

COSATU Launch

On the weekend of November 29 to December 1, 870 delegates from all over South Africa met in Durban to found the Congress of South African Trade Unions. Thirty-three unions with a paid-up membership of 449,679 were represented.

The Inaugural Congress opened with a speech by Cyril Ramaphosa, the Conference Convener (see below). On day two the constitution of COSATU was adopted (see below for preamble, aims and objects).

Three important amendments were made to the draft constitution:

- (i) a 2/3 vote of the Central Executive Committee is required for a decision to be binding;
- (ii) representation on the Central Executive Committee was changed in favour of larger unions. Unions with under 15,000 members get 2 delegates, those above have 4;
- (iii) an additional full-time post, that of assistant general secretary was created.

The next item of business was the election of office bearers.

Those elected are:

- * President - Elijah Barayi (vice-President of National Union of Mineworkers)
- * 1st vice-President - Chris Dlamini (President of Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union; and former President of FOSATU)
- * 2nd vice-President - Makhulu Ledwaba (President of Commercial, Catering and Allied Workers Union of SA)
- * Treasurer - Maxwell Xulu (vice-President of Metal and Allied Workers Union)
- * General Secretary - Jay Naidoo (General Secretary of Sweet, Food and Allied Workers Union)
- * Assistant General Secretary - Sidney Mafumadi (General and Allied Workers Union)

Day three of the Congress began with a mass rally of 10,000 workers at the Kings Park Stadium. Messages of support were read out from the following organisations: Transvaal and Natal Indian Congresses, Western Cape Youth League, United Democratic Front; from all the international trade secretariats, from the ICFTU, from

European unions and from South African Congress of Trade Unions.

The main speech, by President Elijah Barayi, condemned the pass system, the Bantustans, the government, and the banning of COSAS; called for the lifting of the state of emergency and for troops to get out of the townships; and warned that COSATU will take up these issues vigorously.

Delegates returned to the conference hall to discuss the resolutions forwarded by member-unions (see below). But first the COSATU emblem had to be selected from five designs put forward. The majority of delegates selected the design which depicted figures of three workers struggling to turn a large wheel, to move it forward. But certain important changes were requested: that one of the figures be changed to represent a woman worker; and that the slogan of "An injury to one is an injury to all" be added.

OPENING SPEECH TO THE INAUGURAL CONGRESS

"Workers' political strength depends upon building strong and militant organisation in the workplace. We also have to realise that organised workers are not representative of the working class as a whole but are its most effective weapon. Therefore, for workers it is important that organisation on the shop floor be strengthened and in this way we will be able to contribute to the struggle of the working class as a whole and to the struggle of the oppressed people in this country.

"It is also important to draw people into a programme for the restructuring of society in order to make sure that the wealth of our society is democratically controlled and shared by its people. It is important to realise that the political struggle is not only to remove the government. We must also eliminate unemployment, improve education, improve health facilities and the wealth of the society must be shared among all those that work in this country.

"It is important that the politics of the working class eventually becomes the politics of all the oppressed people of this country."

This was the central thrust of Cyril Ramaphosa's (convener of the Congress) opening speech which set the tone for the Inaugural Congress. This was an historic occasion: "The formation of this Congress represents a tremendous victory for the working class. Never before has it been so powerful and so poised to make a mark in

society." Cyril Ramaphosa went on to discuss the role that COSATU will play in the crisis in which South Africa now finds itself and its crucial role within the wider struggle for liberation.

"We are all living in urgent times, therefore it is urgent to make it clear to the South African government, employers and all sections of society where the working class, united under the banner of COSATU, will stand.

"The reforms that have been proposed by the government and employers are not offering any solution. The Rand is continuing to drop, there is high inflation and the cost of living is rising every day. While all this is happening the people in the country are continuing to resist. Confrontation with the police has become a daily thing. Some of the townships have become completely ungovernable. The government has clearly demonstrated that it is not in control of this country and PW Botha has failed to point the direction. It is time that the working class tell him to lay down his powers and let the legitimate leaders of the country take over the seat he now occupies.

"We have seen in the past four years that organisations of the oppressed have grown stronger. And at the same time we have seen trade unions growing stronger as well. We have seen trade unions not only broaden their areas of struggle on the shop floor, we have also seen them contribute to community struggles.

"However, the pace of these struggles has been determined by people in the community. As trade unions we have always thought that our main area of activity was on the shop floor - the struggle against the bosses.

"But we have always recognised that industrial issues are political. Workers have long realised when they are paid lower wages that it is a political issue. But what is difficult is how to make the link between economic and political issues.

"We all agree that the struggle of workers on the shop floor cannot be separated from the wider struggle for liberation. The important question we have to ask ourselves is how is COSATU going to contribute to the struggle for our liberation. As unions we have sought to develop a consciousness among workers, not only of racial oppression but also of their exploitation as a working class.

"As unions we have influenced the wider political struggle. Our struggles on the shop floor have widened the space for struggles in the community. Through interaction with community organisations, we have developed the principle of worker controlled democratic organisation. But our main political task as workers is to develop organisation among workers as well as a strong worker leadership. We have, as unions, to act decisively to ensure that we, as workers, lead the struggle.

"Our most urgent task is to develop a unity among workers. We would wish COSATU to give firm political direction for workers. If workers are to lead the struggle for liberation we have to win the confidence of other sectors of society. But if we are to get into alliances with other progressive organisations, it must be on terms that are favourable to us as workers.

