffirmed the principles of pursuing social justice for the marginalised, poor working-class communities and resolve to provide quality, inclusive public education in South Africa.
- SADTU recommit to accelerate the demand for the permanent employment of Grade R practitioners in South Africa.
- That SADTU must continue to reject neo-liberal policies, austerity measures and reaffirmed the total attainment of the right

of every learner to access public education as part of advancing the goals of the National Democratic Revolution.

- SADTU resolved to pursue mass education to deepen revolutionary morality in working-class communities and campaign against gender-based violence in society.
- SADTU reaffirmed its call for the Reconfiguration of the Alliance.
- SADTU calls for the KwaZulu-Natal provincial government must comply with pension laws in the Republic.

SADTU KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Conference newly elected office bearers were:

- Provincial Chairperson: Musa Zulu
- Provincial Deputy Chairperson: Zodwa Zwane
- Provincial Secretary: Nomarashiya Caluza
- Provincial Deputy Secretary: Vuyani Mbhele
- Provincial Treasurer: Musa Dube
- Portfolio Convenors
- Gender: Lebo Molefe
- Sports, Arts and Culture: Noligwa Magwaza
- Education: Martin Dlamini

COSATU KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Secretary,

Edwin Mkhize has congratulated the newly elected SADTU KwaZulu-Natal Provincial leadership.

SADTU Provincial Election Outcomes

SADTU Mpumalanga Newly elected Provincial Office Bearers were:

- Provincial Chairperson: Oupa Bodibe
- Provincial Deputy Chairperson: Donald Nhlapo
- Provincial Secretary: Walter Hlase
- Provincial Deputy Secretary: Kabelo Lekitlane
- Provincial Treasurer: Phumzile Themba
- Portfolios:
- Provincial Gender Convenor: Mildred Masilela
- Provincial Education Convenor: Zodwa Makhanya
- Provincial Sports, Arts and Culture Convenor: Busisiwe Sibiya

SADTU North West leadership at the Provincial Conference at Orion Safari Lodge in Rustenburg

- Provincial Chairperson: Mike Mainganya.
- Provincial Deputy Chairperson: Maropeng Mothata
- Provincial Secretary: George Els Themba
- Provincial Deputy Secretary: Tebogo Thekiso
- Provincial Treasurer:

Nancy Thipe

Portfolios:

- Provincial Sports, Arts and Culture Convenor: Mary Madiba
- Provincial Gender Convenor: Khanyisile Ndaba
- Provincial Education Convenor: Malema Matladi

SADTU Free State leadership at the Provincial Conference in Parys

- Provincial Chairperson: Gape Legopo
- Provincial Deputy Chairperson: Phildah Ngesi
- Provincial Secretary: Mokholoane Moloi
- Provincial Deputy Secretary: Nthabiseng Phalole
- Provincial Treasurer: Kennedy Khantoane.

Portfolios:

Provincial Sports, Arts and Culture Convenor: Maseabata Leoka
Provincial Gender Convenor: Jeanette Kanye,
Provincial Education Convenor: Thato Matlebe



SACCAWU rejects planned RETRENCHMENTS **AT** PICK 'N PAY

Pick 'n Pay Group CEO Sean Summers has served workers with a Section 189 notice with the intention to retrench around 22 000 employees at the company.

The South African Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers' Union (SACCAWU) has expressed its strong condemnation of the unfolding threat to job security and negotiated working conditions affecting approximately

22 000 Pick 'n Pay employees.

Jerry Mmoneri, SACCAWU Deputy General Secretary said, "It is mischievous and malicious of Pick n Pay to create an impression that there is in negotiations when in

fact there is none.

What the CEO is not declaring is the fact that Pick n Pay has simply decided to bypass the provisions, dictates and spirit of the law and directly served workers with Section 189 notice of the Labour Relations

Act, instead of serving the Union, which is a collective bargaining agent of workers in Pick n Pay.

Such notices were in fact served on members and the Union after the company had run off to the media



Addressing the Press briefing Deputy General Secretary, Jerry Mmoneri urged all workers and its members employed at Pick 'n Pay to be combat ready to defend jobs.

to present factually inaccurate information to deceive the entire nation and in the course of this set the union against her members by claiming existence of negotiations”.

The recent financials for Pick n Pay in 2025 in the company's financials indicates that 'the company totalled a revenue of \$6.8 billion, driven by Boxer growth and recapitalization and raised ZAR12.5 billion on recapitalisation resulting in a net cash position of ZAR4.2 billion.'

