

# Congress Militant

Price 20 cents  
[Solidarity price R1.00]

Socialist Paper in Cosatu and the ANC

## Cosatu must stand firm for the Alliance!

This COSATU 5th National Congress takes place against the background of a fundamental turning point in the political history of South Africa. The victory of the ANC in the April elections marked the decisive defeat of apartheid and political domination by the white minority.

COSATU's election campaign was crucial in ensuring a massive victory for the ANC. The overwhelming majority of COSATU members, and the mass of the working people voted for the ANC.

Now formal political power in the government of national unity rests with the ANC. This marks an important shift of power relations in society in favour of the black majority.

However, the entry of the ANC into government has given rise to a number of questions, which are being discussed and debated throughout the movement.

Foremost is COSATU's future in its alliance with the ANC and the SACP. If COSATU breaks from the Alliance, what is the alternative? Is it the immediate formation of a workers' party?

### Shift to the right

The reason why this issue has flared up anew is the apparent shift further to the right by the ANC

leaders since entering government. They are siding with the bosses, especially in regard to economic policy. They are supporting the arguments of the bosses for wage restraint, and showing preparedness to water down the RDP.

President Mandela spoke out against the strikes in July, accusing strikers of being a "particular faction", concerned only with their own interests and not those of the five million unemployed. Echoing the bosses, he said strike action will frighten away investors.

Now, there is unhappiness over the changes on tariffs in the motor and textile industries, which were introduced without consulting the unions.

### Against breaking the Alliance

But despite all these concerns, and media speculation of a rumoured split between Cosatu and its political partners, Cosatu affiliates are in

favour of retaining the alliance at this stage.

Presently those in the forefront of agitating for the immediate break-up of the alliance are the ultra-left groups such as the Workers' List Party, Comrades for a Workers' Government, and the The Workers' International to Re-build the Fourth International.

*Congress Militant* firmly opposes this viewpoint. We fully support the position that the alliance should be maintained.

We urge members of Cosatu, SACP and the ANC to vigorously argue in favour of maintaining the alliance at this stage.

### Should a Workers' Party be formed now?

To argue for an immediate break-up of the alliance poses the question: *What is the alternative?* No doubt, the ultra-lefts will answer: A mass workers' party!

But this is a dangerous over-simplification of what is involved. A workers' party cannot simply be proclaimed.

*Congress Militant* has always argued that the working class needs its own independent political party in the fight for its class interests, which are

at odds with those of the capitalist class.

A workers' party is absolutely necessary in the struggle of the working class to end the capitalism and to bring about socialism.

Cosatu is the main foundation upon which a viable mass workers' party can be established. It is vital that before a workers' party is launched, that its necessity is understood by the majority of workers inside Cosatu.

On this basis the unity of the organised workers will be maintained, and this will make it possible to draw millions of the oppressed behind the workers' party.

### Dangers of ultra-leftism

The ultra-lefts want to prematurely establish a small workers' party in their own interests, and not those of the working class.

This would lead to the breaking away of the advanced layers of the organised workers from the mass. This will result in confusion within the movement, particularly in Cosatu.

Such a development would seriously endanger the unity of the working class built up so painstakingly over 20

years, and of which Cosatu now forms the pillar.

It is vital that this unity be maintained for the working class effectively to struggle against the bosses.

The ultra-lefts believe it is sufficient merely to have support amongst a minority of advanced workers to proclaim a workers' party.

They base themselves more on what they are *against* than clarity on what they are *for*.

### Danger of splits

The logic of this approach, when applied to the trade unions, is that whenever the leadership adopts wrong policies according to the ultra-lefts, then the answer is to form rival and allegedly more "revolutionary" trade unions.

Already in Durban they are taking steps to form a separate general workers' union in opposition to Cosatu. This is a recipe for divisions, splits and the fragmentation of the working class movement.

### Right Conditions

While supporting the preservation of the alliance, we are nevertheless in favour of

the formation of a workers' party. There is no contradiction between these two positions.

