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Wits, Dept. of Sociology and Harold Wolpe Dialogue

28 October 2010

JHB

Topic:

**LESSONS OF THE STRIKE WAVE
ACROSS SOUTH AFRICA**

Speaker:

Mr. Frans Baleni

The aim of these dialogues is to create a space for open and informed dialogue and debate around key local and global political, social and economic issues facing South Africa.

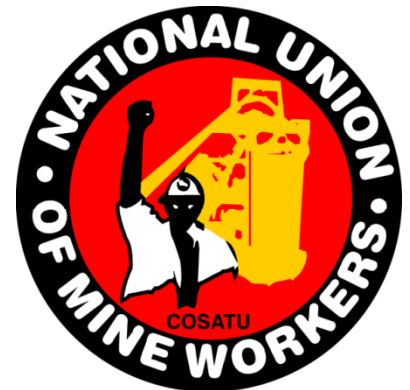


WOLPE DIALOGUE: LESSONS OF THE RECENT STRIKES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Presentation by:
Frans Baleni
General Secretary
National Union of Mineworkers

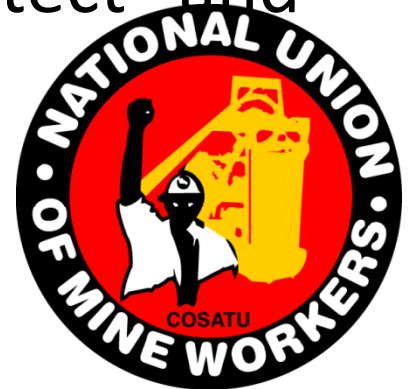
Presentation Road Map

- The purpose of a Trade Union
- Permanent Contradictions
- Why workers embark on strike?
- Lessons
- Conclusion



The Purpose of a Trade Union

- Trade Unionism occurs throughout the world wherever conditions for capitalism exist.
- It is an inevitable consequence of capitalism.
- Workers are exploited through the use of the market mechanism for private gain.
- Trade unionism is a collective action by those who sell their labour power to protect and improve their living standard.



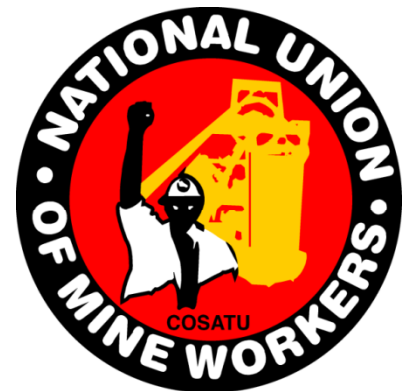
Permanent Contradictions Between Employers and Workers

Employers	Objectives	Means of attaining objective	Outlook
	Maximise profit	Cut costs Improve bottom line	Right to control
	Conflict	Conflict	Conflict
Workers	C.O.S Safety Living wage Job security	Regular wage increase and improvement of C.O.S	Right to influence decisions



Class Consciousness

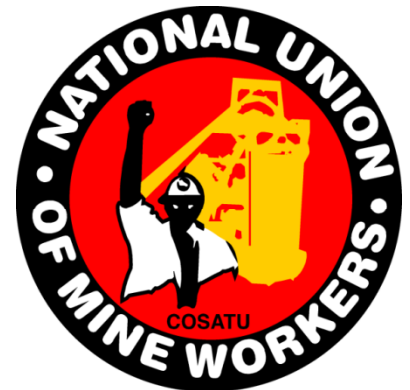
- Class consciousness means the false consciousness has been replaced by a full awareness of the true situation by realisation of the nature of exploitation.
- Members of a class develop a common identity, recognise their shared interests and unite, creating **CLASS SOLIDARITY**.



Why workers embark on strike?

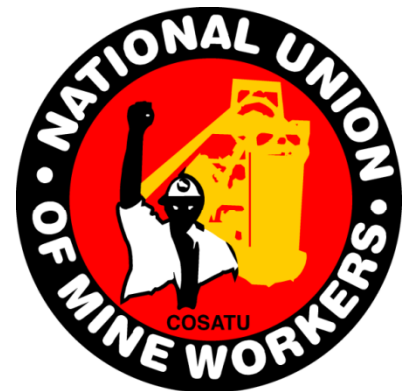
- **Wage gaps and inequalities**

- In 2005, 50 CEs surveyed were paid a total of R782 m
- A construction lowest paid has to work for 149 years to catch-up with the CE.
- A mineworker has to work 219 years to catch-up with the CE.
- Materialistic culture by Business, Politicians and Lumpen.



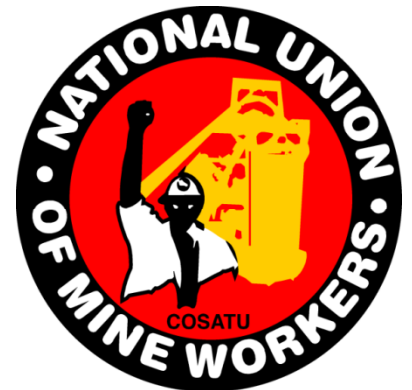
Why workers embark on strike?