'Pick n Pay Stores Limited reported a revenue increase to R122.124 billion for the

53 weeks ending March 2, 2025, compared to R115.367 billion in the previous year.'

'De-escalation of working hours, late transport provision for employees, staffing ratio, outsourcing of canteen facilities and maternity leaves are amongst the changes the company want to impose,' alluded Mmoneri.

'The company intends to reduce working hours from 196 hours per month to 176 hours which is equivalent to around R2 000 reduction in wages per employee', Mmoneri declares.

'The hourly rate

for employees at Woolworths is more than at Pick 'n Pay yet the company has the audacity to claim that 'they are paying more than their competitors,' reiterated Mmoneri.

"SACCABU will oppose the Section 189 notice served by the company," Mmoneri elaborated.

Amongst the changes Pick' n Pay wants to impose on workers are:

*Scrapping transport for employees working during night shifts that fall outside normal public transportation schedules

*Scrapping legislated 1.5% Sunday pay by

treating Sunday as a normal working day

*Scrapping benefits negotiated for variable time employees or part-timers

SACCABU has 'called on the Minister of Employment and Labour, Nomakhosazana Meth to intervene on the impasse between the union and the company wherein 22 000 jobs are at stake.'

The matter has been referred to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration for hearing of arguments by all parties.



Members of POPCRU engaged on wellness activities at the Klipriviersberg Nature Reserve, Johannesburg.

WHY WORKER WELLNESS Is Central to Building a Resilient Public Service

The global mental health landscape is under severe repression as a result of the rising costs of living, family feuds, conflicts at workplaces and recent wars leading to displacement, hunger, unemployment and economic exploitation.

With workers affected in the labour market, trade unions have embraced

mental health as a trade union issue by involving workers in various interventions to eradicate burdens in the world of work.

Comrade Johannes Dire unpacks what the union is doing practically in reshaping workplaces.

In the demanding terrain of South Africa's criminal justice system, where public servants are confronted daily with crime, social distress and institutional pressure, the question of worker wellness is often treated as secondary.

Yet, the reality is far more profound: without the physical, mental and emotional well-being of those tasked with maintaining law and order, the broader project of building a safe and stable society becomes significantly weakened.

This is why initiatives such as the recent Wellness and Sports Day hosted by the Police and Prisons Civil Rights Union (POPCRU) in the North West province should not be viewed as symbolic or recreational events.

They represent a deeper intervention into the conditions under which public servants operate, and a recognition that the strength of any institution ultimately rests on the well-being of its workforce.

The gathering of officials from the South African Police Service, the Department of Correctional Services and other public institutions in Potchefstroom was more than a convergence around sport. It was a deliberate effort to rebuild human connection in a sector often

defined by stress, trauma and institutional strain. In environments where officials are required to confront some of the most difficult realities of society, opportunities to reconnect, decompress and support one another are not luxuries—they are necessities.

What emerged from the event was a powerful reminder that wellness must be approached holistically. Physical activity, such as the fun walk, aerobics and sporting competitions, plays a critical role in maintaining health and relieving stress.

However, wellness extends beyond physical fitness. It encompasses mental resilience, emotional balance and even financial stability, all of which are essential for officials to perform their duties effectively.

The presence of various stakeholders, including financial and medical service providers, underscored this broader understanding of wellness. It highlighted the fact that the challenges faced by workers do not end when they leave their workplaces.

Financial pressures, family responsibilities and personal well-being all intersect with professional performance. Addressing these dimensions in an integrated manner is key to building a capable and motivated public service.

Equally important is the

role that such initiatives play in fostering unity and solidarity.

In a sector where different departments often operate in silos, bringing together members of the security cluster in a shared space of activity and engagement strengthens relationships and builds a sense of collective purpose.

The informal interactions that take place on sports fields and during wellness activities can often achieve what formal meetings cannot—breaking down barriers and reinforcing a shared commitment to service.

The message delivered by leadership during the event was clear: wellness is not a once-off intervention, but an ongoing responsibility.

It requires sustained commitment from institutions, leadership and organised labour alike. It also requires a shift in mindset—from viewing wellness as an optional extra, to recognising it as a strategic imperative.

Importantly, the testimonies shared during the event, including those from athletes who balance demanding professional roles with sporting commitments, served as a source of inspiration. They demonstrated that resilience is not an abstract concept, but

something that is cultivated through discipline, support systems and opportunities for personal development.

As the public sector continues to grapple with increasing demands and limited resources, the importance of investing in the well-being of its workforce cannot be overstated.