However, we believe the conditions for this do not exist now. There is no doubt that as the struggles of the workers develop, the need for the creation of a workers' party will become inevitable.

This will be understood to be politically necessary by the organised workers in the first instance, and by the majority of the working class as the political situation unfolds.

This does not mean that we must sit and wait fatalistically until "the time is ripe". We must consciously aid the process. The question is not *whether* a workers' party is necessary, but *how* to go about its establishment.

### Election results

The outcome of the elections reconfirmed the support the ANC enjoys among the masses, including in Cosatu.

The majority of workers continue to look to the ANC and its leaders for an improvement in social conditions. They still believe that the leadership will deliver on the promises made in the RDP.

For the African majority in particular, the

# Struggle for socialist policies in the Alliance

fact that white domination has been swept aside and that we have a black majority government is the predominant factor in our consciousness.

They believe that this creates the most favourable opportunities for the fulfillment of their aspirations.

After barely four months in office could this support really have evaporated sufficiently for the question of an alternative party to be posed? Surely not!

Yet, important as the election was in changing decisively the course of this country's history, it was not an event in itself.

The defeat of white minority rule by the working class, has removed an important obstacle in the march to their own freedom as a class.

It is part of the process of the political development and maturity of the working class, which began years before, and will continue for years afterwards.

It is a process which will find its consummation in the development of a mass workers' party. Precisely how long it

a crucial role to play in developing this working class opposition inside the ANC.

A break up of the alliance at this stage will weaken any effective opposition to capitalist policies inside the ANC, clearing the way for the unchallenged domination of such policies.

Leadership has to be provided through the organised workers, in the struggle for the interests of working people.

This struggle also involves a battle against capitalist tendencies in the organisations whose leadership the workers recognise.

It is out of the experience gained in these battles that the necessity of an independent workers' party will be understood. It is clear that this task has not been exhausted in relation to the ANC.

What has been done to influence tens of thousands of workers who are still behind the ANC? What support do the advocates of the workers' party have in the trade unions, factories, etc. What is their programme?

**"Our view is that, for now, we are very central in seeing the RDP implemented and can't play that role if we terminate the alliance now" - Cawu National Organiser**

takes is difficult to foretell.

### Mass support for the ANC

It is true that the ANC leaders have adopted capitalist ideas, and that they want these capitalist policies to be predominant in the ANC. But this situation cannot be combatted by breaking the alliance with the ANC.

Such a step would separate the most advanced workers from the ANC before they have had a chance to influence the mass of ANC supporters. The organised workers -- Cosatu -- have

### Struggle for reforms

The ultra-left have an abstract approach to programme. For them "nothing is possible under capitalism!" Otherwise it is "reformism", creates illusions in capitalism, and is therefore of no consequence to the interests of the working class.

They feel it is sufficient to write and publicise a "revolutionary programme" (in their opinion), and it ends there. One day workers will accept it, and overthrow capitalism the following day.

For the working class a programme is not an abstract thing to be purchased in the market place from any one of a number of merchants all proclaiming the superiority of their particular brand of socialism.

A programme comes into being on the basis of the dialectical inter-play between objective conditions, the class struggle, the development of consciousness and the changing relations between the class and the political party to which it owes its allegiance.

### Key to struggles

The key to the struggle for social reforms lies in the following: Firstly, it makes it possible on the basis of what are seen to be objectively reasonable demands to mobilise a broad layer of the working class into struggle.

Secondly, the struggle for reforms, however limited, helps to strengthen the confidence and organisations of the working class. This, in turn, helps prepare for future battles.

Thirdly, in the course of these struggles class consciousness can be raised. Workers can be made to realise that only through struggle can their immediate demands be met, and that ultimately, to secure permanent gains it is necessary to overthrow capitalism itself.

