

**South Africa:
From apartheid
to democracy**

A seminar
on the future role of
British trade unions

29 November 1993



■ **The reconstruction and development
of South Africa: The challenge to Cosatu
and the wider democratic movement**

Address by Jay Naidoo, former Secretary General, Cosatu

■ **The Programme of Action for the
British trade union movement**

Convened by
the Anti-Apartheid Movement
Trade Union Committee
in co-operation with the TUC



Preface

For many years, British trade unions have been providing support to their sisters and brothers in Southern Africa both through campaigning and practical assistance. This has undoubtedly helped to achieve the goal of ending apartheid and securing democratic elections, but the legacy of over 40 years of apartheid cannot be removed overnight.

The inequalities in housing, land ownership and education, the social deprivation and the extremes of wealth and poverty will take longer to overcome. South African workers and their families will continue to need support from Britain and elsewhere as they struggle to achieve economic and social equality as well as political equality.

To consider what continuing forms of assistance British trade unions can give, the Anti-Apartheid Movement's Trade Union Committee, with the support of the TUC, organised a seminar on 29 November 1993. It discussed ways of providing assistance both in the period up to the election and continuing thereafter, so that the Programme for Reconstruction and Development can be implemented and the non-racial trade union movement can continue to develop and grow stronger.

A consensus view of the seminar was that a Programme of Action should be produced and this has been done, taking account of the points raised and the views that were expressed. The Anti-Apartheid Movement hopes all unions will be able to continue their Southern Africa solidarity work along the lines in the Programme. The Trade Union Committee will continue to provide assistance, information and guidance to unions as the process of change continues.

Mike Sparham
Chair, AAM Trade Union Committee

The reconstruction and development of South Africa: The challenge to Cosatu and the wider democratic movement

Address by Jay Naidoo

“It is a great honour for me, yet again, to address a seminar organised by the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The backbone of the Anti-Apartheid Movement in this country, and indeed in many other countries, has been the trade union movement. The trade unions affiliated to the TUC have made an enormous contribution to our struggle against apartheid. We thank you for this.

Today, the new transition in South Africa holds many dangers. We have reached a state of irreversibility. The fact that the National Party that has occupied power for close to 48 years, is now vacating power is now recognised even by the existing President, De Klerk. The ANC is the government-in-waiting and in many senses already occupies a situation of dual power where Nelson Mandela is recognised as the real president in South Africa.

In terms of the election on 27 April 1994, that date has been fixed and no amount of opposition from the parties that have opposed or withdrawn from the negotiating process will threaten that date. On 27 April itself, we are confident that the ANC will win an overwhelming victory. Last week, an interim constitution was adopted. There will be within the next 10 days the setting up of, what we call, the Transitional Executive Committee with sub-councils in a number of important areas, particularly security forces, finances, law and order, on the issue of regions and women. These are councils that are aimed at ensuring that a free and fair environment is created for us to have a democratic election. In addition, there are structures that will be set up such as the Independent Electoral Commission and the Independent Broadcasting Authority.

So these are the structures that are being put into place in the next few days to ensure that we do have a free and fair election. The challenge to us and really, the content of today's seminar is: **Will that vote on 27 April mean more to our people than just a ballot exercise?** We sit in South Africa with close to 46% of our people unemployed,

with close to 14 million people living below the minimum living levels, with 15 million people in our country being illiterate, and with close to between 2 and 3 million houses to be built for the homeless that live in shacks and squatter camps. We sit in a country where violence continues to ravage many parts.

So the challenge really is: will the election taking place on 27 April mean something more to people than just the right to vote, and for us the challenge is: are we able to create economic growth in jobs for our people on a sustainable basis and jobs at decent living wages? Are we able to meet the needs of people, particularly given that apartheid has meant that the majority of people live in absolute poverty? Would we be able to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of our industrial capacity given that apartheid has protected South African industry behind very high tariff barriers, and these tariff barriers will have to be brought in line with international standards as we reintegrate into the world economy? Will it improve the skill levels of our people and ensure that black people in our country don't just occupy the scales that link to unskilled and semi-skilled work and which pay the low wages in our country, and will we ensure finally that rights of both individuals and collective rights, such as the rights of unions, the rights of women, the rights of youth, are recognised as part of a new society?