"To make sure we establish alliances which are progressive, we must be strong and united. And it is COSATU that is going to unit us under one banner. To do this we have to give concrete expression to the five basic principles on which COSATU was formed. All these principles must be put into practice in order to build a stronger unity and enable us to better participate in the struggle for liberation.

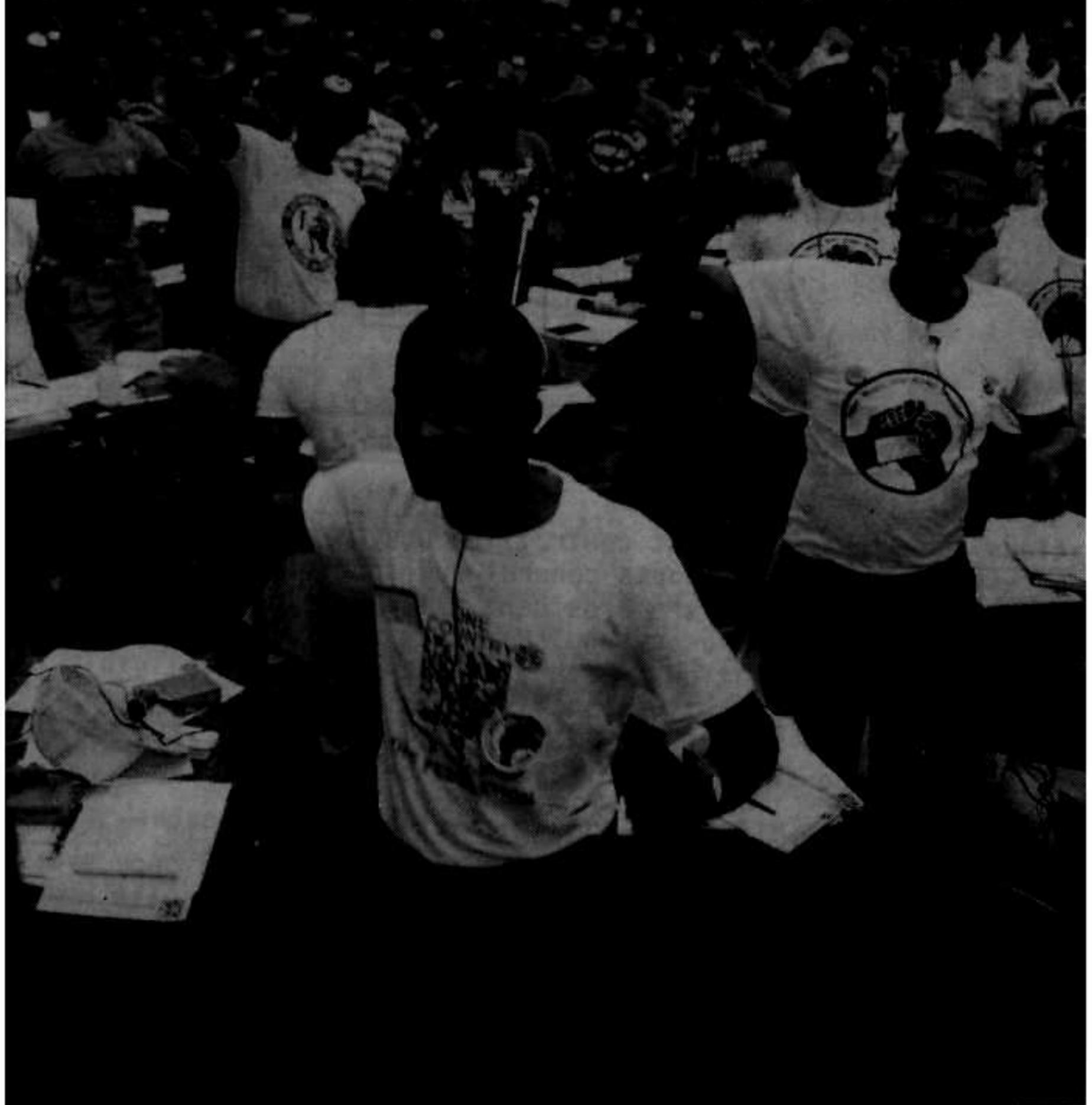
"When we do plunge into political activity, we must make sure that the unions under COSATU have a strong shop floor base not only to take on the employers but the state as well. Our role in the political struggle will depend on our organisational strength.

"We must meet with progressive political organisations. We have to work in co-operation with them on realistic campaigns. We must not shy away and pretend they do not exist.

