

# 11th NUM Central Committee session

**February 1993 The National Union of Mineworkers in South Africa held its 11th Central Committee meeting. The session was attended by 300 delegates representing 280 000 union members. NUM-president James Motlatsi outlined general guidelines in his keynote address. Raw Materials Report presents highlights of the speech and also presents a summary of the Central Committee decisions. Both documents were prepared by the NUM media department. The media department stresses that these summaries not are to be regarded as the official record of the proceedings.**

## **NUM president, James Motlatsi**

We have been told endlessly by the press and politicians about the collapse of Communism and crisis in the former Socialist countries. But they never talk about the crisis of Capitalism.

They tell us about difficulties in the money markets, about the rise of unemployment and the rate of bankruptcies. But they never add them up and say the capitalist system is in a crisis and may never recover. The truth is that capitalism is in deep trouble. It would be premature to say that its condition is critical and that the end is near but we must expect a worsening in its economic and political relations.

The disintegration that is taking place and which is being reflected in the rise of reactionary Nationalism will intensify. The crisis of capitalism is like cancer in that though it is gradually destroying the living tissues it has spells of remission that falsely give the impression of recovery. We may have more spells of remission but we can expect the system to destroy itself, eventually, perhaps through imperialist wars.

### **Bankruptcy of apartheid capitalism**

Our own country is in deep crisis. It is worse than most. The evil spirit of Nationalism has been fostered here with dire consequences. There is economic stagnation. The source of new investment has virtually dried up. The social infrastructure of the society is collapsing. Our schools and hospitals are falling apart. The crime rate is worse than at any time during apartheid. It is more dangerous for a black person to walk on the street than ever before. We have no public morals for people can only survive through corruption.

There is increasing and intensifying poverty both in the township and in the rural areas. The rate of unemployment exceeds anything experienced in the West.

There are in the region of 6,5 million unemployed out of an economically active population little more than 16 million. That makes the rate of unemployment amongst all ethnic groups to be 32,5 per cent. The incidence of unemployment, however, is much higher amongst blacks than any other group. It would not surprise me if at least some of those who have left school but have not yet reached the age of retirement are unemployed. This is a dreadful indictment of South African Capitalist society. The rot in capitalism has penetrated so deeply that we may never recover until we have made fundamental changes in the structure of society by placing political power in the hands of every person and economic power in the hands of workers.

### **Strengthening the tripartite alliance**

The NUM believes that this Alliance should be strengthened as we move towards liberation. And it intends to support that belief with material support. The ANC will require funds in order to fight elections against the parties supported by the wealth of whites and of the establishment. I would like our union to initiate the foundation of an Alliance Election Fund and urge other unions also to contribute to it, in much the same way as British unions support and finance the Labour Party. We should raise this proposal with Cosatu as soon as possible. This would make it perfectly clear that we see our political future through the activities of the ANC and the SACP. But, of course, we would need to be involved in their policy-making processes, as Trade Unions in Britain participate in the Labour Party, and this might require new constitutional provisions. It is vital, however, that we ensure the continuity of our political allies well into the future by contributing to their funds and guaranteeing them our solidarity.

### **Political role of the union**

It should be clear from what I have said that I do not believe that NUM or any other trade union should act as a political organi-

sation. We must act through the political parties in the Alliance. The NUM has very clear industrial functions and general political responsibilities. Its duty is to service its members in whatever industries they work, that is a big task requiring energy and resources. It is also its duty to see that its members are provided with education, health care and housing but they must result from policies of the ANC and the SACP. I hope, therefore that members and officials will stop trying to make the NUM into a political party and will instead work to make the union more efficient in looking after the direct interests of our members.