The answer for us is to be found in what we've called the Reconstruction Development Programme. We are debating and developing this as a programme that will unite the entire society behind a programme of reconstruction. It's a programme that will undertake a fundamental restructuring of society both at the political, economic and social levels and ensure that that society and its institutions serve not just a minority and an elite, as it has done in the past, but serve the interest of the majority of people. The development aspect of the programme, the focus on developing the human potential of all sections of our community, particularly through an emphasis on education and training and a need to address in a form of affirmative action those constituencies and sections of our society that have been disadvantaged in the past.

The need for a programme is very clear. We need a coherent framework within which we set ourselves goals and set ourselves clear timetables and establish what the necessary resources are to achieve those goals. And we do it in a way which is inclusive of all the major parts of our society. At the moment that programme is being negotiated within the alliance, particularly between Cosatu and the ANC, and that will develop in the future to a programme that begins to incorporate, as it has already done, sections of civil society, particularly the civic movements, the women's movements, the youth movements, etc. But we have also, at a whole range of different levels through existing forums that we have set up such as the National Economic Forum, the Housing Forum

and the Electrification Forum, begun to initiate and discuss such programmes with even existing government and employers in the country.

The main pillars of such a programme of reconstruction will focus on a need for us to address poverty and deprivation and to unlock resources in our country in a way that meets both the need for economic growth and the need for development. We also intend through such a programme to ensure that opportunities are created that lead to the creation of jobs, that lead to greater efficiency within our economy, and a focus on providing for the social needs of people, particularly health care, education and training, both in relation to urban and rural development. One important component of that is to create a social security net. We intend to do that through a series of short-term job creation projects and public works, increasing welfare benefits to sections of our society, given the high levels of malnutrition in our country affecting children, introducing nutritional programmes such as school feeding.

Another essential part of such a programme will be land reform. A situation which exists in South Africa where in the rural areas we have a situation of mass poverty, of increasing levels of starvation and a society that really is constituted mainly of women and children. Land reform will have to take the issue of land redistribution to households that are headed by black single women.

Access to basic necessities such as water and sanitation and electrification also become key priorities of a new future government given that at the moment close to 12 million people in South Africa have no access to clean water, and more than two-thirds of our population have no access to electricity. This, in spite of the fact that we live in a country where there is an oversupply of electricity.

So government investment will go increasingly into infrastructure and such investment will seek to benefit the black population in general but in particular women and rural communities. Part of the reconstruction programme will also attempt to link the whole urban development strategy to a rural development plan.

A second major point of emphasis would be on education and training, particularly through a process that allows the trade union movement to intervene strategically in the restructuring debates taking place within our country. For us one of the key challenges is to develop a collective bargaining strategy that links skills to grading systems, to the wage demands that we have and to a whole industry restructuring programme. This will link our proposals for a national training system that begins to underpin the whole upliftment of the black community in terms of increased job opportunities for black workers that allows them to determine career pathing within industry and economy as a whole.

At an economic level the objectives we seek to achieve are to democratise the economy, to reduce inequalities and to develop economic growth in the Southern African context. This we would hope to achieve through developing active labour market policies, again a focus on what are the trade reforms needed for us. A key part of Cosatu's work is the developing of an industrial policy or strategy that while improving efficiency within our economy also locates the trade union movement at the centre of such restructuring. Clearer science and technology policies, with an emphasis on the need to produce original design, are needed. At the moment the only original things that South Africa really create is what we call creepy crawlies that they use in swimming pools, and sprinkler systems used in the gardens of the very wealthy section of our community.

Another part of trade reform relates to the need for us to increase the benefaction of the minerals that we now export in their raw form.