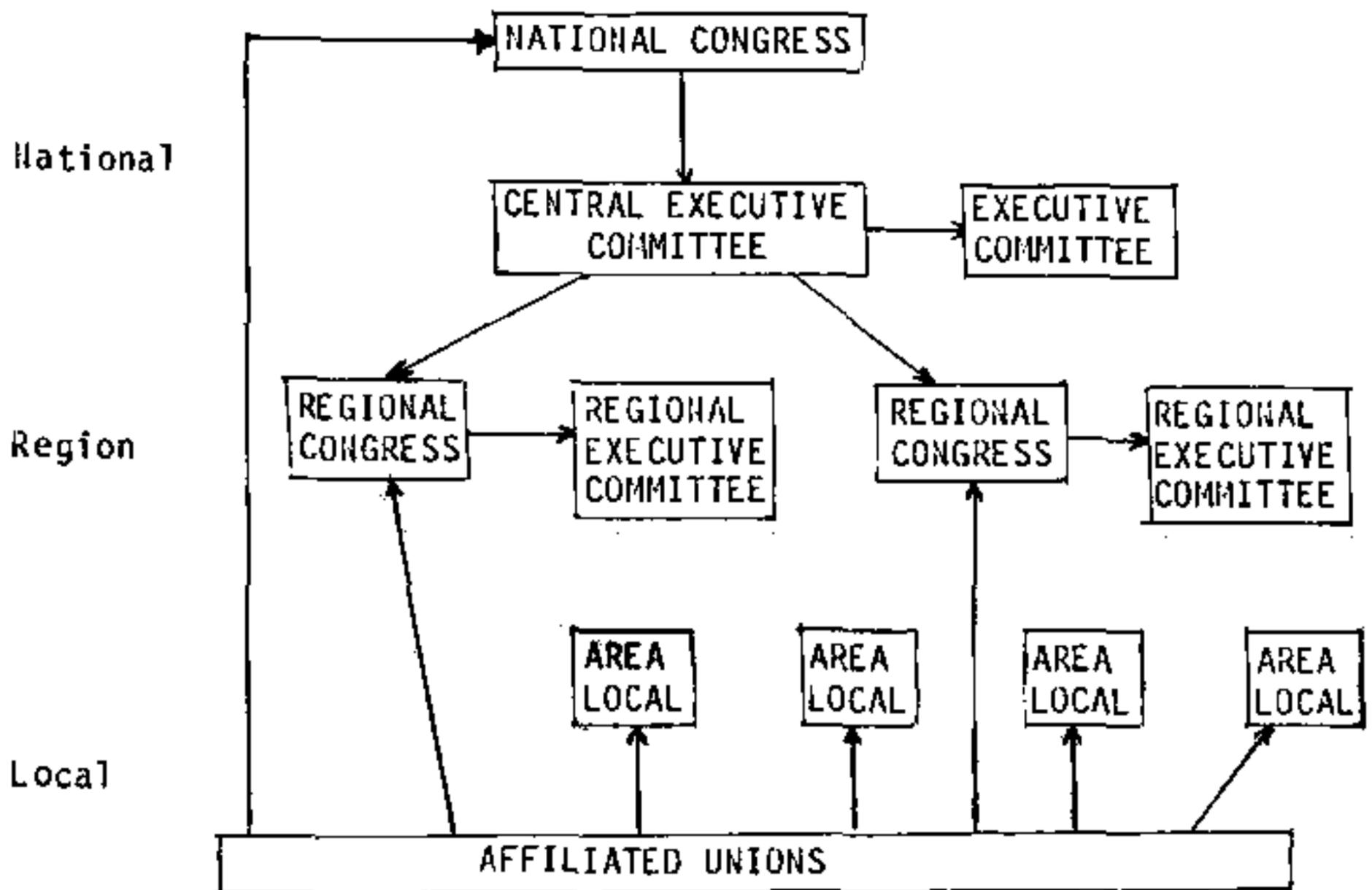
"We have to pay particular attention to worker education and our role in the political struggle. We must encourage a healthy exchange between our Congress and other progressive organisations.

"In the next few days we will be considering resolutions which will point the direction that COSATU will take. We will be putting our heads together not only to make sure that we reach Pretoria but also to make a better life for us workers in this country. What we have to make clear is that a giant has risen and will confront all that stand in its way. COSATU is going to determine the direction of the working class in this country."

ONE COUNTRY
ONE FEDERATION



Structure of COSATU



National Congress * highest controlling body * meets at least once every two years * adopts general and specific policy by means of resolutions * elects the President, Vice-President, Second Vice President, General-Secretary and Assistant General-Secretary * No official of the federation or its affiliates shall be eligible for the position of President, First Vice-President, Second Vice-President or Treasurer * each affiliate has 1 delegate per 500 members - workers must be in the majority of the delegation.

Central Executive Committee * manages the affairs of the federation between meetings of the National Congress * meets once every 3 months * 2 representatives for each affiliated union with under 15,000 members (1 must be a worker); 4 for unions of over 15,000 * Chairperson of each Region has speaking but no voting rights * President, Vice-President, Second Vice-President, Treasurer, General-Secretary and Assistant General-Secretary hold same positions, but no voting rights.

Executive Committee * limited power - assists the General-Secretary * meets once between meetings of the Central Executive Committee * cannot make policy or amend a policy decision of the federation * President, Vice-President, Second Vice-President, General Secretary, Assistant General Secretary plus 4 additional members of the Central Executive Committee (no more than 3 members from 1 region, and no more than 2 members from 1 affiliated union.)

Regional Congresses * carries out decisions of the NC and the CEC * subordinate body to the CEC - decisions of the Regional Congress may be confirmed amended or reversed by the CEC * each affiliate with a Branch in the Region elects 5 representatives for the first 1,000 members and then 1 representative for every 250 members * elects a Regional Chairperson, Regional Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer and Regional Secretary.

Regional Executive Committees * administers the Region between meetings of the Regional Congress * meets once a month * 2 delegates from each affiliate with under 8,000 members, 4 delegates with over 8,000 * plus Regional Chair, Vice-Chair, Treasurer and Secretary. [10 Regions planned for]

Locals * All members of the Shop Steward Committees of affiliated unions meet in Shop Stewards Councils or Locals (one per area) to co-ordinate local action and encourage co-operation between affiliated unions.

