



# THE APDUSAN

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OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

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**THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS AND LANDLESS PEASANTS  
SHALL BE PARAMOUNT !**

## COSATU PRESSED TO "COME ON BOARD"

President Mbeki has called the trade union federation COSATU "to come on board"; that is, for it to become part of government plans for the country. What exactly does this mean? Since the president of the country attaches great importance to this matter let us consider this question a bit closer.

◆ Does it mean COSATU is going to be part of another process of consultation? All very nice sounding and democratic. But are the decisions going to be taken by people who have the immediate and long term interests of the workers and peasants at heart? If not, why not?

It's all very well to consult, but we are interested in decisions being taken that will have real, positive impacts on the lives of the millions of workers and peasants. It's no use hiding behind phrases such as "but you've elected us, etc". If they, the representatives, find it so difficult or impossible to take and implement decisions on behalf of the masses, they should ask themselves whether the way the system is put together is not the real problem and that the system needs to be destroyed.

We cannot just accept that the exploited masses should be left standing on the sideline, watching this spectacle of law making play off in front of them, and occasionally applaud the government for doing a good deed.

◆ Is government trying to dictate to the unions how they should operate? This is not an uncommon phenomenon if we look at examples such as Margaret Thatcher's Britain.

◆ What does the leadership of the unions make of this "consultation" and "transformation", as the popular catchphrases go nowadays? Do they throw in their lot with their class and with the landless peasants, or do they embrace Mr Mbeki's romantic political notions?

Comrades, it is time that we start building and strengthening organisations in which decision-making is done by the people themselves and not by wolves in sheep's clothes. ●

## THE HOUSING CRISIS

After the 1994 elections the South African government promised the population 1 million houses within 5 years. After 6 years of ANC it has fallen way short of this target. According to statistics revealed by the Urban Sector Network at the 31 January 2000 meeting of the Housing Portfolio Committee, there is a backlog of 3 million houses. (The Urban Network Sector is a group of NGO's who concentrate on housing).

The current budget projection for housing is only 1.8%, instead of the minimum 5 % needed to eliminate the backlog. The report also reveals that housing subsidies for first-time homeowners are too small and have not been increased for a long time. In the new housing schemes no attention has been given to health services and public transport. People are dumped in areas far from their work and they are forced to spend hours travelling to and from work every day. No clinics and hospitals have been planned with the erection of these schemes. We are being dumped in ever growing squatter camps and reserves in the former Bantustans. A big hullabaloo is being made of every little housing scheme that is being completed, but it is just a deception to lull the people into accepting that must patiently go on waiting for a long time to come.

We say that the government has reneged on its promise of houses for everyone. All parties will start heaping blame on each other with the run up to the local government elections. Comrades, it is time that we start to realise that these parties do not care about the exploited workers and landless peasants of this country.

Comrades! Proper housing is a right and not a privilege. It is our task to unite with like-minded organisations and demand proper housing, with a proper infrastructure of health care, schools and public transport servicing our areas. Let us demand the end of corruption in the allocation of houses. ●

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# A PARLIAMENT FOR THE PEOPLE?

A rather curious statement by the leadership of the COSATU appeared in the 5/6 February 2000 edition of the Argus newspaper. We quote: "We believe that those hoping to see this government turn into a Thatcherite, union-bashing government will be sorely disappointed."

Sooner or later the COSATU leadership may very well have to change their tune. The government's agenda will be influenced by many factors, one being the resistance it will experience from the organised workers and peasant organisations - who of necessity will have to defend their political and economic gains. What, however, is certain is that this government, while pretending to make and enforce laws in favour of the downtrodden masses, is in fact acting on behalf of the capitalist class. Of course, our fine parliamentarians are quick to point out that this village now has running water, that township is now electrified. So what! Viewed in the context of the suffering and deprivations of the masses and all the wealth and resources of this country,

what they have accomplished boils down to very, very little indeed. They may admit it but what do they offer as a solution?

In Parliament (the place of talking?), what does all the talking and goings-on there mean to the working class and peasantry? Do we know of the countless consultants who are paid thousands of rand to work out ways and means of keeping a legislative knot tied around the necks of millions of workers and peasants? (Remember Eugene Nyati?). It would be interesting to know how much parliament spends annually on these consultants. What is the role and function of what is called Portfolio Committees; what is the nature of all the deals that are being made there and whose interests are being served? (the R30 billion weapons procurement deal comes to mind). Why is it that when laws that are meant to protect the workers and peasants are not enforced, nobody in government and Parliament cares one bit. So much effort, so few results for the oppressed and exploited.

Some will protest and say: but parliament is what we've fought for and we must make sure that we choose the right people to serve us there. Is this true? To argue and say that Parliament will work properly only when the representatives do their work properly, is to miss the point altogether. The laws that are made there are not meant to improve the lives of the workers and peasants. They are meant to keep the workers and peasants in their miserable economic and social condition.

