

# Divisions Mar CCAWUSA Merger

The merger meeting in the commercial and catering sector saw unfortunate fragmentation and the creation of two opposing wings both claiming to represent the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (CCAWUSA). It is the first time that political tensions within a Cosatu affiliate, manifested in a power struggle around voting rights, have been openly expressed threatening to divide workers and create fissures in the federation's stated objective of "one union one industry".

The launching congress, held at Wits University over the weekend of the 27 and 28 June, was attended by over 400 delegates from the three unions to be included in the merger. These are Hotel and Restaurant Workers Workers Union (HARWU), Retail and Allied Workers Union (RAWU) and CCAWUSA. According to a Cosatu CEC directive two other unions, General and Allied (GAWU) and South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU) would simply hand over members to the new union. Natal and Cape Liquor and Catering Unions, presently outside of the federation, attended as observers.

Tensions around the question of credentials of the Johannesburg branch and between four minority branches of CCAWUSA, said to have broken the Congress mandate adopted two weeks earlier, delayed the opening of the launch until late Sunday (28 June) afternoon. By this time two CCAWUSA branches, Cape Town and Klerksdorp had already left due to lateness. Debate around credentials and the fact that Johannesburg was unhappy with four branches breaking the Congress mandate continued, resulting ultimately in the chair ruling closure. At this stage the majority of Johannesburg branch delegates started leaving. Later however the meeting was re-opened and the chair invited back onto the platform. Four branches of CCAWUSA, including Natal, Eastern Province, Orange-Vaal, and Pretoria subsequently went on to "launch" the new union together with RAWU and HARWU in the absence of the other branches. Pietersburg branch had unfortunately not attended.

The two opposing wings within CCAWUSA are presently in dispute about the legitimacy of the second meeting and whether this meeting in fact constituted a merger launch or not. Backing Johannesburg and Cape Town branches, the position of the other branches not being clear, is the entire Head-Office of the "old" CCAWUSA

including the National General-Secretary Vivian Mtwana, National Negotiator Jeremy Daphne, the National Organiser Willie Dichaba, the National Educator Graham Van Wyk, and National Administrator Cheryl Abrahams. On the other side are the new office bearers elected by branches at the launch who have received the official backing of Cosatu.

The Cosatu statement released shortly after the launch reads; "The merger of CCAWUSA, HARWU and RAWU into a giant CCAWUSA is a great step forward for Cosatu's One Union One Industry policy. Cosatu salutes CCAWUSA and calls on all members to respect the democratic decisions of the majority and build CCAWUSA into the organised, fighting voice of every shop and hotel worker in the country". A CCAWUSA Transvaal branch press release, backed by the old Head Office reads: "The meeting was of course unconstitutional, totally undemocratic without a mandate and divisive. As such all decisions are null and void. We cannot go along with this meeting, its decisions and do not recognise the merger and new office bearers. At a time when we face massive state repression and attacks by the bosses these moves are reactionary and cannot be supported by any progressive force".

The new National office bearers are:

President - Makhulu Ledwaba (ex-CCAUSA President and Cosatu 2nd Vice-President)

First Vice-President - Hebert Mkhize (ex-CCAUSA Vice President)

Second Vice President - Chris Mohlatsi (ex-HARWU National Chair)

Treasurer - Dinah Nhlapo (ex-CCAUSA National Treasurer)

General Secretary - Pappi Kganare (ex-CCAUSA Vaal Branch)

National Organiser - (Commercial Sector) Mxolisi Godana (ex-CCAUSA Jo-burg branch organiser)

National Organiser - (Catering Sector) Alan Horwitz (ex-HARWU Jo-burg branch organiser)

National Negotiations Co-ordinator - Jeremy Daphne (ex-CCAUSA National Negotiations Co-Ordinator)

National Education Co-Ordinator - Jay Naidoo (ex-CCAUSA Natal Branch organiser)

One of the members elected to the new executive, Jeremy Daphne, has since withdrawn on the basis that the merger meeting was undemocratic.

It was agreed at the meeting that the name of the new union would be changed within three months after discussion at shop-

floor level. Resolutions passed called for a struggle led by workers for a democratic and socialist society. The Freedom Charter was adopted as a working document which lays down the basis for socialism. A separate catering sector in the new union and other constitutional changes were also agreed to.

In an interview with the Johannesburg branch after the merger, officials expressed the reasons for their objection to the merger having ever taken place on the following grounds. The determination of credentials, they argue, was carried out in an ad-hoc and inconsistent manner. The method of determining credentials was changed just before the launch began. A dispute around credentials arose after the unions HARWU and CCAWUSA had exchanged financial documents. HARWU tabled a bank statement whereas six CCAWUSA branches tabled financial statements. RAWU had nothing to table.

According to HARWU they became aware of a vast discrepancy in the financial statement tabled by the Johannesburg branch. "We are talking about paid-up and not signed up membership. On examination of their statement we found that they could only account for 22 000 members, whereas they had delegates on the basis of a membership of 40 000. This represents a discrepancy of 18 000 members". The Johannesburg branch on the other hand argue that they thought the reasons for exchange of financial statements was to examine the financial health of the organisation and not to determine membership which is normally done on a workplace by workplace breakdown. Further they argue that there was no way of checking HARWU's membership on the basis of their own bank statement or that of RAWU. Proposals to cut down membership by HARWU were consequently rejected.

Johannesburg branch argue that the launch was actually closed by a ruling from the chair. The second meeting was attended by only four branches, representing about 30% of the union's membership. Individuals from these four branches spoke out against the Congress mandate, such as the agreement to change the name of the union. Also these individuals spoke on all the HARWU resolutions with no mandate whatsoever. The second meeting, according to Johannesburg branch was simply a meeting and in no way was a merger congress, hence all decisions taken are null and void. The Johannesburg branch therefore feels that issues must first be thrashed out inside CCAWUSA. "We feel that if Cosatu pushes ahead with the new union, in spite of its undemocratic nature and the divisions it would be a disastrous and foolhardy exercise. This

will not achieve Cosatu's objective of "one union one industry". In order to achieve real working class unity and all the benefits it brings CCAWUSA must resolve its' own problems first. This must be carried out in a decent, comradely and democratic manner".

The new union however argues that there was a quorum. In addition they wish to point out that all the officials from Head-Office stayed throughout the proceedings, no-one objected to its un-democratic nature. Some of these were even nominated in the elections and one actually elected. In the caucus of the Johannesburg branch they decided to renege on a compromise with regard to credentials offered by their own General-Secretary, also they were all called back inside when the second meeting began but chose to ignore this.

HARWU argues that a long history of tension with the old CCAWUSA, their inflexible approach to the question of a seperate organiser for the Catering sector and their intransigence on the question of absorbing HARWU and RAWU and not actually merging may be seen as some of the root causes of the tensions around the merger. This is in addition to their domination of minority branches within CCAWUSA, which caused problems at their last Congress." Our demand that a seperate Catering sector exist within the new union is not just capricious but is based on past experience with CCAWUSA. Many of our members had in fact left the "old" CCAWUSA because of their failure in organising this sector. This is also why we wanted a change of name, CCAWUSA has a bad reputation amongst many of our members", says HARWU.

Notwithstanding divisions within the union both sides agree that there is an urgent need to resolve the situation as soon as possible. Both sides maintain that they are firmly committed to Cosatu's objectives and are willing to resolve the dispute through Cosatu structures. Meetings to try to resolve the situation are already underway. The Johannesburg branch maintains that bearing this in mind they are perturbed with press reports about a split in CCAWUSA, and are calling for a special CCAWUSA Congress to try to resolve the situation.