PREAMBLE TO THE CONSTITUTION OF COSATU

We the Trade Union representatives here present firmly commit ourselves to a united democratic South Africa, free of oppression and economic exploitation. We believe that this can only be achieved under the leadership of a united working class. Our history has taught us that to achieve this goal we will have to carry out the following tasks:

1. To organise the unorganised workers and build effective trade unions based on the democratic organisation of workers in the factories, mines, shops, farms and other workplaces.
2. Organise national industrial trade unions, financed and controlled by their worker members through democratically elected committees.
3. Unify these industrial unions into a national worker controlled federation.

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4. Combat the divisions amongst the workers of South Africa and unite them into a strong and confident working class.
5. Encourage democratic worker organisation and leadership in all spheres of our society together with other progressive sectors of the community.
6. Reinforce and encourage progressive international worker contact and solidarity so as to assist one another in our struggles.

We call on all those who identify with this commitment to join us and the workers whom we represent as comrades in the struggle ahead. We call on all trade unions to strive to unite their members in their ranks without discrimination and prejudice, and therefore resolve that this federation shall determinedly seek to further and protect the interests of all workers and that its guiding motto shall be the universal slogan of working class solidarity:

"An injury to one is an injury to all"

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF COSATU

The most important of these are:

- * To secure social and economic justice for all workers.
- * To strive for the building of a united working class movement regardless of "race", colour, creed or sex.
- * To encourage all workers to join trade unions and to develop a spirit of solidarity among all workers.
- * To understand how the economy of the country affects workers and to formulate clear policies as to how the economy would be restructured in the interests of the working class.
- * To work for a restructuring of the economy which will allow the creation of wealth to be democratically controlled and fairly shared.
- * To strive for just standards of living, social security and fair conditions of work for all.
- * To facilitate and co-ordinate education and training of all workers so as to further the interests of the working class.

RESOLUTIONS

STATE OF EMERGENCY

This Inaugural Conference, believing:

1. that the declaration of a State of Emergency has been used to wage a war of repression against all sections of the oppressed

- communities and to try to crush democratic organisations;
2. that the cause of all violence in South Africa is the existence of the apartheid system, and that there can be no peace while it exists;

calls:

1. for the immediate lifting of the State of Emergency;
2. for the withdrawal of the SADF and all apartheid security forces from the townships;
3. for the unconditional release of all political prisoners and detainees, the unbanning of banned individuals and organisations, as a prelude to the creation of a democratic South Africa where all shall live in peace and prosperity.

DISINVESTMENT

This Congress:

1. believes that all forms of international pressure on the South African government - including disinvestment or the threat of disinvestment - is an essential and effective form of pressure on the South African regime and we support it;
2. further believes that if this government remains intransigent in its racist, anti-democratic and anti-worker practices, then this pressure will have to increase as an act of solidarity with our struggle for liberation from exploitation and oppression.
3. commits itself to ensure that the social wealth of South Africa remains the property of the people of South Africa for the benefit of all, and further commits itself to the principle of international working class solidarity action as the most powerful form of solidarity action with our struggle.

BANTUSTANS

Congress noting:

1. that the bantustan system was imposed on the African people, against their will, with a view to thwarting the just struggle for One Person One Vote in a unitary South Africa;
2. that various bantustan administrations have practised extreme forms of oppression against the oppressed people - including trade unions;

noting in particular:

the banning of SAAWU in the Ciskei, the banning of all unions in

the Bophuthatswana bantustan and the killing of trade unionists and other democrats by tribally based organisations;

hereby resolves that:

1. the bantustan system be totally rejected and that the Federation struggle - together with other democratic forces - for the creation of a democratic and unitary South Africa;
2. we shall not hesitate to exercise our right to organise in plants based within the bantustans and that we are fully prepared to defend ourselves against repression by whatever effective means at our disposal;
3. that we are completely and absolutely opposed to the super-exploitation occurring in these areas and declare our commitment to reject the idea and practice of workers receiving less wages and worse conditions of work;
4. that we express our solidarity with those communities around Durban and elsewhere who are struggling against being incorporated into the bantustans.

WOMEN

This Federation noting:

1. that women workers experience both exploitation as workers and oppression as women and that black women are further discriminated against on the basis of race;
2. that women are employed in a limited range of occupations, doing boring and repetitive work with low and often unequal pay;
3. that due to overtime and night work women workers are subjected to many dangers while commuting;
4. that women workers often suffer sexual harassment in recruitment and employment;
5. that most women workers in South Africa lose their jobs when they become pregnant;
6. that pregnant women often have to work under conditions harmful to themselves and their unborn child;

resolves to fight:

1. against all unequal and discriminatory treatment of women at work, in society and in the federation;
2. for the equal right of women and men to paid work as an important part of the broader aim to achieve full and freely chosen employment;
3. for equal pay for all work of equal value - the value of work must be determined by organised women and men workers themselves

4. for the restructuring of employment so as to allow women and men the opportunity of qualifying for jobs of equal value;
5. for childcare and family facilities to meet workers' needs and make it easier for workers to combine work and family responsibilities;
6. for full maternity rights, including paid maternity and paternity leave and job security;
7. for the protection of women and men from all types of work proved to be harmful to them, including work which interferes with their ability to have children;
8. against sexual harassment in whatever form it occurs;
9. for adequate and safe transport for workers doing overtime and night work.

now commits itself:

1. to actively campaign in support of these resolutions;*
2. to negotiate agreements with companies wherever possible as part of this campaign;
3. to actively promote within its education programme, a greater understanding of the specific discriminations suffered by women workers and ways in which these can be overcome;
4. to establish a worker-controlled sub-committee within its education programme to monitor progress made in implementing this resolution and to make representations to the education committee;
5. to budget for the working of such a sub-committee;
6. to actively promote the necessary confidence and experience amongst women workers so that they can participate fully at all levels of the federation.

