

SALHA 76: PANU

FOOD & ALLIED WORKERS UNION

NATIONAL BI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE



PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

THEME:

*"UNITE, DEEPEN THE NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION FOR
WORKING CLASS INTEREST"*

29 JUNE - 04 JULY 1997
CAPE TOWN

PRESIDENTIAL SPEECH

Comrade, General Secretary : Mandla Gxanyana , the acting Office Bearers Lucky Nsizwana , Thomas Basson and Christopher Plaatjies . Leaders of COSATU , SACP , ANC and the present Ministries , Distinguished Guests fraternal forces in the labour movement. I will start by saying we have come a long way as FAWU and we have survived through thick and thin. This was only because of our political understanding and ideological belief on the interconnection of economic struggles with the broad national question. The national liberation has been in the heart of this organisation from its inception in 1941 in the form of African Food and Food and Canning Workers Union.

It is both a pleasure and an honour to share the same platform once again with so many leadership of FAWU from all the provinces of our country . Furthermore one feels especially fortunate to be part of this Bi-annual conference . Two years ago in 1995 , we came together in Bloemfontein for a week long Bi-annual Conference . A programme was produced and adopted by the conference and furthermore a action plan to implement the Programme was discussed by the NEC and also endorsed .

If we have to be honest not all the aims and objectives we set for ourselves we have manage to achieve them as expected per the mandate of our last Conference , there are number of reasons for that, the G .S report will deal with some of them . Nevertheless we manage to implement some of the areas e.g. setting the tone for Super Bargaining Council which has to put a process of standardise wages in the Food and Beverage Sector and come up with clear industrial policy on the following areas training and grading , industrial provident fund and other benefits.

We have reached this date not without problems internally as leaders of the organisation and as the broad membership . Let us lead this organisation and the masses of workers in theory but also in practice. The prospects of achieving a revolutionary break through in South Africa are greater today than ever before in our history. The 27th of April was just a confirmation of the long standing vision of transforming the country from the ashes of Apartheid monopoly Capitalism to Apartheid free South Africa. We owe the workers of this country an answer , the landless rural masses, students , women and all peace loving people. Because it is through the mobilisation , organisation and unity in action of this large front of forces who made it possible from every corner of our country Apartheid to be unworkable.

✓ This conference is taking place in the context of that background , at the time where also the Government of National Unity is also consolidating policies that are geared to transform our country. Our struggle is known throughout the world, stirring freedom - loving people in every country. The building of this broad front of forces inside and outside our Country has been the greatest achievement of our struggle.

Electoral Mandate of the Alliance

Comrades 1994 April was a total different scenario from the strategic perception of the liberation movement . This was different in a sense that to plan for our children educational upbringing , we know for 13 years we must be responsible at least to see them reaching Matric (Standard 10) as a goal and responsibility we have as parents .

The political and economic situation is not as mechanical as the educational plan of our children . In politics and economics you deal with social science that have to impact and transform the social life and further correct the imbalances of the past ,by providing housing and security for all , putting electricity to the rural poor and proper infra-structure , combating illiteracy in all levels , creating jobs and free medication for all . Most importantly water , sanitation and redistribution of the mineral resources for the under-develop areas of our country , these are the basic human rights and the founding principles of our constitution .

Our conference is taking place in the most challenging times. It is when the whole world is focusing at our young democracy in particular at the time when the Nationalist Party has retreated back into the benches of the Imperialist World where it originally belongs. The attacks by the NP in the form of F.W. de Klerk , Gatsha Buthelezi , DP in the form of Tony Leon and big business , that COSATU , SACP ANC ALLIANCE scares the investors is not new . This is nothing else except manifestation of political bankruptcy on their part

It is therefore important for us as FAWU when we approach COSATU conference we go with clear strategy and tactics that will guide the labour movement for years to come. We must clear the mist that is being created by the anti - democratic forces , that labour is just a bunch of radical and militant grouping. This conference have to show those anti - democratic robbers that our responsibility is beyond the factories we are accountable to the larger nation in many areas of development. Furthermore we must also interrogate the electoral mandate of alliance where are we and where are we from and where we are going ? If G.E.A.R. is the strategic shift from the RDP what alternative are we providing as a comprehensive package on macro-economic policy for the country?

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Comrades, clear policies will not only help in shaping up the organisation , but it must also help in giving the directions on many levels from the factories restructuring and effective contribution to the broader political and economic development of the country. Out of this conference we should be able to say our deliberations and discussion have manage to mould combinations of contingents who are prepared to destroy and smash capital in all its manifestation and ramification.

With all the problems and complex nature of our political settlement we have manage to come-up with the constitution which is in many respect working class bias and entrenches the fundamental principles of our liberation struggle , non-racialism , non-sexist and democratic values . This is the space which as the working class of this country we have to creatively utilise in our historical mission to Socialism . I am saying this that our constitution entrenches the right of workers to strike, the very constitution recognise that the masses of our people have a right to vote regardless of the status in life .

What next ?

The duty and the responsibility of the working class is to galvanise and mobilise the broad forces of the Civil Society behind the programme of transformation . The campaign of doing away with all Apartheid debts is not the responsibility of the non-governmental organisation , the working class must be in the centre stage of those campaigns . Through the scribing of Apartheid debts the Government will be able to deliver the essential services and attack the persistent poverty that is facing our people , unemployed , the rural poor and build our economy away from the context of "globalisation" which presently is benefiting the richer nations of the so called G8 .

