

FAWU BULLETIN

Newsletter For Members and Staff

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Cnr. NY1 & NY 110, Gugulethu, 7750

Tel: 021 637 9040 Fax: 086 508 6065



COSATU welcomes Nel sentence

The Congress of South African Trade Unions welcomes the four consecutive life sentences - plus an additional 62 years in prison without parole - handed down to Johan Nel, who killed four people and injured eleven in a shooting spree in Skierlik in January.

No lesser sentence could possibly have been given for such an appalling crime, motivated purely by racist obsessions, for which there can be absolutely no mitigating circumstances.

COSATU agrees with the judge that there is no place for racially motivated violence in a democratic South Africa and that the country's citizens must be protected.

While nothing can erase the grief of those bereaved, the community can take some comfort from the fact that the court passed such an exemplary sentence, which should act as a deterrent to any other would-be racist killers that they will be dealt with as harshly as the law allows when convicted.

COSATU congratulates its members in the North West and the Skierlik community who demonstrated every day at the court and showed their determination to see justice done to a man who ended four lives and inflicted pain and suffering on the injured and bereaved.

Emerging Farmers in Dairy Industry Suffering

Western Cape: A dairy industry summit, called by the MEC for Agriculture, Cobus Dowry was held in Stellenbosch yesterday.

It emerged from the meeting that emerging farmers in the dairy industry are struggling to cope as farmers were not being paid enough for raw milk that they produce. It was said that these farmers normally have between 10 and 15 cows each to compete with the hundreds owned by commercial farmers to the detriment of the former.

About 70 percent of the province's budget was spent on emerging farmers yet they don't make large profits and consequently, are being forced off the land.

Proposals were made that government should raise import tariffs on milk from the present two percent as it is believed that this would assist emerging farmers. It arose from the meeting that about 48 000 tons of milk products were imported although there is more than enough milk in SA to meet demand.

The competition commission's process is also stalling which affects farmers negatively. Farmers claimed that they had no say in the pricing of dairy products and normally bear the brunt when problems in the supply chain surfaces.

FAWU Workshop On Policy Formulation

The Danish 3F trade union federation hosted a workshop from 17 November to 18 November at the Booyens Hotel in Johannesburg.

The workshop was convened as FAWU is currently be developing a policy for the agricultural sector that will cover a wide variety of issues relating to FAWU's organization of farm workers. The knowledge gained here will also be of great assistance to other departments in the trade union.

“We want to make comrades to appreciate and to be more or less be on the same level when we talk about policy issues. The workshop is a result of the Project Requirement that Fawu develops a policy and strategies for farmworker organising and training. It is such a broad requirement that we thought that let us have a workshop on policy formulation as a first step”, said comrade Howard Mbana the Project Co-ordinator of the FARM WORKERS PROJECT within FAWU.

Farm worker gets temporary stay in fight against Eviction

A Swartland farm worker is getting a temporary reprieve as he fights his eviction, allowed to stay on the farm he has lived on for the ten years.

Michael Morobi from the nearby Pemonia farm, approached the courts after his employer wanted to retrench him and five other workers.

The Piketberg Magistrate's Court has now postponed his case to January, and this means that Morobi, his wife and his two children will be able to stay on the farm.

Morobi says that he is relieved that they'll be able to celebrate Christmas at the place they call home.

About a hundred farm labourers marched through the streets of Piketberg yesterday to call for an end to farm evictions.

The Right to Agrarian Reform for Food Sovereignty Campaign's Andries Titus says that Morobi's court battle only highlights the plight of hundreds of other labourers in similar situations.

[From Radio 786 online, 21 Nov, 2008]

COSATU Central Executive Committee

The Congress of South African Trade Unions is holding a scheduled meeting of its Central Executive Committee from 24-26 November 2008. Among the many issues to be discussed will be:

- Managing the threats to unity of ANC and COSATU
- Preparing for 2009 elections - manifesto and list processes
- Assessing Alliance Summits
- Preparations for COSATU 10th National Congress, 20-23 September 2009
- 16 days of activism against women and children abuse
- 30-minute work stoppage on World Aids Day
- Buy local! Save jobs! Campaign, 6-7 December 2008
- State of health care and education
- Health Charter and National Health Insurance
- Section 77 processes on food and fuel prices and the electricity crisis
- COSATU Programme for 2009
- Global economic crisis
- World trade negotiations

- Zimbabwe and Swaziland

Programme of Action arising out of a Consultative meeting with Affiliates on Shikota situation

The meeting noted the current political situation, which is mainly characterised by a visible campaign for the formation of a breakaway party from the ANC and the formation of a new Federation which will be an alternative to COSATU. This calls for an urgent and decisive response from COSATU and the Alliance.

It was noted with concern that already a convention has been convened to take forward this project and is scheduled for this coming weekend. The new party will be launched on the 16 December.

