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SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER



**'STRENGTHEN WORKPLACE ORGANISATION TO DEFEND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING,
DEEPEN CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AND ADVANCE INTERNATIONALISM'.**



12TH NATIONAL CONGRESS SPECIAL EDITION NEWSLETTER
[LINE OF MARCH ADDRESS BY PRESIDENT MICHAEL SHINGANGE]

Cde First Deputy President

Cde Second Deputy President

Cde National Treasurer

Cde General Secretary

Cde Deputy General Secretary



Cde Michael Shingange
NEHAWU President

Comrade delegates to the 12th national congress of this giant union, guests, comrades and friends, greetings to you once again this afternoon in the name those who walked this road before us. We have arrived at the conclusion of this important meeting of the workers. This congress is the first national congress for many of our delegates and it is valuable experience for the future of the union because of the experience they have gained. This congress is also the last congress for some of the delegates here who may not return to a platform like this for various reasons. The experience of these outgoing members and shop stewards reflects in the capacity and spirit of our union in our daily struggles. But specifically and most importantly this congress is a departure congress for our immediate former President Cde Mzwandile Michael Makwayiba as National Office Bearer and President of this great and giant union.

We can confidently speak on behalf of members of the union converged here to say that we derive great pride from the fact that we all had the privilege to be led by a shop steward of Comrade Makwayiba's calibre as our President. To us as members of the union we view comrade President Makwayiba as the model shop steward who individually embodies the very idea of what an outstanding shop steward is. This is to say that the tradition of revolutionary shop steward can be reflected and be perfectly summarised in the personality and conduct of comrade Makwayiba; and we say this without a fear of contradiction. In the outstanding role that President Makwayiba played and continues to play in the international trade union environment speaks

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highly not of him only him as an individual shop steward but reflects positively on all of us as members of the union that he has led with several collectives for more than 30 years.

The revitalisation of WFTU and the affiliation of COSATU to WFTU has a great deal to do with the critical role that our President played consciously and deliberately. We thus accompany Comrade Makwayiba on his departure from leadership structures of the union with clean hearts and good wishes. Ndlovu will always be our President and our organisation will call on him many times in the future when his wisdom is needed as it will surely be needed.

As we close this congress we are supposed to ask ourselves important questions about the success of this important gathering of workers. The question that immediately arises at this point is whether we have achieved all that we set out to achieve? As the leadership we have reason to believe that we have made great progress in this congress. From all the discussion in this congress it is the belief of this leadership that as we conclude this congress we are in an improved position to elevate our struggle to a higher stage for the victory of the working class against our class enemy.

We are of the firm belief that we have deepened and improved our understanding of the true nature of the challenges that face our members and our structures. We believe that we should be in a position now to articulate clearly the strategy and plans that we have developed and adopted in order to respond to the challenges of our day and project a clear programme over the medium term.

It is our belief too that the members of the organisation as represented by these delegates

have been able to select the most suitable and capable of shop stewards and officials to steer the ship in the correct direction and carry out the necessary tasks to fulfil their aspirations as a class. We also believe that if we can call this congress successful we must have been able to raise our collective consciousness in relation to the tasks we have as an organisation in the wider political space in connection with to the wider working class struggle. If the 12th congress of the union is indeed a successful one we believe that we must be able to say we have come out more united from this from the congress than we were when the congress started it; indeed we believe this to be true. The unity we speak of in this instance is not the ordinary claim that is made for cosmetic appearances but the unity we refer to is that which is rooted on common purpose and common vision we have consolidated.

Therefore we believe that the declaration and resolutions that emerge here serve as the foundation for the unity we seek as an organisation; that unity contributes to the unity of the class as a whole. The reason we hold this view is because the resolutions and declaration contain the breath, the thoughts, the experiences, the aspirations and the imagination of the members inside and outside of the walls of this hall. This hall merely contains a perfect summary of the relevant experiences and knowledge of the masses of the oppressed working class. The whole thinking of the delegates here, we believe, is inspired and shaped by the knowledge and perspective of the workers out there without whom we could not sit as we are sitting and claim revolutionary goals as we proudly claim. It is only through the living spirit and memory of the whole working class represented here that we can truly shape the future of the oppressed classes.