### **Improving service given to NUM members**

The work of the union has expanded and become more complex over time. We are still growing and will continue to grow, in the process we shall invariably take on more tasks. Every time this happens the work of the existing officials becomes more onerous and they become inefficient. We need, therefore, more full-time officials to share the load. They should be democratically elected and be directly accountable to the membership. There are ways in which we can do this. The one way is to have an elected-full time Executive Committee. If you agree to this then the size of the Committee would have to be reduced and everyone on it would have to be subject to election. We would have to negotiate with the mines an agreement so that members of the National Executive Committee who have been defeated in the election could return to their old jobs. Alternatively both the elected regional chairpersons and secretaries should become full-time officials directly accountable to their regional membership.

### **New election procedures**

It is important that the members have the fullest possible information about the candidates so that they can make a reasoned choice. For this purpose the candidates should be able to canvass for support

amongst the members. They should be able to visit branches and address meetings so that the members can actually see and hear them. To make this possible all nominations for elections should be required to be submitted at a specified time which is to be at least two months before the elections are held. There would need to be nomination papers, proposed and seconded by members of the union, on which candidates give information about themselves and describe qualifications. It is vital that all elections are conducted on the basis of complete information about the candidates and with equality and fairness.

### **Cadre development: workers' college**

The need to make provision to create a cadre force from which we can select officials has been raised a number of times. I have spoken about it before and the union has made decisions about it. There is no dispute about training our cadre force. We desperately need people to run our union who have knowledge of the industry, the history of our society, the liberation struggle and international relations. And who possess a clear political commitment to the working class. Yet so far nothing has been done about it.

At this meeting, I think we should settle the issue. We now have the funds at least to start establishing our own college. I propose that we take immediate steps to acquire property that can be converted to our use and create the educational infrastructure to run it effectively.

### **Retrenchment – where to?**

The only way we can protect ourselves against continual and irresponsible retrenchments is to aim for a streamlined mining industry which is not scratching for profit on the backs of the mineworkers and in which we can have a highly paid skilled labour force. If we can aim for this we will not only solve the migrant labour problem, for migrant workers cannot be skilled workers. This way out of the retrenchment

problem, however, raises serious issues for us. We would be demanding the permanent closure of all mines which could not pay reasonable wages to mineworkers.

Many mineworkers, therefore, would have to leave the industry and, as I stated earlier, there are at present no alternative jobs for them. How would we choose who should leave? And what would happen to those economics, such as Lesotho and Mozambique that have become dependent on the remittances of mineworkers for their foreign exchange. If we reshape the mining industry in this way then the construction would have to be done in a planned way which takes account of our national interests as well as those of the mineworkers. Individual mineworkers should not have to suffer. It would have to take place after intense consultation with the workers who would decide who left and who stayed. It would still, however, raise real issues but we must see them in context.

### **A new vision of South African mining industry**

I want to enter liberated South Africa with some of the problems behind us. I am not saying that we must settle, or even raise, at this stage the question of ownership and workers' control. They are important but will have to be settled when we have a clear blueprint outlining the future of the shape of the mining industry. We must have that blueprint before the elections are held. This means that we, as a union should decide on our priorities and enter into immediate consultations with our partners in the liberation movement. Since 1987 we have laid down the broad outlines of our policy. We do not need further working parties or committees of experts to map out our future. We are intelligent enough, with sufficient knowledge and experience of mining to know what is good for our members and the country. My own vision is clear. I want a mining industry that is capable of providing decent wages and working conditions to all of its members without any kind of discrimination on any grounds whatsoever.

*The photos illustrating the documents from the 11th session of the Central Committee of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) of South Africa show housing conditions in a South African mine. Source: NUM media department.*

I want an industry that employs a permanent, stable and skilled labour force. I want an informed work force with a strong union. I want an industry which is democratically run in the interests of workers and the community.

We cannot leave the shape of our future to be decided by chance. I would like the Central Committee to decide today, to mandate the NEC to start immediate discussions with the ANC about redesigning the mining industry to meet the aspirations of mineworkers so that when our people go to the polls they will not simply be choosing their representatives but will be voting for a clear economic future.