Our task on the one hand is to expose the lies, deceit and charade which is parliament, and on the other hand to build organisations where we are in control. The history of the struggle in this country has many such examples. Through this self-organisation of the people, we start building an alternative to this "parliament against the people". Our stand is that parliamentarians must serve the people, not themselves, not the small rich capitalist section of the population, but the millions who are the majority. ●

## A NEW DEVELOPMENT IN COSATU

Five years after the 1994 elections there is growing dissatisfaction amongst the oppressed masses with the current dispensation. This discontent is reflected in disjointed protests of workers organised in the trade unions against the effects of the GEAR policy of the government - the non-delivery of services; retrenchments due to privatisation and wage disputes continue. Although workers are mainly taking up 'bread and butter' issues, the growing tenacity and unifying factor of these issues indicate that a strengthening of the workers across political affiliations is taking place. A political development is taking place amongst the workers that must be assisted along a progressive path. The question is how?

Trade unions appear to be organs that are sealed against outside influences. But this is just an appearance which is evident in recent developments in 'Local Shopsteward Councils' in COSATU. Because of the alliance of COSATU with the petit bourgeois ANC and SACP who are running the bourgeois state machinery and are hell-bent on pursuing the imperialist policy of neo-liberalism, the leadership is no longer capable of keeping up a consistent rhetoric on socialism, which COSATU had since its inception vowed to achieve. This state of affairs makes the shopstewards look outwards and

political organisations. While many locals still focus mainly on shop-floor issues and political discussions are a rarity, others are beginning to focus less on such issues and more and more political matters are being taken up even though they are as yet poorly attended. But these locals are vitally important. Any serious revolutionary cannot ignore them. ●

## LAND CLAIMS - SOME FACTS & FIGURES

The leading (front page) article in the Sowetan of Monday 7 February gave some revealing figures released by the Land Claims Commission. From the start of 1998 to December 1999 they received 63 455 claims of which 785 settlements were made. If this process is going to continue for the next 5 to ten years, where will it lead?

The commission says it is running on a tight budget. The peasantry's desire for land is not diminishing. Conflict over land in the rural areas has surfaced from time to time. Many retrenched workers on mines and on farms are returning to these rural areas. And all the government has to offer is some promise of future restoration of land to the dispossessed. We can no longer believe in these promises. The only promise we can have is the one made to ourselves that we shall fight for our real liberation. ●

become more accommodating of new ideas from other

## TRIBUTE TO THE LATE LEONARD NIKANI

Leonard Nikani, a former president of UMSA died in Uppsala, Sweden on 6 December 1999. Nikani's entire adult life was devoted to the liberation struggle in South Africa. A message from APDUSA delivered at a memorial service to honour his life, held at the Holy Cross Church, Mdantsane on 20 December, the day he was buried in Sweden, aptly described him as "a hero of our time".

Nikani joined the Society of Young Africa, a youth organisation affiliated to the UMSA, as a student at the University of Fort Hare. He was to play a leading role in this organisation, becoming chairman of the Durban branch. It was in Durban that he was introduced to the study of Marxism and he remained a committed Marxist for the rest of his life.

In the early 60's, with the peasantry in open revolt against the whole apartheid system, APDUSA was formed and Nikani, as one of its leading cadres and chairman of the Johannesburg branch, played a crucial role in organising mineworkers and other migratory labourers on the Witwatersrand into APDUSA. It was during this period that he was co-opted onto the Head Unity Committee of UMSA and was charged with the delicate task of organising an escape route for members of UMSA into Botswana in 1964.

In exile UMSA arranged for Nikani together with other cadres to obtain military training by the Cubans in 1968. They were subsequently sent on a hazardous mission to South Africa to recruit volunteers for political and military training. The mission was successful but after escaping from South Africa to Swaziland Nikani was imprisoned and put into solitary confinement for 18 months before getting political asylum in Sweden.

In Sweden Nikani became a teacher at the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA). It was at SIDA that he met his second wife Eva whom he married in 1985. Sadly, she died in 1993 when their two children were young.

Nikani was an inspiration to his comrades who elected him to the highest position in the organisation, president of UMSA. Unfortunately he had to relinquish that position in 1993 with the onset of his illness. Nikani will be remembered by this and future generations for his outstanding contribution to the struggle for true liberation in South Africa.

## UNITY BETWEEN TOWN AND COUNTRY

In December last year a delegation from the Western Cape Branch of APDUSA was sent on a trip to visit centres of APDUSA activity in the Eastern Cape. In the meetings that were held it became clear that there is no difference between the struggles being fought in the rural areas and the urban areas. People are faced with the same problems such as the crisis in education, health care, housing etc. While all over people are compelled to carry on these old struggles as before there is a tendency for them to be fought on a regional basis.