REGIONAL AREAS OF THE FEDERATION

That this congress resolve:

1. that the regional areas of the federation be:
 - a) Northern Transvaal
 - b) Witwatersrand/Vaal
 - c) Highveld
 - d) Western Transvaal
 - e) Northern Natal
 - f) Southern Natal
 - g) Orange Free State
 - h) Northern Cape
 - i) Western Cape
 - j) Eastern Cape

2. that the Central Executive Committee be instructed, that immediately when feasible, as provided for in clause 9.1. of the constitution of the federation, that regional structures be established in such regional areas.

EDUCATION

This federation noting:

1. that the present education system in South Africa is designed to maintain the working class in ideological bondage;
2. that the present education system is designed to continue and reinforce the values, ideas and practices of the ruling classes
3. that the present education system is aimed at fostering divisions and anti-democratic values within the working class;
4. that education is vital in the liberation struggle of the working class;
5. that education must serve the interests of the vast majority of the people of the country;

therefore resolves:

1. to establish a national, regional and local education programme for the federation to:
 - a) ensure that this education programme politicises, mobilises and organises the working class so that they play the leading role in the liberation of our society and its transformation into an economic, social and political system that will serve the needs of those who are now oppressed and exploited;
 - b) develop an understanding and capacity to wage our struggle by democratic means that will allow maximum participation and decision making power for workers both now and in the future society we wish to build;
 - c) develop the human potential to the fullest and create and transform skills and the abilities so that they are accessible to the oppressed and exploited;
 - d) develop the understanding among the working class that their struggle forms part of the world struggle against oppression and exploitation;
2. to establish a Federation newspaper which will:
 - a) express the views and policies of the Federation and its affiliates;
 - b) record the struggles of the Federation and its affiliates;
 - c) counter the dominance of the bosses' media by popularising democratic ideas, values and traditions among the working

class.

3. to organise and commemorate the important cultural events and resistance days in the working class calendar, for example, May Day and June 16 and Federation Day;
4. to recommend to the Central Executive Committee of the federation that they appoint an education officer and newspaper editor;
5. To establish a National Coordinating Education Committee made up of:
 - a) regional and local committees of workers;
 - b) union representatives.

ON THE CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

This Federation noting:

1. that Capital and the local state are spending millions of rand to celebrate the centenary of Johannesburg;
2. that they are planning the celebrations next year without consulting the workers who have built Johannesburg, the gold mines and the industrial complexes we have today;

therefore resolves:

1. to organise a boycott of all centenary celebrations;
2. to ensure that all unions under the banner of COSATU organise an alternative programme to highlight 100 years of exploitation and oppression in Johannesburg and in particular the mining industry.

FEDERALISM

This Congress noting:

1. that South Africa's bitter history of industrialisation and exploitation has forged one nation;
2. the attempts by the apartheid regime to create and reconstruct separate states and nations which will be combined into some federal system are fraudulent and undemocratic;
3. that the intention of the proposed federal system is to maintain power and control in the hands of the present minority and perpetuate an oppressive and exploitative system;
4. that the demand of all progressive and democratic forces in South Africa is for a unitary state based on One Person One Vote;

resolves:

1. to reject as a total fraud the new proposed federal solution;

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2. to re-affirm our belief in a unitary state based on One Person One Vote;
3. to work towards the destruction of all barriers and divisions so that we are united irrespective of language, race or creed.

and further believes that:

only with the total unification of all people into South Africa will we be able to re-build our rich land and make a real contribution to breaking the chains of poverty and economic exploitation that bind Africa.

RIGHT TO STRIKE

This Federation noting:

1. that the strike is a legitimate right and necessary weapon of the working class in their struggle against bad working conditions and low wages;
2. that the strike is internationally accepted as an essential element of collective bargaining;
3. that freedom of association, assembly and picketing for strikes action are also fundamental rights, internationally, in industrial struggle;
4. that the infringement or curbing of these rights is detrimental to the social and economic interests of the workers;
5. that the right to strike is severely curtailed in South Africa
6. that a strike involves a democratic form of struggle;
7. that picketing is an integral part of a strike and of morally persuading fellow workers not to break a strike;
8. that essential service workers are not allowed to take industrial action in pursuing their demands;

therefore resolves:

1. to continue a relentless campaign which will allow workers full freedom of association, assembly and picketing for strike action. This requires that all forms of security legislation that denies these rights be removed;
2. to ensure that where workers have followed mutually agreed dispute procedures with employers, there will be full job security during such strikes. This requires that eviction from accommodation and other such measures be outlawed;
3. to campaign and respond vigorously against police and state intervention in strikes or industrial disputes;
4. to fight for the right of trade unions to establish strike funds;

5. to ensure that strikers are free to establish and control strike committees;
6. to fight for the removal of the designation of essential services and that all workers be allowed to share equal rights.