Whether these beliefs that we hold are true or not true will be proven on the ground through our daily organising work in the workplaces where our structures exist. This is to say that the outcomes of this intensive congress work will be confirmed or disputed by the how our decisions and programmes are received and carried out in the workplace as a primary habitat of the trade union by our shop stewards and members. The work and deliberations that was done over the past five days cannot be declared automatically relevant unless those outcomes are tested in the area where trade union practices its art; the workplace.

As we finish and round up this national congress it is our view that we must carry the memory of this particular congress some key principles that were affirmed in our congress discussions. These principles continue to confirm and emphasise the character of our union which we all have responsibility to defend. It is important that we must always put it clear for all concerned to see and understand that our orientation to our work as a revolutionary union has its foundation in the understanding that our is not a orientation to cooperate with the system by which we are oppressed; but ours is to wage a consistent struggle that is ultimately intended to undermine and collapse the system of capitalism as a whole than cooperate to sustain it.

The enemy camp in the reactionary trade union holds a view that a trade union must concern itself with only the short term regulation of relations with the employer with an express intention to create labour peace other than to confront and contradict the employer.

We have friends at the workplace that we work with, when you go and engage the employer, one of the difficulties that we have

is the objective outcome of those engagements because their interest is not to contradict and oppose the employer but it's to create a Labour peace and therefore we must cooperate with the employer. We are saying it must be understood that NEHAWU is of a different orientation.

The notion of labour peace and cooperation as though there is mutual benefit is liberal idea that favours maintaining of the economic and political status quo. This tendency is a tendency that we must fight with all our power. It is very important that we remind ourselves and each other of this particular perspective of our red union to struggle because the liberal ideology of cooperation with the system removes from the thinking of the workers that they constitute a class that has specific class interests. Therefore any cooperation with the labour and economic system by any of our class oriented trade unions must always be understood as a temporary tactical manoeuvre to attain short term goals in the economic struggle and not a long term strategy that define our permanent attitude to the existing power relations.

Even the settlement agreements that we sign when we strike or when we negotiate, themselves do not constitute victory of the class struggle or of our continuous contradiction of the system but rather a temporary economic tactical manoeuvring but not a long term objective of why we exist. We exist so that at the end of the day we don't have to sell our labour and be oppressed by any human being, system or any class. That's our orientation as NEHAWU. The few things we gain when we negotiate and bargain are temporary not long term.

Defending the class oriented trade union tradition and its political perspective is

important to ensure that the struggle we wage is revolutionary at all times. To defend the character of the programme we pursue is as important as defending the position of the motive forces in a revolutionary struggle. For that reason this congress bears the responsibility to rearticulate, for purposes of the present political moment, our understanding of the state of the motive forces in the NDR.

Our understanding of the motive forces goes beyond the mere accidental association of groups with interests on a particular political programme as potential beneficiaries but our perspective identifies motive forces as that category of social forces whose inherent class position guarantees the sustainability of the whole transformation discourse while its revolutionary demands and revolutionary action shapes its direction and content. The motive forces has the most enduring revolutionary potential to carry the struggle to its logical conclusion as result of its objective position not only its short term decision. The motive forces of any revolution are tied not only to the result of the revolutionary effort but are placed as those who pay the greatest price for its execution.

Those who stand to benefit when the revolution succeeds and those who perish when the revolution doesn't succeed also have a duty and responsibility in some form or another as they would pay the ultimate/greatest price in pursuit of the revolution. We have no option to abandon this course but others have that option of abandoning the struggle.

In history of the revolution it is undeniable that the working class is the motive force of the NDR because it is on the grounds of its revolutionary actions under the political





guidance of its political party that we have scored the many victories that we have scored in the political terrain.