In terms of achieving greater democracy in the economy, given that our economy is dominated by a few major conglomerates, there is a need for the introduction of anti-trust legislation, a need for us, even in business terms, to take the affirmative action that is necessary to promote smaller and medium enterprises and, as I said earlier, the need for us to develop the type of active labour market policies which locate Cosatu and the trade union movement, and more broadly the civil society movement at the centre of our decision-making within the economy.

We would also, as part of that, try to use the budget as a redistributive mechanism with an emphasis on reorganising the budget and government consumption on delivery of services rather than feeding, what exists at the moment, as a very bloated bureaucracy at the top. Listening to the radio this morning and hearing what the National Health Trust executives are earning, brings to point what we need to do in South Africa. Certainly, part of our culture we are trying to develop is a type of transparency where budget formulations are done with broad participation of society. We need to stimulate equality of regional development throughout our country, and which, in some senses, begins to project a more long-term perspective of a five-year or even ten-year programme.

In relation to the state itself, which is a third pillar of our programme, we need to again fundamentally restructure the state in South Africa, and this has already begun to happen. One of the key instruments of that would be a bill of rights. There has been recently a big debacle about the interim bill of rights that attempted to establish employers' rights to lock-out as a fundamental right equal to the right of strike. This is something that we successfully defeated but which still lingers in the corridors of some of the political parties that represent employers in our country.

The democratic state, as I said, has got to ensure that employment in such a state is related to the provision of efficient and effective services to our peoples. Therefore the emphasis is away from the bureaucratic jobs to more jobs being created that increase employment at the levels of providing teachers as we extend the education system, employing more people in the health sector as we extend the health care system to large sections of our population that don't have access to it, and the municipal sector where in many black areas there are no proper services provided to such parts of our country. Within that, promoting the type of culture in a democratic state that will seek to consult and negotiate through proper structures, through institutions of either multi-lateral or tripartite, other stakeholders in the society, so a key element from the side of Cosatu and the ANC is to create the type of institutions and strengthen existing institutions at a tripartite and multi-lateral level.

So, in conclusion, what one can say is that the challenges that face us are momentous. They are enormous and daunting. In fact, in many cases, more daunting than the struggle against apartheid, because we are having to grapple with moving from being an opposition movement to being a movement in power. A movement that is able to deliver on the struggles that have motivated the majority of people in our country. As part of this process we are convening a number of conferences within civil society and finally of the ANC. The idea would be, and at the moment this document is in its fifth draft, a notion of a reconstruction and development programme which, in the first instance, is a vision of where we want to go, what is the quantification, what are the timetables. In a very limited way. But arising from that to develop a manifesto that becomes part of our election campaign, so that our election campaign is not a set of promises but a programme that people have been involved in drafting and which all of our organisations and structures will be loyal to, and which gives our programme and campaign a legitimacy.

A more detailed programme is being worked out in relation to what a future government needs to do on Day One, and that programme should be concluded in the next few months.

But the most important challenge at the moment is to win the election. We have 15 million people who are illiterate, who cannot read or write. We have 4 million people who have no identification documents, that means they can't vote. We have many 'no go' areas, white farms where already farmers are confiscating ID documents of workers and threatening them if they vote for the ANC, domestic workers who are increasingly coming under pressure in the homes of white families, and we have the violence, and we have 'no go' areas where effectively we are banned as organisations.

We are embarking on a massive voter education programme. We have to ensure that we get our people to the polls. We have to minimise the levels of violence in our society, and therefore we already, in this context, have the threats of civil war that you are hearing. Massive mobilisation amongst right-wing whites, and supported by the black surrogates - neo-fascists on your TV screens, a neo-fascist party that regards black people as baboons and you have those type of contradictions but it is a very volatile situation.

They do not have the capacity to have a coup or to smash the momentum towards democracy. They have the capacity to cause quite large-scale destruction but not enough to destabilise the progress we've made. We will never accept and neither will the people ever accept a return to the dark days of apartheid, but they also have a capacity to distract us and detract us from what are very essential challenges I have spoken to you about this morning.