Healthy, motivated and supported officials are better equipped to serve communities with professionalism, empathy and dedication. Conversely, neglecting worker wellness risks undermining both morale and service delivery.

The POPCRU Wellness and Sports Day therefore stands as a practical example of how organisations can begin to address this challenge. It is a call to action for all institutions within the public service to prioritise wellness, not as a peripheral activity, but as a central component of organisational effectiveness.

In the final analysis, the strength of our institutions is inseparable from the well-being of the people who sustain them.

If we are serious about building a safer, more responsive and more humane society, we must begin by ensuring that those who serve are themselves supported, valued and empowered.



NIOH CALLS FOR PRIORITISATION OF THE health and safety of workers

By Zinhle Mapumulo-Oliphant

Occupational health is often overlooked in national healthcare debates, yet it remains central to South Africa's public health, economic stability, and

social justice.

As the country marks World Day of Safety and Health at Work on April 28 every year, the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) issued

a clear call: the health and safety of workers must be placed at the centre of South Africa's national agenda.

The environments

in which people work directly affect not only their personal health but also the well-being of their families and communities.

In a country grappling with inequality and a legacy

of hazardous industries, protecting workers is both a public health imperative and a matter of justice.

Professor Spo Kgalamono, Executive Director of the NIOH, stresses the urgency of shifting the mindset on how occupational health is understood and prioritised in this country.

“We need to reposition occupational health from being seen as a regulatory burden to being viewed as a foundation for productivity, dignity, and social justice. This shift matters!” she says.

“Healthy workers are more productive, families are more secure, and the overall health system faces less strain. Every workplace is a public health site.

When we prevent silicosis in a miner, reduce chemical exposures in a petrol attendant, or protect nurses from burnout, we are protecting the health of communities at large,” Professor Kgalamono explains.

South Africa’s informal

economy employs millions, yet the occupational health risks for informal sector workers are poorly documented and rarely addressed. Their risks are poorly documented, their protections minimal, and their voices unheard.

Yet they are the backbone of our economy. The NIOH is intentionally shining a light on these vulnerable workers through several research studies focusing on agriculture, petrol attendants exposed to harmful chemicals, and advocacy for improved working conditions for golf caddies.

“We are working to address these gaps by focusing research efforts on the unique risks these workers face and advocating for improved policies and protection to ensure safer, healthier working conditions.

For example, NIOH has contributed to improving working conditions for golf caddies and conducted studies assessing oxidative stress and DNA damage in petrol attendants exposed to harmful BTEX compounds,

helping inform targeted interventions and policy changes.

By forging collaborations with academic institutions, government entities, and international agencies, we amplify our reach and voice to close critical evidence gaps.”

This evidence is not abstract. It is a lifeline. It helps policymakers and employers confront risks that have long been ignored. But Professor Kgalamono warns that more must be done.

“If we fail to address the health of vulnerable workers, we fail at public health. The informal economy is growing rapidly, and unless we act decisively, millions will remain unseen and unprotected,” Professor Kgalamono adds.

About the NIOH

The National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH), a division of the National Health Laboratory Service (NHLS), is a public institution dedicated to promoting healthy, safe, and sustainable workplaces in South Africa

since 1956.

The institute works to prevent occupational diseases and injuries through surveillance of work-related illnesses, health hazard evaluations, epidemiological research, and specialised pathology and laboratory services. NIOH also supports evidence-based policies and programmes that protect workers’ health across various industries.

The NIOH is recognised internationally as a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre and is a Centre of Excellence in occupational health research, surveillance, and laboratory services.

Zinhle Mapumulo-Oliphant is the Communications Manager National Institute for Occupational Health. For more information, visit: www.nioh.ac.za

DIGITAL CONNECT

Another Cosatu Initiation

WHY JOIN A LABOUR UNION

A labour union is an organized group of workers who come together to collectively bargain with employers in order to protect and advance their rights, interests, and working conditions. Unions represent workers across various industries and sectors and work to ensure fair treatment for employees. Here are some key reasons why joining a union can be important:

- Improved Wages and Benefits
- Job Security
- Workplace Safety
- Stronger Voice in the Workplace

Just to name a few...



Img:Application form by Cosatu Media

Labor unions can also engage in political and legislative activities to advocate for policies that benefit workers, such as fair wages, improved labor laws, and protections against discrimination or exploitation.

COSATU DOCUMENTS



COSATU NATIONAL CONGRESS RESOLUTIONS



UNIONS CONTACT DETAILS