It is through this that the ANC have been in the driving seat for more than 29 months and there are a number of weaknesses in the approach of the democratic forces. Our vision of transformation of the state being dissipated through our caution about the constraints imposed by our negotiations deals on the one hand , and tendencies towards becoming too departmental , provincial or sectoral in our approach . This is a clear indication some of our comrades have drawn themselves on the existing bureaucracy of the Apartheid regime , this also assist our enemies to increasing criticism about the pace of delivery of the RDP.

We believe that the key to the above , is a common understanding in the movement about our vision of transformation and the kind of society we are building. This is at the heart of our conflicting strategies and methods.

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Comrades in analysing this current phase of our struggle we need to go back to the Morogoro and Kabwe resolutions on our strategy and tactics set out on both historic conferences that our struggle have two stage . It characterised the objective of the national liberation of the African people and the black people in general; uniting the liberation alliance around the vision of a national democratic state based on the Freedom Charter. The motive forces for this phase were identified as the working class , the rural masses and the black middle strata.

The contents of the national question is central to this conference of FAWU , we must emerge with policies that will directly contribute to the broader RDP. the area I am talking about are contained in your programme Macro - economic strategy of the government , our policy approach to EPZ , the question of the living wage , World Class Manufacturing . Rural development, land reforms and Market policy . Most importantly Regional trade and tariffs, the question of Food Security, Bargaining Councils and labour Standards. The other areas is the environmental policy which includes ; Coastal Management , Marine Resources , Health and Safety and our international participation. we need also to adopt clear policies on education and training with specific focus ABE , Technical Skills for our members.

Comrades we must understand that we are holding an important sector in the manufacturing industry. If we miss this golden opportunity history won't forgive us.

Comrades the province were we are hosting our conference is embedded with number of crisis , one we are under the leadership of the National Party which is facing a political crisis . It is important that from this conference we must come up with strategies and tactics that will strengthen our alliance with the SACP, ANC and SANCO with the sole purpose of claiming our political legitimacy as the representative of peace- loving South African . Lets start now to prepare for 1999 general democratic election, by committing ourselves that every FAWU member vote ANC .

The Alliance

Comrades the alliance was not born because of there was a Food Union on the form of Food and Cuning Workers Union and African Food and Cuning in 1941 February . We have entered in number of battles and Wars of dispossession and resistance until 1906 divided . Come 1912 when comrade Pikley Ka Seme made a brialent and scientific call that the oppressed and colonised must unite on the common mission and vision against the common enemy the British and Hollanders . This was meant to unite all forces from- domestic workers , plantation workers , mine-workers , rural and urban people , intellectuals and religious fraternity on the common goals of non-racialism , non-

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sexism and democratic votes for all .

After this call there were number of persistent repressive laws which follows , to mention just the few 1913 Land Act , The Native Urban Areas Act of 1923, The Industrial Conciliation Act. These laws were very important in maintaining and controlling a cheap and divided workforce and undermine the pride of our nation. But the major way that the bosses and the government tried to control and supply workers was by strict controls over the African working class , and a final attack on the already diminishing peasantry .

The glorious "Doctors Pact" of 1946 took the question of the alliance further which laid basis for 1955 blue-print document Freedom Charter . The alliance question in FAWU is non-negotiable and I believe as we are in the threshold of our Federation conference this will be the mandate of this conference , that we must consolidate the alliance will clear programmes . This conference is charge with mammoth task of putting in place strategies and tactics that will correct the blunders of our alliance partners .

COSATU

Comrades we are not making any meaningful contribution in COSATU structures nationally as well as regionally . We need to develop programmes that will assist our delegates on all COSATU structures to be effective be it EXCO , CEC's , NEDCOM , PRU and all sub-structures that deals with policy , political and economic formulation . I hope the General Secretary will dwell much on the capacity problems and further come up with proposals on the wayforward .

NEDLAC

Comrades processes at this level development are very fast , not very long economic sectors will be demarcated and if our involvement is as poor as it we might be declare an essential service sector . There are number of policy position that are being discussed others have direct impact to our sector , the education department and the constitutional structures of the organisation must develop capacity building courses that will enable us to input technically and politically on the unfolding processes .

In conclusion

In memory of our gallant heroes and heroines the founding fathers and mothers of this union , who have sacrifice their lives in many ways some are still with us, our honorary President Mama Ray Alexander . We salute you with great pride without overstating our feelings in spite of all the difficulties our people have had to face under the brutal system of Apartheid Capitalism . To know that the ideas for which many of us have sacrificed are very much alive and embodied in this

contingents of leadership is encouraging , especially to people of my generation . Let us rededicate ourselves and redouble our efforts in the transformation of our country to a fully-flesh democracy .

I must again thank the international delegates who sacrifice their time to be away from their families to come and share their experiences with us at this part of the continent . This is the time were the international Labour Movement have to forge forces as it happened in history against Nazist in the late 30's and early 40's . It is also my believe the same enemy we fought then is still alive in the form of this new animal "Globalisation " which is in the war to globalise poverty and misery to the developing nations . International solidarity is no longer a slogan it is the guide for the Labour Movement to advance the Socialist Project .

It will be a historic blunder not to thank the Head Office staff which have work tirelessly to make this occasion a success with all the frustrations that goes with it , well done comrades you are the mobile unit and the back-bone of this Union .

Lastly not least I thank all the delegates hoping that you will make this conference a real stock-taking without prejudice and advance our struggle in greater heights . Let build unity , lets show those who think we are incapable to take control of life and problems the other side of the story . The whole Labour Movement is looking upon this conference for obvious reasons . FAWU NOW AND FAWU FOREVER.LETS SURPRISE OUR ENEMIES !

AMANDLA
VIVA FAWU
VIVA COSATU
VIVA SACP
VIVA ANC