



Collective Bargaining

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Collective Bargaining, Organising & Campaigns Conference

**“Let this historic conference
develop a powerful strategy
to claim the social surplus -
today and tomorrow. I wish
you best of luck with your
deliberations.”**

**- Zwelinzima Vavi
COSATU General Secretary**

Editorial note

The COSATU Collective Bargaining, Organising and Campaigns Challenges is charged with the weighty responsibility of charting a clear course for the organised working class - boldly confronting our weaknesses, building on our strengths, and using our decades of experience of working class struggle to successfully navigate these stormy waters.

Inequalities in the labour market, said General Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi, must be decisively dealt with. Transformation of the labour market must

fundamentally alter the power relations between the workers and the employers, in favour of the worker. We have no choice but to push for a fundamental overhaul of our economy. We need a radical transformation that puts people at the centre.

For the sake of our children, and our childrens children, we cannot allow



Zwelinzima Vavi - Editor in Chief



the status quo of high levels of poverty, unemployment and inequality to bedevil our existence. This stance is true to the Freedom Charter and to the founding principles

of both the ANC and our own Federation.

While we live in a capitalist society, and strive for socialism, workers wont wait for some future utopia to claim what is rightfully ours. Let this historic conference develop a powerful strategy to claim the social surplus- today and tomorrow! ■

COSATU UNIONS AND THE STATE OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: Summary of the ANC's Secretary Generals' address to the conference.

“Collective Bargaining is a collective tool of workers to engage a more organised and brutal partner, who owns the means of production, the employer.”

Gwede Mantashe



Comrade Gwede's speech was a mix of an impromptu political class and honest criticism of COSATU affiliated unions and the state of collective bargaining.

Amongst the challenges and possible responses to these challenges that the address highlighted are that:

- Individual workers who have a contract of employment with their employer are much weaker individually in dealing with employer and to counter the power of the employer, workers must organise themselves into a union so that they can have a collective voice in engagement.
- When there are more than one union in a sector they compete and in the majority of times fight for membership and the right to represent workers in the sector; during this competition the employer exploits the divisions and even fund and resource the inter-union fights.
- Many COSATU unions compete in a number of sectors, with the result that they weaken each other.

He further added that:

- It is an important principle for a union to be strong in making preparations for collective bargaining mandatory and;

- When a UNION has prepared the articulation of issues it becomes clearer and therefore easier to contests ideas in the public domain from a working class perspective.
- Worker control as a principle is an important principle, but it must be underpinned by ongoing training of the leadership.

Speaking on anarchy and lawlessness he said that:

- Anarchy and rowdiness is fast taking root in the collective bargaining, with COSATU unions being no exception and;
- That this kind of anarchy that makes South Africa to be ranked number 144 out of 144 in the Global Competitiveness Index in the area of employer/ employee relations, despite the country being rated number 52 overall. The case in point being the NUM in the platinum mines and FAWU in De Doorns where they paid the price and still have to recover from doing away with house rules being ignored and lawlessness taking over. He further warned that;
- As things develop today there will be no bargaining dispensation to talk of in five years. In that situation COSATU unions will be much weaker.
- Union are fast replacing solid organisation with anarchy and therefore fast

blunting this important tool of bargaining and striking.

On union staff members and organizers he said that:

- When one listens to spokespersons of unions and when one bumps into the young trade union organisers one detects the deterioration of quality.
- His conclusion is that COSATU is in a dangerous downward slope. Unions are under siege and less equipped to deal with the difficult situations they face.

On division in COSATU he noted that:

- The federation is not only divided but it is saying so itself and thus weakening itself in the public eye; and added that the ANC has recouped some lost ground in the public since Mangaung, with some experience on how a divided organisation becomes so weak.
- His advice was that a three months recruitment campaign will test the unions and give the federation a sense as to whether it can recover soon.