The meeting agreed that the threat to destabilise COSATU must not be underestimated. COSATU must respond effectively and take concrete measures to defend the organisation from what is a clear counter-revolutionary project to reverse the gains workers have made to build a organisation that have acted as their shield for so long.

What is that we are dealing with – whose project is this?

The attempts to split the ANC and create a new Federation to counter COSATU must be understood from what it is – a class act aimed at undermining not only the ANC and COSATU but the NDR. This is a deliberate and longstanding agenda, as first prize to transform the ANC from being a broad liberation movement that has a bias towards the working class into a neo liberal, centre-left bourgeois narrow electoral political party.

COSATU has come to understand this agenda and has written discussion papers to analyse the phenomenon of what is popularly known as the 1996 class project. The refusal to transform the economy, the refusal to confront the power of monopoly white capital, the unilateral introduction of GEAR, the privatisation and commodification programmes, the marginalisation of the Alliance and the ANC, the

attempt to restructure the ANC and make it a “modern political party” of the learned, the demobilisation of the mass movement including the ANC members and reducing them into spectators and voting cattle: these were all part of this deliberate class agenda pursued by the core of the people who are now mobilising for a convention and a new political party.

COSATU must approach this battle correctly as a class war against the working class by what is clearly capitalist class pursuing a historic mission to weaken the working class, divide it and blunt its weapons and make it a conveyor belt for the interest of capital and accumulation. This agenda to divide and defeat the liberation movement is the old agenda of international imperialism. At the centre of the agenda is to defeat the ANC so that it can never effect a thorough-going transformation of the society. This would leave the interests of local and international capital intact.

We must draw lessons from other countries with similar experiences such as Nicaragua, Panama and recently Venezuela. The booklet to be developed must speak from this class analysis and theme.

It is not accidental that there is an agenda to use former trade unionists to penetrate, divide and weaken a revolutionary Federation such as COSATU. Any person who wants to divert the NDR and defeat the ANC must start by weakening and dividing COSATU. The people behind this class agenda have identified COSATU as a centre of gravity – the pillar behind the strength of the ANC. COSATU is the most organised formation of the Alliance with organised presence literally everywhere in the country. In this context COSATU is a strategic target for all who seek to weaken and destroy the ANC and the NDR.

COSATU should not be concerned about the size or whether attempts to break up unity and create an alternative Federation will succeed or not. We all know that this is an impossible task – it can never happen. What we should be concerned about is the potential for violence and the disruptive nature of their activities.

The meeting pointed to relevant historical incidents such as the mayhem caused by the five *madoda* in Rustenburg in 1997, the mayhem caused by the small union calling itself *Mouthpiece*, linked to the IFP, that led to the killing of the NUM Carletonville regional chairperson, comrade Selby Mayise and other shaft stewards in

Carletonville, etc. when it caused so much confusion amongst workers that it embarked on unprotected strikes in demand of death benefits and provident funds. NUMSA in Volkswagen faced a similar challenge in 2000 when a man not even employed by the company worked with *indlu yengwevu*, which was a faction within the plant and managed to mobilise thousands of NUMSA members to embark on an unprotected strike. Their demands had nothing to do with improving conditions of employment but they had grievances against certain shop stewards. Thousands of workers were dismissed as a result. OGAWU, which is was a splinter union formed by a former CEPPWAWU President, opportunistically took the matter up and lost in every court including in the ILO. In 1995 Turning Wheels – a small union - mobilised truck drivers who were others-wise members of SATAWU and stage a huge highway blockade near Mooiriver that lasted days. Recently 3000 workers were led by a small crisis committee of a mere seven people in the uranium mine near Klerksdorp. All these workers have been dismissed. The NUM must now fight for their reinstatement – the crisis committee is nowhere to be found.

In all these examples the small crisis committees and or small unions never existed outside the strikes, but the impact of the disruption to the union and the Federation and even to the economy was huge. The Star of the October 29, 2008, reported that Willie Madisha held a meeting with NUMSA and NUM shopstewards in Gauteng. The Gauteng province is following unconfirmed reports that the Boysen Hotel meetings may be continuing. Our Northwest and Limpopo provinces are following up reports of activities of Willie Madisha who is reported to be meeting shop stewards who he knows have some grievances against the union at that level. The meeting emphasised that the concern is not about the size of the threat but about its disruptive nature.

The meeting asserted that whilst it was important to refer to history to understand the phenomenon, that was not to be used to demoralise the forces and leave them timid but was to be balanced with an understanding of the reality of the current circumstances and conjuncture. These examples are being raised not to panic our base but to warn it against complacency and over confidence.

Based on these challenges, a strategy that includes developing an alliance strategy, addressing the weakness in the alliance, and flushing out dissidents in the ANC have been formulated. The document is about 40 pages long and extracts hereof will be printed in the next bulletin. Full versions will be made available at a later stage.

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