## Central Committee Decisions

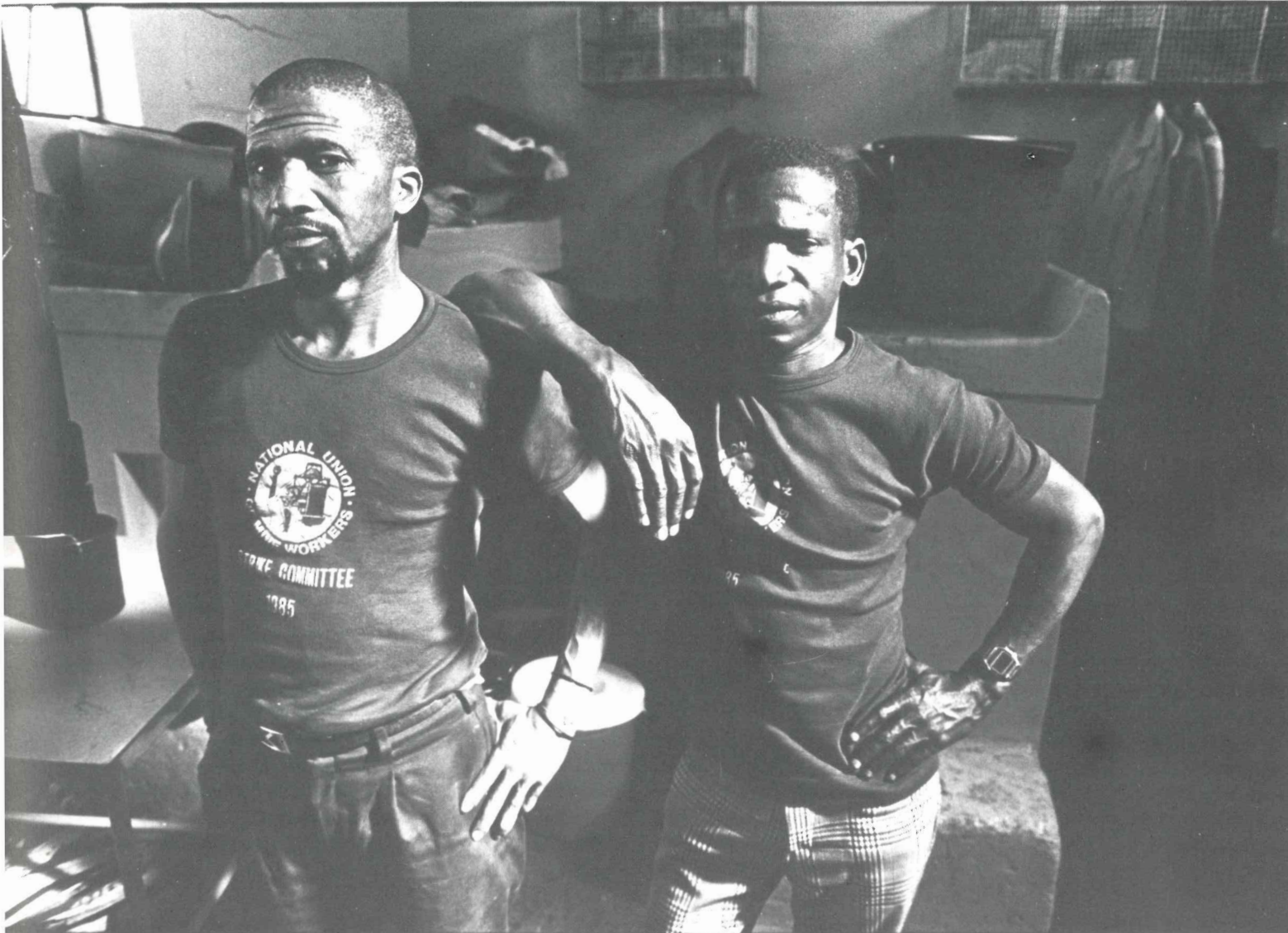
### Political power

The Central Committee noted that our struggle for liberation has brought us to the point where the first democratic elections are a reality that is within our grasp. It is the mass struggle of our people on many fronts that have brought us to this point and it is the mass organisation of this our people that we need to push us to final victory: be-

cause we know that nothing can be won by our leaders at the negotiating table if it cannot be defended on the ground through mass struggle.