So, in terms of that, while focusing on the needs for reconstruction, we have to fight an election campaign. At the same time, we have to develop the structures that defend the democracy on 28 April and also achieve the restructuring of the state because we could win political office but not the right to govern and exercise political power because the civil service remains essentially the civil service of the apartheid era.

These are the enormous challenges facing us in the democratic movement. We need your urgent help now in supporting our final, last mile to democracy. From the 28 April we would be in the proud position of having Cde Nelson Mandela as the first democratically elected president. This will be a fitting tribute not only to millions of my fellow country people who have fought in the trenches of battle, but all the millions of democrats like yourselves who support us. ”

Jay Naidoo

London 29 November 1993

From apartheid to democracy in South Africa

A Programme of Action for the British Trade Union Movement

Preamble

The British trade union movement has a long history of active campaigning against the apartheid system in South Africa and in solidarity with the non-racial trade union movement and the wider liberation movement.

Two recent developments have required the trade union movement to re-examine the role it can play. Firstly, agreements have now been reached which provide a comprehensive framework for the transition from apartheid to democracy in South Africa. Secondly, the ANC, Cosatu and the democratic movement in South Africa are now calling for the lifting of economic sanctions, in the light of the progress which has been made towards a new democratic order and are committed to a major programme of reconstruction and development.

Moreover the first fundamental step in the process of transition from apartheid to democracy is now on the horizon: South Africa's first non-racial elections are to take place on 27 April 1994.

This Programme of Action has been drawn up on the basis of the deliberations at a Seminar convened by the Trade Union Committee of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, in co-operation with the General Council of the TUC, which took place in London on 29 November 1994 and which was addressed by Jay Naidoo, the retiring General Secretary of the Congress of South African Trade Unions, who outlined Cosatu's perspective on reconstruction and development.

This Programme seeks to provide new guidelines for the trade union movement in Britain so that it can continue to make an effective contribution to this process of transition in South Africa from an apartheid state to a non-racial democracy. Above all, it seeks to provide support and solidarity to the non-racial trade union movement in South Africa as it pursues its objective of the reconstruction and development of South Africa. It is divided into three sections reflecting the key potential areas of solidarity:

I. Countdown to democracy in South Africa

The most urgent and important priority is to mobilise support for South Africa's first ever non-racial elections on 27 April. The British trade union movement can contribute in a number of specific ways:

- Responding generously to the ANC's Votes for Freedom campaign by making direct donations; promoting the campaign amongst their branches and membership; publicising the campaign in their journals; and by promoting the planned National

Voting For Freedom day on 20 April 1994, which is co-sponsored by the Trades Union Congress, when mock polling booths are to be established and workplace collections organised;

- Pressing companies with subsidiaries in South Africa, through collective bargaining mechanisms or otherwise, to ensure the South African employees of such subsidiaries are able to engage in free political activity during the election process. Unions in the retail sector should do likewise, by pressing major retailers which import from South Africa, to secure such undertakings from their suppliers in South Africa.
- Playing an important role in ensuring effective international monitoring of the electoral process, both by pressing the British government to contribute to the initiatives of the UN, the EU and the Commonwealth, as well as sending monitors if required from the trade union movement.
- Contributing to voter education programmes by providing assistance. The Anti-Apartheid Movement has established a special fund entitled 'Education for Democracy in South Africa Fund', to provide a channel for funds to organisations which represent those who have been disenfranchised or otherwise disadvantaged by apartheid, including non-racial trade unions.

2. Economic solidarity: Campaigning after sanctions

The lifting of economic sanctions presents new possibilities for the promotion of economic solidarity with South Africa which can contribute to the programme of reconstruction and development which the ANC and Cosatu have drawn up in order to address the legacies of apartheid. In the words of Jay Naidoo:

"It's a programme that will undertake a fundamental restructuring of society both at the political, economic and social levels and ensure that that society and its institutions serve not just a minority and an elite, as it has done in the past, but serve the interest of the majority of people. The development aspect of the programme, the focus on developing the human potential of all sections of our community, particularly through an emphasis on education and training and a need to address in a form of affirmative action those constituencies and sections of our society that have been disadvantaged in the past."