### Test for ANC leaders

The ANC is attempting at present to serve the needs of classes with irreconcilable interests. Because of the crisis in the world and South African economy it will not be possible for even the modest RDP to be implemented in full without struggling against the capitalism itself.

Inherent in such a situation is the possibility of a split within the ANC, with one wing going over to the bosses and the other remaining with the working class.

A determined struggle by Cosatu for the full implementation of the RDP will test the ANC leadership, and at the same time provide the best means of preserving Cosatu's unity.

The ANC leadership will have to choose between the conflicting class pressures bearing down upon them from the bosses on the one side, and the working class on the other.

Should the ANC choose the side of the capitalist class, a change in the attitude of the masses towards the ANC will inevitably follow.

### Future of the Alliance

Although we support the maintenance of the Alliance, this does not exhaust the question of the relationship between Cosatu and the ANC.

The alliance cannot be retained for its own sake, at any cost. Such a policy, supported in the name of unity, could itself become a source of division in the future.

A discussion and review of the nature of the alliance, and its basis, is absolutely essential. This cannot wait until the next national elections, as some argue

There is a view within Cosatu, put forward by the NUM, for example, that "the unions should jealously guard the tripartite alliance, which will ensure that the ANC-led government remains with a working class base."

Fawu adds further that "our feeling is that the alliance should continue, in particular because of the whole question of the RDP."

The other point of view is that expressed by Enoch Godongwana, general-secretary of NUMSA, that while the alliance with the ANC should continue, "The key question is how to maintain and jealously guard our independence as a labour movement. How do we avoid becoming a transmission belt, if we are in alliance with a liberation movement that forms part of the govern-

ment of the day?"

Such a debate is necessary and healthy for the workers' movement, and it will undoubtedly continue well beyond this congress.

### Political independence

We agree entirely with comrade Godongwana

### RDP

The battle for socialist policies now centres around the struggle for the implementation of the fundamental demands contained in the RDP. It is the responsibility of all in the Alliance, especially COSATU, to ensure that this happens. Without this the danger exists that key

**"If the ANC government does not deliver the goods you must do it what you did to the apartheid regime" - President Mandela addressing Cosatu's Special Congress in 1993**

about the need to preserve the political independence of Cosatu within the alliance. We believe that the question of Cosatu's political independence goes to the heart of the debate.

But what does "independence" mean? Independence is not merely an organisational question. It is political.

The first principle of any genuine workers' organisation is to be independent of the bosses and the state.

But it is above all a question of programme and strategy -- of the policies COSATU pursues within the Alliance.

Organised workers have to independently lead struggle, draw behind them the other layers of the working class and oppressed, and not allow them to be dominated by capitalist politicians.

In practice it means that Cosatu must work out its analysis of the economic crisis facing capitalism and chart a way forward to socialism.

It must provide its own answers to the economic arguments advanced by the bosses. It cannot simply echo the views of ANC leaders in parliament.

Where the ANC leaders show a willingness to struggle for the RDP against the resistance and sabotage of the bosses, they must be supported. Where they retreat Cosatu must oppose them.

demands in the RDP will be abandoned by the leadership.

The RDP is now supported by everybody from all points of view, including the bosses.

Yet we must be clear. The bosses support it in their own class interests. It is politically expedient for them to support it at this point.

They will support it for as long as it does not encroach on their profits, wealth and property.

From the point of view of the working class, the fact that the RDP has become both ANC and government policy is a huge victory for COSATU. This conquest cannot just be abandoned without struggle.

However inadequate the RDP may be, it contains many of the basic immediate demands which the labour movement has fought for over decades.

As long as they have not been realised, they will remain the key issues around which the working class struggle will evolve.

These demands have to be vigorously defended and fought for by COSATU.

The struggle against the bosses' resistance to the full implementation of the RDP will further illuminate the historical task facing the working class -- the formation of a workers' party to abolish capitalism and for the workers to take control of the economy.

**Strengthen Cosatu's power to fight the bosses and capitalism**