In NUM, our members are burning to put our energies into reconstructing our society, into building peace, into constructing a society in which the basic rights and needs of all our people are met. But for peace and reconstruction, there must be democracy.

Victory for democracy means more than the vote. To address the legacy of apartheid, we need to empower our people, to create jobs and provide social services. This can best be achieved through a Recon-



struction Programme based on a solidarity pact with the ANC-led alliance. The NUM Central Committee therefore decided to support a Reconstruction Accord between Cosatu and the ANC, that includes the following aspects:

- The rights of workers as embodied in the Workers Charter should be protected and guaranteed by an ANC government;
- Consultation with the democratic forces and accountability of leadership – must be entrenched in the way the new government operates;
- A programme of action on issues of poverty, job creation, education and training for our people;
- This Reconstruction Accord should be a signed document that binds the future ANC government.

On the basis of such an accord, NUM decided to give its fullest support to the ANC's election campaign, to make our vision of reconstruction, redistribution and development a resounding success.

The Central Committee noted that millions of our people are not used to voting procedures and processes, and that the majority of mineworkers and people in rural areas are illiterate. Voter education is therefore an urgent need.

NUM therefore decided to establish an Election Campaign Fund, and to motivate this to Cosatu. The Central Committee also decided to establish a National NUM Election Campaign Committee, whose functions would be agreed with the ANC. NUM also agreed to use the grassroots leadership skills in our ranks to assist the ANC during the election campaign, in the following ways:

- Releasing (seconding) some of its officials, office bearers, regional leadership and full-time shop stewards to this process;
- Negotiating time off for worker leaders to fulfil this task; and paying their lost shifts;
- Engaging and training capable retrenched workers in the various regions to do voter education, and paying them allowances from the funds raised;

- Availing the marshalls to the ANC to assist during the election campaign.

The Central Committee resolved to support the proposal that COSATU nominate comrades to stand for election to the new parliament on the ANC's list of candidates. Finally, NUM decided to approach the ANC to ensure that workers from neighbouring countries who have worked in this country for more than five years are entitled to take up South African citizenship, and are included on the voters roll; and that NUM would encourage its members to take advantage of this opportunity.

### **Economic crisis**

On the economic front, the country as a whole continued to experience economic crisis. In the mining industry, we saw a continuation of the economic carnage that has characterised the last few years, with retrenchments as the single biggest problem facing us. For many mining and energy workers, 1992 was a year of sacrifices and an assault on conditions of employment at work; and the devastation of the drought at home.

The Central Committee noted that in many instances, mine management had responded to the crisis by targeting working standards and union rights. Repression and denial of union access has continued; Goldfields of SA, Johannesburg Consolidated Investments and AngloVaal are the major culprits.

The CC also noted that many mines have used retrenchments as a union-bashing exercise, such as De Beers' Finsch Mine, where management contrived to retrench the entire Branch Committee and 88 out of 90 shaft stewards.

### **Wage policy**

The Central Committee reaffirmed the wage policy, adopted at the National Congress in 1991 as the guide to wage demands in 1993. The demand for a national minimum wage has been adjusted for inflation and now stands at R 900 per month for surface workers and R 1 000 per month for un-

derground workers. These are cash amounts that exclude accommodation, food and medical care. The wage policy calls for movement towards a living wage for mineworkers and for the payment of similar wages for similar jobs. The application of these demands will be evaluated in the context of the present wages and economic situation of each mine and sector.