The trade union movement in Britain can play an invaluable role by seeking to ensure that new patterns of trade and investment between Britain and South Africa are consistent with the goal of a non-racial democracy. Specific ways in which trade unions can assist include:

- **Promoting positive investment programmes:** British trade unionists can make

use of collective bargaining machinery, trade union representation on pension funds etc, to encourage British companies investing in South Africa to do so in a manner which is supportive of reconstruction and development programmes and that they pursue good labour practices. The AAM is preparing guidelines for use by trade unions, local authorities and other corporate investors. In addition, investments in projects such as the Community Growth Fund can also be promoted;

- **Promoting trade relations:** British trade unionists can also make use of similar mechanisms in order to make representations to companies importing from South Africa and to encourage them to ensure that the companies from whom they are purchasing items practice good labour relations. British companies should also be encouraged to export to South Africa in areas which are supportive of reconstruction and development;
- **Supporting human resource development:** There are many initiatives, especially in the field of training and affirmative action, where British trade unions can make a contribution. A number of British trade unions covering specialised services such as fire services, local government services, etc could play a specially important role if traditional white craft unions seek to resist change;
- **Advising on privatisation:** With moves to privatise sectors of the South African economy, British trade unions could play a valuable role in advising sister unions on the experience of privatisation in Britain.
- **Transnational corporations:** Many major transnational corporations operating in South Africa have their headquarters based in Britain. There is a tremendous potential for inter-union co-operation in order for effective pressure to be brought to bear on a range of trade union as well as wider social issues. South African non-racial unions should be encouraged to link up with the Europe-wide trade union co-ordinating structures covering individual companies (eg ICI) which are being established.

3. British/South African trade union co-operation

British trade unions have developed imaginative programmes of co-operation and solidarity with their sister unions in South Africa especially over the past decade. With South Africa, now in the process of transition from apartheid to democracy, these programmes need to be consolidated and new initiatives taken. The key areas of co-operation and solidarity which have been identified include:

- **Co-operation with sister unions:** The most important contribution which British trade unions can make, is to establish effective co-operation with their sister union or

unions in South Africa. If such links do not yet exist, the best means of establishing them is for a union to send a delegation to South Africa or invite a delegation from their sister union to Britain.

Where co-operation already exists at a national level, it can be strengthened and extended through twinning arrangements. The AAM Trade Union Committee is preparing model guidelines to provide a framework for advice by unions.

Co-operation between sister unions in Britain and South Africa provides the cornerstone for specific forms of co-operation and solidarity as outlined below.

- **Trade union education and training:** A major means of support is the provision of programmes of education and training for a sister union in South Africa. Much experience has already been gained in this area, and both the TUC International Department and the AAM Trade Union Committee, can provide guidance and advice. A Case Study based on Unison's support for Nehawu's training programme is available on request.
- **Practical solidarity:** British trade unions may wish to express their solidarity with their sister unions in South Africa by supporting specific projects. Both the TUC and the AAM Trade Union Committee can give unions advice in this area. The TUC has already co-ordinated a major project for providing computer systems and training to Numsa, one of Cosatu's major affiliates.
- **Solidarity action:** Many British and South African trade unionists are ultimately employees of the same multi-national. British and South African trade union counterparts need to establish effective means of communication and information exchange so that they are fully informed of developments within the multi-national. The potential would then exist, therefore, for solidarity action if disputes were to take place.
- **Information and education:** The most successful programmes of co-operation and solidarity between British and South African trade unions have included information activities amongst the membership of both unions, so that they are fully aware of the links. This can provide a valuable means of educating British trade unions on the need for on-going solidarity.

Conclusion

This Programme of Action is intended to provide a framework for the promotion of solidarity between the British and South African trade union movements. It is envisaged that it will be updated and revised in the light of developments in South Africa and that it should also be expanded to embrace a regional perspective which would focus on the needs to support programmes of



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