MIGRANT LABOUR

This Federation noting:

1. that pass laws were legislated by the apartheid regime to control and dehumanise the lives of the working class in South Africa;
2. that pass laws and influx control served to strengthen the hand of capital to exploit and oppress the working class in its endeavour to generate super profits;
3. that the economic and social hardships of the migrant labour system includes the break-up of family life and relationships;
4. that the migrant labour system seeks to further divide the oppressed and exploited workers into permanent residents and migrants;
5. that the apartheid regime persists in threatening to repatriate migrant workers to the homelands and neighbouring countries;

resolves to:

1. fight for the scrapping of the migrant labour system including pass laws and influx control;
2. fight for the right of workers to seek work wherever they wish and to reside with their families wherever they wish and that proper housing will be provided for them;
3. call for a national strike should the apartheid regime carry out its threat to repatriate any migrant workers.

NATIONAL MINIMUM LIVING WAGE

Seeing that:

1. the majority of workers in South Africa are earning starvation wages because of the present economic system, constantly rising prices (inflation) is making what little money workers have worth less and less every day;
2. employers in South Africa continue to make massive and completely unrealistic profits when compared with employers in other capitalist countries;
3. many millions of workers do not have any minimum wage protection whatsoever;
4. the issue of a living wage is one of the strongest points for

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organising the unorganised;

we hereby resolve:

1. that the Central Executive Committee establish as soon as possible what workers regard as a minimum living wage;
2. to then initiate and conduct - in alliance with other progressive organisations and trade unions in the country - an ongoing national campaign for a legally enforced national minimum living wage for all workers in South Africa, by amongst other things fighting in every industry through worker action and negotiation for that minimum living wage to be paid by all employers;
3. fight for this minimum living wage to be automatically linked to the rate of inflation;
4. struggle for the abolition of GST on all essential items and worker control over all deductions like pensions and UIF, which are being financed by workers but used against workers by the racist and anti-worker government;
5. fight to open all books of every organised company so that workers can see exactly how the wealth they have produced is being wasted and misused by the employers' profit system, and on that basis can demand their full share of the wealth they have produced. Should the wealth not be there, then it will only prove the inefficiency of employer management and strengthen the case for worker control and management of production.

SOUTHERN AFRICAN UNION COOPERATION

This Federation noting:

1. that foreign and South African multinational corporations (MNC's) have for years exploited workers in Southern Africa by reaping huge profits and exporting them to Europe and America;
2. that workers in Southern Africa are employed by the same MNC's and subjected to similar conditions of control, exploitation and oppression;
3. that many of them are union bashers and have undermined the legitimate right of workers to organise trade unions;
4. that these MNC's, as the major agencies of imperialism, have cooperated with reactionary regimes in pursuit of super-profit
5. that MNC's can only be resisted if there is unity and worker to worker contact in various countries of Southern Africa;
6. that the problems faced by the workers of Southern Africa are integrally linked and that their futures are tied together;

therefore resolves:

1. that unions affiliated to COSATU should actively pursue links with progressive unions in Southern Africa so as to strengthen worker unity;
2. that COSATU should form constructive relationships with fraternal federations in Southern Africa;
3. that every effort be made to unite workers of Southern Africa and improve solidarity work.

UNEMPLOYMENT / NEW TECHNOLOGY / RIGHT TO WORK

Believing:

that all able-bodied men and women have a right to work;

and noting:

1. that under capitalist conditions of exploitation, unemployment is a reality facing every worker at all times;
2. that these unemployed workers are used as a reserve pool of labour by the bosses to keep wages low and to provide a source of scab labour in the event of strikes;
3. that the interests of all workers, whether employed or unemployed, are the same - the right to a job at a decent living wage;
4. that the unity of employed and unemployed workers is essential in the struggle against scabbing and to advance the struggle for the right to work at a living wage;
5. that under capitalist conditions of exploitation, unemployment is a reality facing workers at all times and is a waste of the human resources of this country;

and further noting:

1. that in South Africa there are millions of unemployed - a number that is increasing daily through retrenchments;
2. that the introduction of new technology for profiteering purposes is making the whole unemployment situation even worse. This is further aggravated by pressure from employers for higher productivity;
3. that many are abandoning all hope of finding suitable employment in the immediate future;
4. that for thousands of school leavers there is virtually no prospect of getting employment and therefore no possibility of drawing UIF benefits;
5. that unemployed workers are not organised in South Africa;

Congress therefore resolves to:

1. fight as one united force to defend all jobs threatened by re-

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trenchments; fight the closing of the factories; and fight for participation in and control over - right from the planning stage - the implementation of any new technology. And fight all attempts by employers to make workers work harder and attempts to rationalise production, because in the present system this always leads to unemployment;

2. campaign for a 40 hour week at full pay and a ban on overtime;
3. fight for free and increased unemployment benefits and that these benefits be paid in South Africa;
4. fight for a subsistence fund, in addition to unemployed benefits, supplemented by rent, transport and medical concessions for all unemployed workers;
5. demand that the state initiate a national programme of public works to provide jobs for the unemployed and to improve services and facilities in working class communities;
6. fight for work-sharing on full pay whenever workers face retrenchments;
7. establish a national unemployed workers union as a full affiliate of the new federation for the realisation of the right of all to work and security;
8. struggle for a fair, democratic and rational political and economic system which can guarantee full employment for all people in Southern Africa at a living wage;
9. to give full support to efforts by retrenched and dismissed workers to establish co-operatives based on the principles of COSATU.

NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL UNIONS

Noting:

1. that all affiliates have previously committed themselves to the establishment of one national union in each sector of industry;
2. that we will be unable to protect worker interests and advance their rights unless we build large broadly based industrial unions capable of dealing with the highly centralised structures of capital;

therefore resolves:

1. to confirm its commitment to the establishment of one national affiliate in each industry and to national co-operation between such affiliates as a matter of great urgency;
2. that should such developments not have materialised by the end of March 1986, a Special National Congress be convened in June

- or July 1986 to assess such failure;
3. that in order to facilitate the establishment of national industrial unions affiliates are urged to establish a single union in each of the following sectors:
 - a) Food and Drink;
 - b) Textile, Clothing and Leather;
 - c) Paper, Wood and Printing;
 - d) Mining, Electrical Energy;
 - e) Metal, Motor Assembly and Components
 - f) Chemical and Petroleum;
 - g) Commercial and Catering;
 - h) Transport, SA Transport Services, Cleaning and Security;
 - i) Local Government and Public Administration including Education, Health, Posts and Telecommunications;
 - j) Domestic Workers;
 4. that all structures of the federation be used to encourage mergers of affiliates operating in the same industry;
 5. that the Central Executive Committee establish priorities in relation to resources with a view to the establishment of national affiliates in the following sectors:
 - a) Construction;
 - b) Agriculture;
 6. that the Central Executive Committee be directed to facilitate the implementation of this resolution and to this end take such action as may be necessary. Further that the Central Executive Committee may also evaluate the viability of the sectors outlined above, with particular reference to problems which may exist in all sectors.

The Tears of a Creator
Poem Composed for the Launch of COSATU
Mi S'Dumo Hlatshwayo and Alfred Temba Qabula

1. O' maker of all things
grief
assails you from all sides
each step forward you take
Brings emnity nearer
What is the nature of your sin?

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2. In the factories
your enemy suffocates you
on this side; the bosses
on that: the boss-boys
3. Attackers and assailants
stalk you
from all chambers
and channels...
Permits and money
become the slogans
through which
they pounce on you
What is the nature of your sin?
4. Your labour power
has turned you
into prize-game
for the hunters of surplus
What is the nature of your sin?
5. In the busses
in the trains and taxis
you are the raw-meat,
the prey
for vultures
Are you not the backbone
of trade?
What is the nature of your sin?
6. Worker
your rulers
have dumped you
away from the cities,
Now all the misfits and orphans
of other nations
can suck you dry
7. Now
you are a nameless breed of animals
a stock of many numbers
and your suppressor's lust
to suck you dry
recognizes neither day

nor night
What is the nature of your sin?

9. Your hand
has developed
a drunkard's tremble
it can no longer draw straight lines
to steer you clear
between the law enforcers and the bandits

10. Worker
are you not the economy's foundation?
are you not the engine
of development and progress?

Worker
remember
what you are:
you are the country's foundation base and block

11. Oh maker of all things
the world over
worker
your capacity to continue loving
surprises me, its enormity
touches the Drakensberg mountains
What is then
the nature of your sin?

12. Your sin:
Can it be your power?
Can it be your blood?
Can it be your sweat?

13. They scatter you about
with their hippos
with their vans
and kwela-kwelas
with their teargas
you are butchered
by the products of your labour
the labour of your hands
these are the cries of the creator of all this
Cosatu

- COSATU -

Woza msebenzi, woza Cosatu, woza freedom.

14. Oh Cosatu
we workers
have travelled a long way here
15. Yes: we have
declared wars
on all fronts
for better wages
16. Yet,
victory eludes us.
17. We
have dared to fight back
even from the bottom of the earth
where we pull wagons-full of gold
through our blood.
18. We have
come from the sparkling kitchens
of our bosses.
19. We have arrived from the exhausting
tumult of factory machines.
20. Victory eludes us still!
21. Cosatu
here we are!
Heed our cry -
we have emerged
from all corners of this land
we have emerged
from all organisations.
We have emerged
from all
the country's nooks and crannies!
22. We say today
that
our hope is in your hands
We are ready.

23. We say:
Let your hands deliver us from exploitation
Let our freedom be borne
Let our democracy be borne
Let our new nation be borne.
24. Cosatu
Stand up now with dignity
March forward
We are raising our clenched fists behind you
25. Behind us
we call into line
our ancestors in struggle
Maduna and Thomas Mbeki
Ray Alexander and Gana Makhateni
JB Marks and hundreds more.
26. Where are you ancestors?
Lalelani and witness:
Here is the mammoth creature
you dreamed of
you wanted to create
the one you hoped for
Here is the workers'
freedom train!
27. It is made up of old wagons
repaired and patched up ox-carts
rolling on the road again
back again
revived!
Once capsized by Champion
the wagon - once derailed by Kadalie!
28. Here it rolls ahead
to settle accounts with the oppressors
to settle accounts with the exploiters.
29. Here it is:
the tornadosnake - Kanyamba with
its floods!
its slippery torso!
Here it is: Cosatu

- COSATU -

The spears of men
shall be deflected!

30. Here it is:
the tornadosnake of change! Kanyamba,
the cataclysm
clamped for decades and decades
by a mountain of rules.
The tornadosnake
poisoned throughout the years
by ethnicity
and tribalisms.
31. Here is this mammoth creature
which they mocked!
That it had no head
and certainly no teeth!
32. Woe unto you oppressor
Woe unto you exploiter
33. We have rebuilt its head
we lathed its teeth on our machines.
the day this head rises
Beware of the day these teeth shall bite.
34. On that day:
mountains of lies shall be torn to shreds
the gates of apartheid shall be burst asunder
the history books of deception shall be thrown out
35. Woza langa
Usuku
Woza Federation
Woza Freedom
36. Cosatu
Stop now
listen to our sound
37. You'll hear us sing
that the rulers
and employers
are sorcerers!