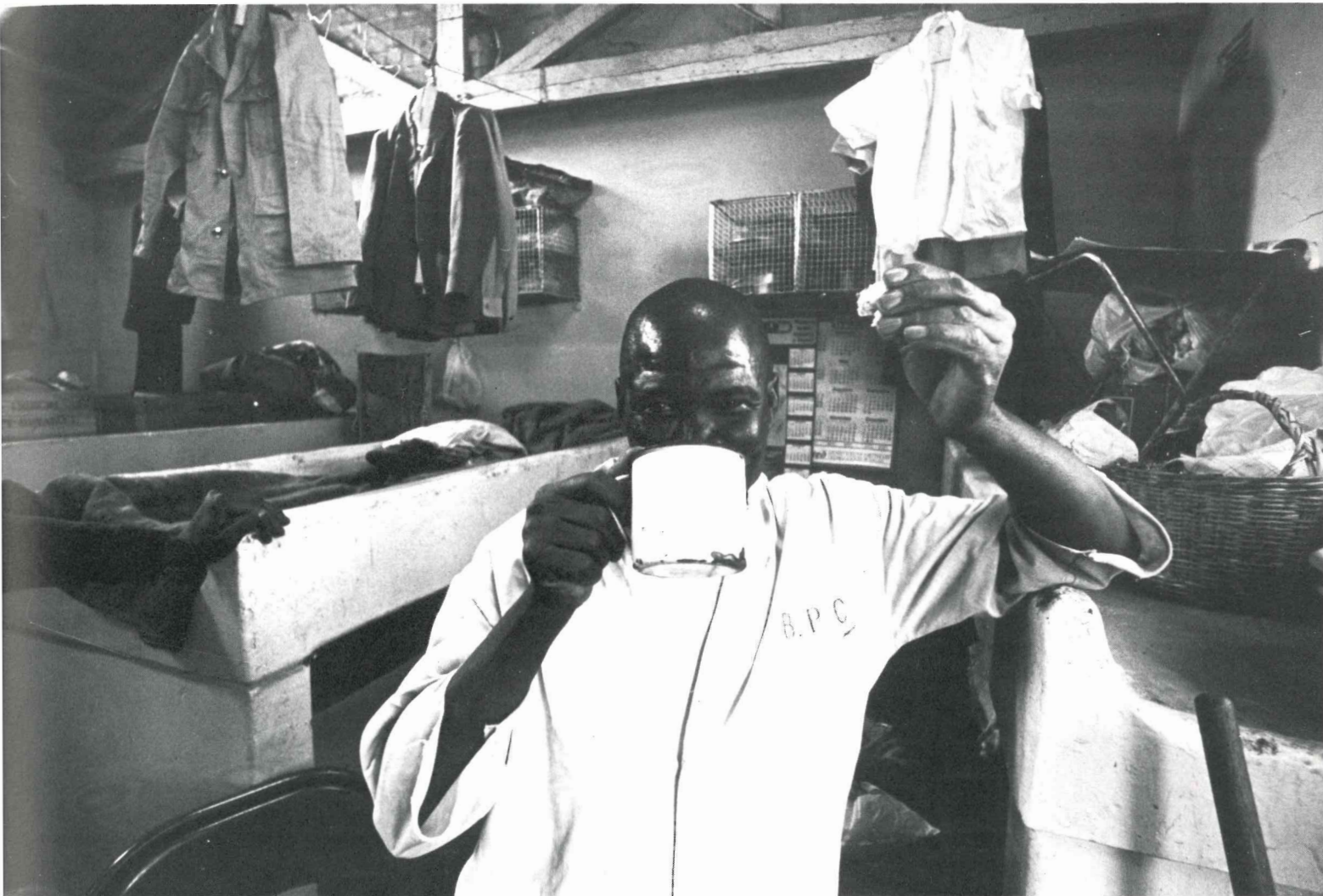
### **Profit-sharing**

The profit-sharing schemes on certain gold mines were reviewed by the Central Committee. These provide supplementary amounts to augment the small basic wage increases on mines in 1992 – if the mines make a profit. While almost all profit-sharing payouts, in the six months to December 1992, were greater than the additional increases in basic wages given by Goldfields and AngloVaal in 1991 and 1992, many payouts were surprisingly low, given the huge profits of some mines. Three of the top five payouts were given at marginal mines. If these mines can afford to share large profit amounts, the formulas for sharing at the rich mines that paid small profit shares needs to be critically reviewed during the 1993 negotiations.