A nurse in Queenstown reported on the worsening situation in the local hospital. The complaints laid by a delegation to Bisho to take up these problems only fell on deaf ears. She also reported cases where members of management only report in the mornings and go home soon afterwards. Is the struggle of the nurses in the Eastern Cape any different from those elsewhere? The workers belonging to NEHAWU in the Eastern

Cape are the fighting the same battles as the NEHAWU members in the Western Cape, but separately.

Workers and peasants must link up and fight their struggles in unity and overcome the obstacles of the backward political ideas of tribalism, racialism and regionalism which are forced down the throats of the people. The need for the greatest ideological and organisational unity between the workers in the urban centres and the peasants in the rural areas is paramount. ●

## SEATTLE, DAVOS AND GLOBALISATION

Globalisation, a neutral word for exploitation, is part of the ongoing onslaught on the working class and peasantry of the world. The talks hosted by the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in Seattle during December 1999 was the scene for the horse-trading that goes by the name of 'talks on free trade'. This meeting, attended by international businessmen and governments, was to spell out the optimum conditions under which lucrative deals and profits could be made. Usually it is a platform on which the developed countries dictate their terms and conditions to the underdeveloped countries.

During these talks the streets of Seattle were seething with thousands of working people protesting against the horrors of globalisation. They were giving notice that the agendas drawn up by business and government would no longer be meekly accepted. The December talks collapsed.

In an article carried in the Cape Times Business Report (8/2/200) entitled "Use UNCTAD as anti-WTO platform, say NGOs", Patricia Alonso, a representative of an international peasant and small farmers organisation had this to say: "In Seattle, there was a dialogue of the deaf. The WTO has led to greater instability in local and world markets and ... greater poverty."

Davos, Switzerland was another opportunity for governments and businessmen of the world to meet. They had learnt a lesson in Seattle. Non-government organisations (NGOs) and unions were not allowed too close to their forums. Nevertheless, here too protests against the deliberations were vigorous.

What does this mean for South Africa, in particular? A position paper presented at the World Economic Forum by Ian Goldin, the chief executive of the Development Bank of South Africa, praised what was happening in the South African economy. He indicated that: "Since 1994 investor confidence has improved ... by a net capital inflow of about 2 percent of GDP per annum". This fact he attributes to " --- democratic and effective governance." He also praises the government for its macro-economic framework which provides the basis for this inflow of capital.

The South African government has always told the population that once investor confidence grows, and the economy along with it, the demands of the working class for jobs, homes and social services will be met. Ian Goldin, the government's praise singer has the final word. He says that restructuring the economy is costly. The formal sector sheds "about 100 000 jobs a year--."! (Business Report - 8/2/2000). ●

# TORNADO VICTIMS' STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Five months after the freak tornado that shattered their lives the disaster victims are still fighting an uphill struggle with the Cape Town City Council for the relief that is due to them. At the time of the disaster City councillors and members of the provincial government were quick to express their great concern and sympathy for the victims and promised to do all in their power to get them rehoused quickly and to provide them with aid for all their personal losses. After the prominence of this terrible event died down the City Council quietly performed a total about face and told the victims that it had no responsibility to rehouse them and that they must pay for new homes if the council is to build them. This in spite of the fact that the City Council was due to receive about R14 million in insurance pay outs on the basis of insurance premiums paid for up to thirty years, not by the Council but by the tenants themselves! The Manenberg Disaster Community (MDC) - the organisation of the victims of the disaster in the area, have calculated that this money is more than enough to provide all of them with reasonable homes. Moreover, a City Council engineer has admitted that the residences that were destroyed and damaged in the storm were only designed to last for 10 years as transit housing for victims of the group areas removals in the 60's. In other words these homes were not designed to withstand the storm that struck 20 years after they should have been demolished and replaced. This puts the blame for the

results of the disaster squarely on the shoulders of the City Council. It has taken the City Council over four months to provide some of the victims with temporary accommodation in small wendy houses after it first expected these people to survive the rains and cold of the Cape winter in surplus army tents.

The MDC staged a protest march in Cape Town in November last year. It is disgraceful that no newspapers, publicised the facts that the disaster victims were trying to put to the public. All the sanctimonious cries of sympathy and pleas for aid to the victims at the time of the disaster have turned out to be so much hypocritical crocodile tears. Nobody seems to care that the Cape Town City Council has totally betrayed its trust and duties for the sake of its self-designated financial interests. There is no public account of the disaster funds that have quietly been absorbed into the Council coffers. It was more important for the Council to spend millions on damp squib millennium celebrations than to serve the most urgent needs of the citizens it is supposed to represent.

APDUSA has been assisting the MDC in its campaign and will continue to do so. The rank duplicity and self-interested opportunism of the Cape Town City Council in this incident must be exposed and it must be compelled to do its duty so that the lives of the unfortunate victims can be restored to some kind of normality.

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1A Palace House, Malta Road, Salt River, Cape Town 7925