38. Do not smile
Do not dare disagree
39. If that was devoid of truth
Where is the ICU of the 1920's to be found?
Where is the FNETU of the 30's to be found?
Where is the CNETU of the 40's to be found?
and the others?
40. They emerged
they were poisoned
then
they faded!
41. Cosatu
Today be wise!
42. In the desert
only the fruit-trees
with long and sturdy roots
survive!
43. Learn that
and you shall settle accounts with the oppressor
you shall settle accounts with the exploiter
you shall settle accounts with the racists.
44. Here is Cosatu
who knows no colour
Here then is our tornadosnake/Kanyamba
45. Helele
Cosatu
46. Helele
workers of South Africa
47. Helele,
transport workers
Helele,
miners of wealth
Helele,
cleaners of the bosses' kitchens
Helele,

- COSATU -

builders of the concrete jungle
Helele,
workers of South Africa.
Helele,
makers of all things

Woza msebenzi! woza Cosatu! woza freedom!

(The authors are members of Metal and Allied Workers Union, Natal,
Workers Cultural Local, Durban.)

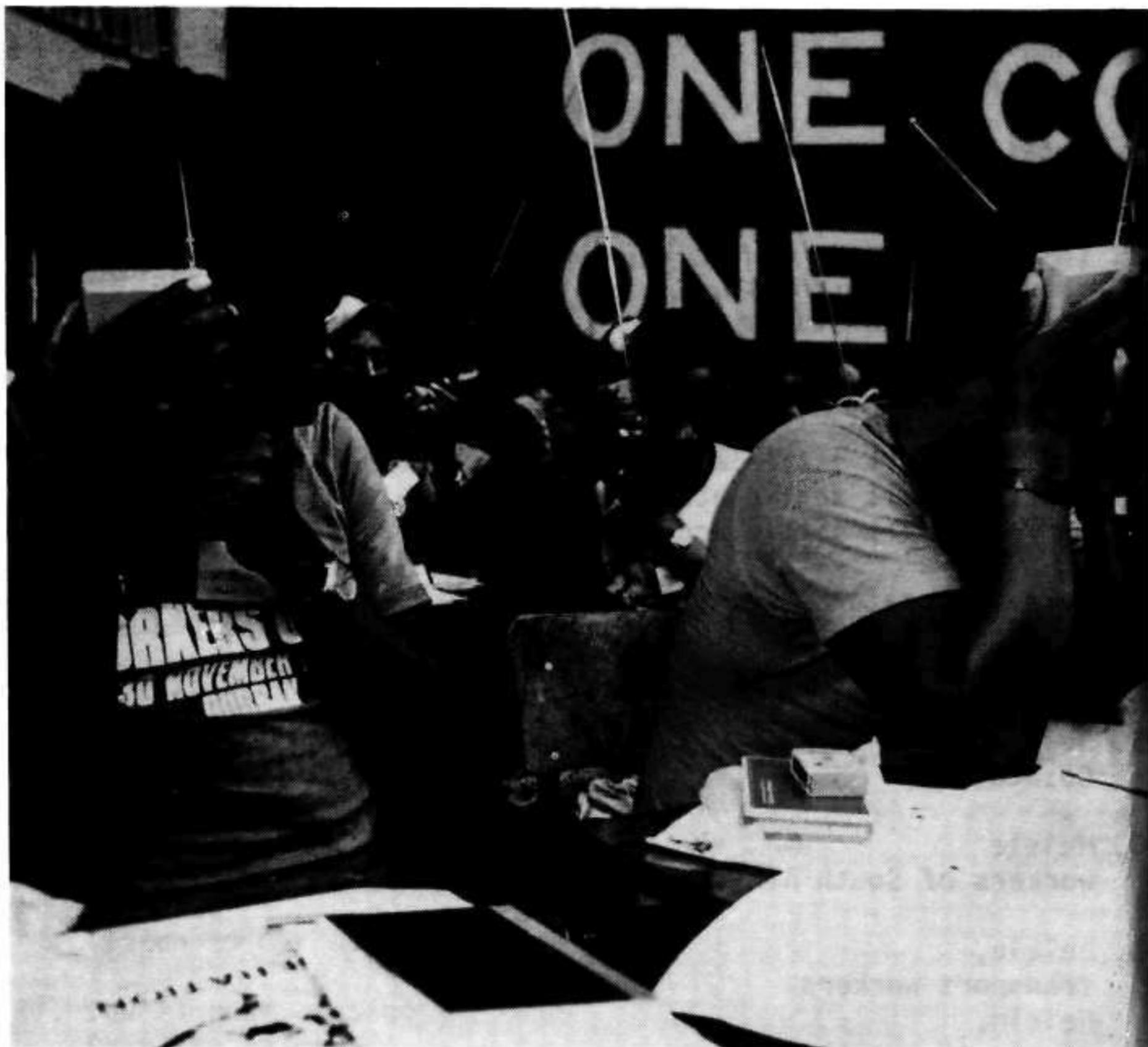


photo: delegates to the COSATU Congress. Hundreds of radios were used in order to allow the proceedings to be simultaneously translated into four different languages.