Problems surrounding the implementation of the profit-sharing schemes were discussed and noted for follow-up action. All of these problems were seen as side-effects of the profit-sharing schemes which should not stop the NUM for proceeding with profit-sharing as a strategy on gold mines during the present phase of mine downscaling.

### **Extension of collective bargaining rights**

Since the first recognition agreement was signed with the Chamber of Mines ten years ago, the NUM has not been allowed to represent its members above category 8 in negotiations on wages and conditions of employment. Many NUM members, as they become more skilled, find themselves being promoted out of the NUM bargaining Unit and being forced into other unions.



The NUM wants the right to represent all its members, whatever bargaining unit they happen to be in.

**Racial discrimination**

The Central Committee noted that most mines contribute a far larger proportion of the pensionable wage to the retirement funds of whites than they do to those of their black employees. Gold and coal mines under the Chamber of Mines, for example, pay 11,75 per cent of the basic white wage bill to retirement funds but only 6 per cent of the basic wage bill to the black Mineworkers Provident Fund.

This type of crude racial discrimination has no place in the mining industry. The NUM negotiating team was directed to raise this issue forcefully in the 1993 negotiation.

**Conditions of employment  
– NUM Central Committee  
rejects the 7 day week**

The Central Committee roundly rejected the concept of Sunday work as a new norm for the mining industry. Delegates agreed that the advantages of seven-day work are far outweighed by the disadvantages:

- the dangers associated with the re-scheduling of Sunday maintenance tasks,
- the preference of workers not to go to work on Sundays,
- the fact that Sunday work will not prolong the lives of mines, but shorten their lives, by ensuring that the gold is mined out more quickly.

The NUM's policy is to move to a five-day working week in the mining industry. Its policy is for every Sunday to be an off-day for workers.

Nevertheless, if there is dire need for a mine, for a temporary period, to work on Sundays, this should be thoroughly negoti-

ated with the NUM and other unions before the Minister is approached to grant the necessary exemptions. Such approaches should be jointly made by the employer and the unions and should require the employer to make a full disclosure of financial and production information to the unions to monitor the continued need for working on Sundays. The NUM rejects the Minister's habit of granting unilateral exemptions from the law on Sunday work. The Union will formulate practical plans to continue to put pressure on the Minister to change his practices on this issue.

### **Downscaling – government fails**

1992 was also a year in which government once again showed its total lack of any constructive programme to respond to the downscaling in an industry that has been the backbone of this economy for decades.

The government has simply ignored the innovative proposals put forward by the NUM in 1991 and in 1992 to use tax pay-backs to save jobs on marginal mines. The summit process, in which all the unions, the mine employers and the government are involved has failed to produce any effective, combined approach to the catastrophe working itself out in the mining industry. In addition, three months ago, NUM put forward an urgent proposal to Derek Keys, that retrenched workers should not be taxed on their retrenchment packages. At present, the tax level on these packages is as high as 50 per cent, as they are taxed as if this money is part of the normal income of workers. As we see it, workers' retrenchment packages are being taxed to pay for the golden handshakes of corrupt civil servants. But in the context of the retrenchment crisis in the country as a whole, Keys has not found it fit to respond.

Instead, he is considering further attacks on the working class and the poor: in a year with 30 per cent food inflation and the destruction of subsistence agriculture through drought, Keys is not only unwilling to zero-rate VAT on food, but may well increase VAT to 12 per cent in the new budget.

Instead, the Central Committee proposed that it is high time the government

looked to the rich instead of the poor when it cannot balance its books, and proposed that further revenues should instead be raised through, for example, a capital gains tax, a wealth tax on the rich, the abolition of tax loopholes, and increase in VAT on luxury goods only.