He concluded by saying that an attack on COSATU is an attack on the congress movement. A weak COSATU is a weak congress movement! ■

Summary of the Opening Address by COSATU President at the COSATU Bargaining, Organising and Campaigns Conference

Sidumo Dlamini



The president, welcoming delegate to the conference invited delegates to pay tribute to the late president of Venezuela, El comandante, Hugo Chavez and spoke of how his decisiveness inspired all of that one day South Africa will be a socialist country and that he demonstrated to us what radical transformation means.

His speech clearly illuminated the plight of the working class under the capitalist system. He said that the working class is confronted with growing unemployment; a growing precariousness of employment, declining household incomes, reduced pensions, and reduced social services.

He further added that:

- That the world's 100 richest people added \$241 US billion to their combined wealth in 2012 and they control an aggregate \$1.9 trillion US.
- According to the latest studies there will be 74.2 million unemployed youth aged 15 to 24 this year which will be an increase of 3.8 million since 2007.
- The number of unemployed worldwide is projected to rise by 5.1 million in 2013, to more than 202 million in 2013 and by another 3 million in 2014 and

this is:

- Worsened by the imposition of austerity measures by governments worldwide as a short-sighted response to the economic crisis.

He called on delegates not sit back and fold arms when it is clear that the working class is being pushed into a dark corner of poverty and of being rightless modern slaves.

He reminded delegates that the COSATU 11th Congress raised a shivering finger and instructed us to call a National Bargaining, Campaigns and Organising Conference which will among other things, consider proposals on measures to transform the apartheid wage structure and craft a new national wage policy.

Part of these proposals must include a:

- National Minimum Wage that would be linked to a minimum living level, as a basic wage floor above which affiliates will negotiate sectoral wage levels.
- Mandatory centralised collective bargaining;
- and reminded delegates that the in 11th congress it was agreed that we need to step up our solidarity in strikes, that we should campaign for amendments to

the Gatherings Act, and that we should investigate the establishment of workable strike funds, within the framework of a Federation-wide policy.

- As well as ensuring social protection for the unemployed.

On collective bargaining he said that:

- That in the education sector there is an attempt to undermine our union and disregard collective agreements; and sent a strong warning whoever is trying to reverse our hard won gains that COSATU will fight to the bitter end for that which belongs to us as workers!
- The platinum bosses systematically undermined collective bargaining and promoted division amongst workers, in order to destroy the NUM and promote their preferred union.

He proposed the creation of strong collective bargaining institutions in all sectors of the economy, and comprehensive social protection for the unemployed; he reminded delegates that it is only under Socialism that we will attain our complete freedom where our labour power will be compensated for what it is worth. ■

Reflection of Day One of the Workers' Parliament!

The Congress of South Africa Trade Union's National Collective Bargaining, Organizing and Campaigns Conference went ahead as scheduled at Birchwood Conference Centre, Boksburg under the Theme

'Engineering Radical Economic Transformation'

The first day dealt amongst others with issues around recruitment, organizing and servicing of the members-a necessary ingredient for sustaining and growing the Federation.

The conference before collapsing in five commissions, the plenary centred various questions to be answered, to inject a new dimension to enhance sustainable service delivery to all workers across all sectors of the economy.

Some of the issues to be worth fighting for were;

- The creation of decent work for all,
- Eradication of poverty across all communities,
- Seriousness in fighting the scourge of Income inequality,
- A forty-hour week demand

'The future victories of the working class lie not so much in their numbers [the workers have always been in the vast majority], but in the knowledge they possess and the ability to intelligently organize and act together on the political and economic fields'

-Lena Morrow Lewis

- for workers,
- The banning of labour broking,
- Full social protection for workers,
- Ownership and control of the economy,
- Fundamental tax reforms and the transformation of our macro-economic policy,
- Land redistribution,
- The nationalisation of the Reserve Bank and intervention in the currency markets, and also
- Access to quality education and quality health care

It was further elaborated by almost all speakers that 'Decent work talks not only to wages, but also to the social wage, or social benefits.'

COSATU argues that government still has to address the elephant in the room: the lack of social protection for over 7 million unemployed' ■

GALLERY