- Post 1994 Collective Bargaining environment
 - Unrealised working class expectations from the political victory
 - Comrade Manager vs Comrade
 - Academic approach to Collective Bargaining
 - Text book IR approach



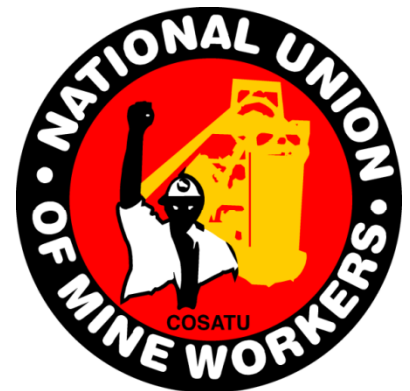
Why workers embark on strike?

- Private taxation
- Lack of tolerance to different opinions
- Insecure leaders and impatient members
- Application of violence instead of persuasion



Why workers embark on strike?

- Wage increase and cos
- Lack of transformation
- Trade union rights
- Abuse of Power by managers and Trade Union leaders
- Control and influence



Public vs Private Sector

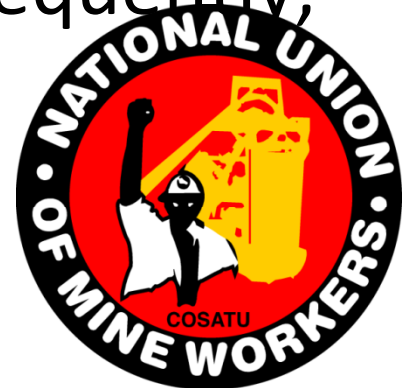
- **Public Ownership**

“Public ownership is the practical expression of an ideology that gives preference to collectivism over individualism in the belief that individuals are better served in all aspects of their lives through the practice of collectivism when it is the primary and dominant aim in society”. (F. Baleni)



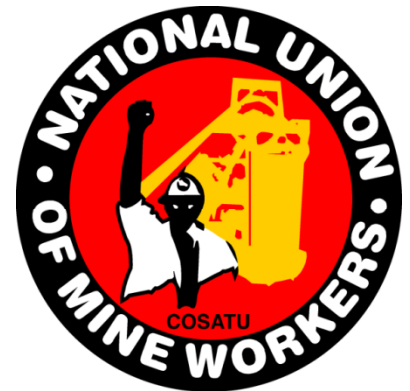
Public vs Private Sector

“The dominant but not wholly exclusive feature of contemporary society is capitalism. This means that it is based on the private ownership of economic resources and their exploitation for individual purposes. It is responsible, therefore, for the inequalities in the distribution of wealth and consequently, political power” (F. Baleni)



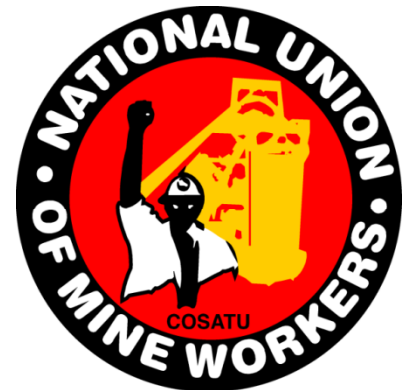
Lessons of the Recent Strike

1. Members expectation vs Employers' offer
2. Mobilisation of members on the basis of a fully met demand
3. No room for 'give and take'
4. Leaders not being given a flexible mandate for settlement.
5. Apparent absence of Trust.



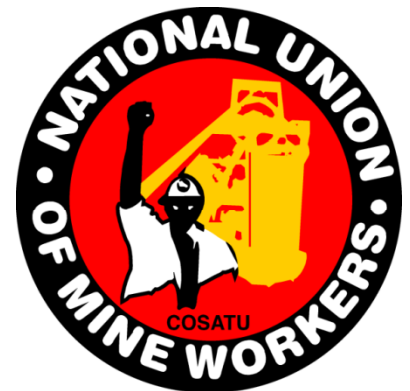
Lessons of the Recent Strike

6. Poor Communication with members.
7. Communicating with members through the media.
8. Absence of solidarity amongst trade unions.
9. Absence of minimum service level agreement.



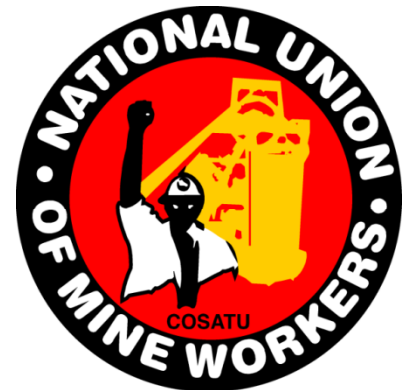
Lessons of the Recent Strike

10. Failure to make a distinguish between the Private Sector and Public Sector.
11. Inability to win public support especially in the public sector
12. Dealing with victims of a strike;
 - Injuries and property destruction
 - Withdrawal of life threatening services



Lessons of the Recent Strike

13. We need to do proper generation analysis of union membership e.g. Traditionalist, Baby boomers, General X and Y.
14. Mass education on CB processes is very critical.
15. Proper economic analysis of the sector before engaging in negotiations.
16. We need bold leaders and employers who are dynamic in the CB and IR arena.
17. We need to raise the levels of class consciousness.



Conclusion

“If you are not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem” **(Alexander Pope)**

Thanks for having me!