### **Retrenchments**

The scale of retrenchments in the mining industry is a social crisis in its own right. Since 1987, we have lost 160 000 jobs in the gold sector alone. We demand that companies planning retrenchment negotiate a Social Plan with the union, that covers elements such as:

- Sufficient notice period to allow for proper counselling, and planning for the future; facilitated by trained Retrenchment Committees;
- Certification of workers to reflect their skills level before they leave the industry;
- Health screening before they leave the industry;
- Procedures that allow for effective recall;
- Minimum severance pay of 2 weeks per year of service;
- Training provisions to equip workers for other jobs or to create their own jobs;
- Support for job creation programmes.

NUM will be negotiating the establishment of Social Plan Funds within each company, to which employers will be required to make a monthly contribution when the mine is still healthy, to be able to finance elements of the Social Plan where necessary.

Fundamental to the process is openness, a review of the Companies Act is needed so that there is better disclosure rights for workers and accountability of directors to the shareholders. Workers have substantial investments in many companies and demand increased control.

The Central Committee also decided that NUM should start drafting a Social Plan Act, that would provide protection for workers and establish the responsibilities of companies in terms of contributing to a Social Plan in the event of retrenchments. NUM decided to call a National Retrench-

ment Conference to build on and build consensus around the concept of the Social Plan and development of employment alternatives.

In the absence of meaningful legal protection for workers facing retrenchment, the NUM Central Committee decided to launch a campaign for a national industry level agreement that sets a framework of rights – as envisaged in the Social Plan for workers in the industry.

The union will initiate legal action and also campaign against union-bashing employers who use retrenchment to victimise union shaft stewards and leaders.

The union will also be negotiating for skills training while workers are still employed, as well as access to meaningful skills training if they are retrenched: both to get other jobs, as well as to create their own jobs. NUM will commission an industry-wide evaluation of existing training facilities, and how these can be restructured to provide workers with meaningful skills.

A proposal will be forwarded to the mining houses to co-ordinate all Training and Job Creation Funds that have been negotiated to date into one co-ordinated fund that is accessible to all ex-miners.

### **Health and safety**

NUM has decided to initiate negotiations on a national, industry-wide Occupational Health and Safety Agreement regulating the participation of health and safety stewards, procedures for NUM participation in accident investigations and enquiries, and facilities and access for safety stewards.

NUM is demanding that income security, for workers disabled in accidents, should be extended from 6 to 12 months; and that each mine should employ a quota of workers disabled in mine accidents.

On the Occupational Diseases Act that is to be amended, the NUM rejects the government's proposals that will undermine the standards of black workers. There is no reason why a black worker who has an occupational disease should not receive the same as white workers.

NUM also put forward a proposal for the establishment of a Health and Safety Com-

mission into conditions in the mining industry: the government has simply failed to respond. Meanwhile, in the first 40 days of 1993 alone, 18 workers have already died in accidents in the mining industry. On average, 600 workers die in accidents every year, and 10–15 000 are injured. This situation has persisted for years, yet this government values the lives of mineworkers so little that they cannot even take a decision to investigate the conditions under which this happens.

### Worker power in Energy Sector

In the Energy Sector, we face the contradiction that many of our people are without electricity in their homes, schools and clinics, yet Eskom is moth-balling power sta-

tions and jobs have been lost. Meanwhile Eskom's energy grid programme is designed for high profit margins – but decisions do not involve workers.

The Central Committee resolved that energy workers and affected communities must increase the campaign for electricity for all, that the installation of such electricity must be designed to create maximum jobs, that energy workers must be involved in the decision-making about meeting the energy needs of all our people and that the high profits planned from the new grid must be used to empower workers and the community at large.

The Central Committee set a time frame for the establishment of a NUM Workers College, as agreed at the Congress in 1991.

This is to be functioning by the Congress in 1994, to meet the urgent needs of skills development in our industry.

NUM declares 1993 as the year to defend jobs and protect standards!

NUM declares 1993 a year to fight off attacks on the poor and the working class!

NUM declares that 1993 is the year of removing the final obstacles to democracy!

NUM declares that 1993 is the year of transfer of power to the people! ■

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