Therefore this congress must affirm the longstanding position we have always had that the working class forces cannot abandon their rightful position at the helm of the revolutionary programme on account of tactical blunders of the political players who have no objective long term interest in the success of our revolution. The political infrastructure that built the South African revolution belongs to the working class and so does the political tradition of mass organisation that carries the permanent potential for radical change. The working class therefore cannot be found in a position of a spectator in a game it must be playing and dominating. The fact that our revolution is conducted under the premise of a class alliance does not absolve the working class as a force its thoroughgoing responsibility

to inspire the demands of the revolutionary process and inform its pace and direction.

The organisations of the working class especially the red trade union bears the greatest responsibility to defend the revolution because they are the main category of social forces at the cutting edge of the contradictions that the revolution seeks to resolve. The working class therefore does not have the privilege to abandon the political terrain and leave politics to politicians because its own political and economic demands are the foundation of all political processes in the first place. The working class must never be seen only as trade union economic demands but must be seen as the totality of the socioeconomic necessities of the popular forces and the disadvantaged masses.

The union is challenged in the present epoch to defend its base, in line with one of earlier



themes in our national congresses.

We are challenged as we leave this Congress to build and defend our base. What is our base? It's the workplace. What is our base? The members. Where are the members? At the workplace. We are challenged to build the structures, workplace and the base. We must defend base and in turn the base will be capable to defend the union when the need arises. From time to time, the union does get attacked and requires to be defended and a union that exist at the head office, regional offices, provincial offices and also exist in provincial and national congresses will not be able to defend itself if it has no strong base that has been built and capacitated as the first line of defence of both the organization and also members. We are challenged as we leave the congress to defend the base.

When we say defend the base we refer to the whole space where it exists; we mean the individual workplace where a branch is but we also mean the network of workplaces and branches that work together to defend one another from the common attack from the employer. The base of the union is the members first but also the population of cadreship of the union as reflected in its shop stewards. When we say we must defend the base we mean an expanded programme of the organisation rooted in campaigning and building internal solidarity in the organisation. The foundation of internal solidarity of the union occurs among branches of the same sector bit different locations, among different branches of different sectors in the same locality and among unions of the federation in one or several localities.

The defence of the base means that we are a growing union whose growth is based on

clearly defined and relevant campaigns that addresses the various challenges of the members and the workers more generally. The defence of the base includes unity of purpose in the organisation, diligent implementation of decisions that are collectively taken and accountability of individuals and collectives to the decisions and the standing vision and objectives of the union. Defending the base means that as the union we are functioning on the basis of the agreed strategy ad programme as opposed to dependence of the many on the initiative of the individual.

It will not help the union defend itself, defend the base and its members if we don't have a sense of solidarity amongst members, branches and across sectors. When workers in the state entities we organize are under attack, and workers in the same region or localities from other sectors don't pay attention to that, when the employer is finished with workers at those state entities it will come to others sectors. What we are raising is that part of the defence of the base means that we must reimagine the spirit of solidarity amongst workers. No worker, no branch, no sector can be attacked by the employer and other members look the other way. It shouldn't happen. Employers must know, you touch one member of NEHAWU anywhere else, you touch one member of NEHAWU everywhere else. Members of NEHAWU must rise in defence of one another, of themselves, their base and organization. That should be the spirit of departure. If we are fragmented and don't pay attention to the issue that challenge workers, we will perish. We must take a deliberate conscious decision to capacitate our shopstewards to defend the base. A shopsteward battalion that is not capacitated will not be able to defend members and the base. Defending the base means to infiltration and counter organising by other unions.



No trade union of any respectable calibre can consolidate its future if its base is not defended on these basis. Beyond this congress we are required comrades to defend our base especially in the face of the attack on the collective bargaining rights.

If we are to defend Collecting Bargaining it means we must have a strong base. The duty to defend collective bargaining is as basic as the duty to defend our right to exist as an organization. If we can't collectively bargaining for our members then there's no reason to exist at the workplace. If we are made to be incapable to bring substantive benefits to our members at the workplace, members will find another vehicle through they will achieve these basic needs of workers.

We must send a clear message to government about our fight to defend collective bargaining and further indicate that no matter the

outcome of the constitution court ruling about Resolution 1 of 2018, all that we are saying to the state, you will not hear the end of this thing, all what we are saying is implement that resolution. We must campaign and fight for the rights and defence of collective bargaining. The recent local government elections are a clear indicator of workers' anger.

