

Congress Militant

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Paper of the Marxist Workers' Tendency of the ANC

Cosatu and ANC – Mobilise against threats to democracy!

The inclusion in the draft Bill of Rights of a clause that gives bosses a right to lock-out workers is outrageous. To add to this, the decision that the jobs of all apartheid civil servants should be guaranteed after the elections is adding insult to injury. Workers are furious.

The clause in the draft Bill of Rights says "Workers shall have the right to collective action, including the right to strike, and employers shall have the right to lock out."

As Cosatu's Northern Transvaal regional secretary, Joe Selau said, "this is a matter of life and death for the trade unions."

The purpose of a Bill of Rights should be to limit the powers of the state to interfere with the rights and interests of individuals. We would support a Bill of Rights that guarantees the equality of languages and cultures, protecting individuals against discrimination and ensuring freedom of expression and the right to form opposition parties.

The right of workers to be organised in trade unions and to take strike action is also a fundamental right. This is because rich white minority bosses already have a privileged position as the owners of industry and wealth in SA. They use this power to exploit workers and their families.

Right to strike

The only defence that workers have against this exploitation is their right to strike. Experience tells us that we have had to take up strike action even to demand a cent in increment. Without a right to strike the unions will be dead.

But the bosses say that if the workers have a right to strike then they must also have a right to lock them out. We reject this. How can there be equality between those who own the means of production and those who own nothing? They cannot claim a right to lock us out as a fundamental human right.

How can it be a human right to dismiss workers in mass, or to deny people a right to work? The draft interim constitution already protects and recognises

their "right" to private ownership of the means of production.

If we let the bosses get away with this they will see it as a sign of Cosatu's weakness. Weakness always invites aggression. If the lock-out clause stays the bosses will feel more confident. They will be preparing themselves for further attacks on the unions in future. This must serve as a warning to the working class.

We cannot be on-lookers while the bosses' representatives are using the negotiations to attack our rights. They are taking advantage of the fact that we have not consistently used mass action to support our leaders in the negotiations.

Illegitimate regime

In the last few months the De Klerk government seems to have forgotten that the majority of the South African people never elected them.

De Klerk authorised the SADF's bloody raid on Umtata where they brutally murdered five children.

The NP government is being stubborn on the question of the petrol price. Their concession to reduce the petrol price by 2c is not good enough.

Now, Kriel is busy dismissing Popcru members because they dare to stand up for their rights.

Recently Inkatha, the white right wing and certain homeland puppets formed themselves into the so-called Freedom Alliance. This was after they left the World Trade Centre when they could not convince anybody of their demands. But De Klerk is still using this to force more concessions from the ANC.

The negotiators have already agreed on extensive regional powers. This will benefit the capitalists and the reactionaries like Gatsha, Mangope and Gqozo.

Now the Freedom Alliance wants De Klerk to put pressure on the ANC to accept even greater limitations on the powers of a constituent assembly, and to win stronger powers for the regions. **The ANC is right to reject their demands.**

We cannot allow a tiny minority to hold the whole country to ransom for ever. Mass action must be used as a warning to the negotiators in the World Trade Centre, and to bring the apartheid puppets to their

senses.

On top of this, De Klerk's threat to hold a referendum is an attack on the ANC, and an attempt to weaken our power. **We must stand firm for elections on April 27.** If De Klerk wants to test the view of South Africans he must go for the real referendum – the April 27 one person one vote election.

All these questions put together make the call for mass action by Cosatu appropriate. The lock-out is not just a trade union matter. It is part of a general attack on the working class now and in preparation for the future. That is why the ANC, SACP and all formations in the Alliance should put their weight behind Cosatu's proposals for mass action. For the strike to go ahead on November 15 mobilisation must start now.

Let us march in all major centres of the country to remind the NP that they are an illegitimate regime. We must warn the bosses that we will not give up our hard won trade union rights in the new South Africa.

Programme of action

Sam Shilowa is right when he says Cosatu's programme of action will strengthen the hand of the ANC in the negotiations – against both De Klerk and Inkatha and the right wing. Experience tells us that mass action has always been necessary to defend the masses' interests in the negotiations.

Our enemies are using every opportunity to secure tactical advantages for white privileges and capitalism in the new South Africa.

Let us support Cosatu's firm stand in defence of workers' rights and democracy:

- The lock-out clause must be removed from the draft bill of rights.

- There must be no blanket guarantee of senior civil servants' jobs. A serious danger is that some of the top civil servants have the potential to sabotage the new government. A future government and the trade unions must be free to restructure the public service.

- No to De Klerk's referendum. The people of South Africa want elections in April.

This programme of action must be used to kick-start the election campaign for a massive ANC majority in the coming elections.

No lock-outs! No unilateral restructuring!



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**Lock-out is an
attack on
human rights!**

Viva Cosatu!