The government has a moral and political responsibility and duty to at least reclaim some form of legitimacy in the eyes of the working class particularly public servants. If you think that you will defeat public servants, every worker across sectors will know that it's coming to them. The country shall not know any peace if workers are angry. If you are the head of the State, you don't want to be responsible for an unstable country because you have angered workers.

We make the call to those who have a moral

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responsibility as custodians of all the laws that we have today to defend them. We must be vigilant and continue to defend our rights as workers. These rights are slowly being eroded and reversed. Workers had the right through pay progression for example however it's been taken away now. Workers have rights to be safe at the workplace but how many of our shopstewards were charged during COVID-19 because they refused to work under dangerous conditions. Therefore we need to fight and defend the gains that we have today. That is the task that we have going forward the Defence of Collective Bargaining.

The duty to defend bargaining is as basic as the duty to defend our very right to exist and an organisation of workers in our workplaces. The attack on the right to collective bargaining is an attack on the very basis why South African political can be called progressive, let alone revolutionary. The attack on

collective bargaining in the beginning of the Americanisation of our labour relations and the whole economy. The attack on these rights is creation of gun slinging politics of the imperialist that are based on the continuous suffocation of the average man. This is big boots politics that are camouflaged as sensible economics. We must fight and we will fight with all that we have to defeat this attack.

If any war against the working class in the last 27 years was ever waged; this is the greatest war that has ever been waged. It is the final battle that the capitalist intends to wage against us that has the most potential to give him long-term victory against the workers. It indeed goes beyond the public sector but affects the whole economy. We do not have the privilege not to win this battle. Indeed to take up the war against the suppression of the right to collective bargaining is to further our duty to defend the base.

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The union also as earlier reflected continues to pursue and international struggle. To that end it important that we make it clear to this congress that the internationalist struggle is connected to the local struggle and vice versa. As such we are as duty bound to fight for freedom in Swaziland as we are bound for fight for rights in the workplace because of the dialectical relationship between the local and the international. The international struggle is expressed in the relationship between the local regional struggle, the continental question and the global questions. The regional questions require to be given greater attention particular the Swaziland question. The Swaziland struggle is key to the progress of the SADC region and the progressive political forces need to pay attention to the Swazi question because failing to address the crisis of the monarchy in Swaziland places any progressive vision of the region in great danger. The SADC region is important to the success of the South African revolution as well. To that end this congress and the union must utilise the resolution it has taken on Swaziland to elevate our struggle and campaigns to higher heights.

The Palestinians and the Cuban blockade questions continue to sit high on the agenda of our organisation because the freedom of the Palestinians and Cubans is equivalent to our own. The firm resolutions taken here on these two standing campaigns of our union should propel us to a more determined action so that we deepen or solidarity work and force the ANC to desist from relying on formal government relationship of state to state relations to replace the political relationship we have with the peoples of these nations.

The use of the state to hide a reactionary posture on the political and ideological

questions is unacceptable to say the least. This statement is true in relation to the movements approach to the Swaziland question and as congress we must clearly condemn this counterrevolutionary orientation.

The results of the recent local government elections have revealed important issues about the national political situation. For us as the union we have consistently made it known that the ANC had limited time to correct its actions before the electorate effected punishment as swift as this one. That negative outcome reflect how the ANC has failed ti heed the call of the working class and other popular forces. This election presents a deepening moral crisis for the liberation movement and an estranged relationship of the movement with the masses. The election also presents a scenario where our electoral system is facing a legitimacy crisis if one considers the lack of participation as shown by a drastic low turnout of voters. The election was not a vote to affirm the opposition than it was a vote against the consistent failures of the ANC and that vote was communicated by sheer absence of the masses at the voting lines. The legitimacy crisis we speak of must be halted by all revolutionaries because all revolutions are based on the moral superiority of the revolutionary cause and its forces.

Comrades, Let us close ranks and defend the base

Amandla!!!!



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