

to fight the 'boere' who ran the hospital. But eventually they were able to come to an understanding. In the post-apartheid SA, institutions such as Natalspruit was being run by a black woman who had no respect for workers. The union's organiser at the hospital said the internal problems had led to the resignation of a lot of professionals while further staff shortages would ultimately bring the hospital in conflict with the community if service delivery was affected.

Another issue raised related to the speculation of further job cuts across hospitals in Gauteng. A Nehawu official said the ANC 'wants us to vote but at the same time they are threatening job cuts' in some hospitals. This, he said, created problems for the union in its efforts to mobilise people to vote for the ANC. It is understood that a circular was sent by the Gauteng government to a number of hospitals in Gauteng requesting them to develop plans on how they intend cutting current staff by 8%. This is in a context of severe staff shortages in a number of hospitals including Natalspruit and Baragwanath. The Nehawu official said it is understood that the health department had overspent and was looking for ways to cut costs. The union has requested that the circular be withdrawn. The official said that in the face of further job losses the ANC has not been so vocal, during the election process, on how it plans to save jobs.

From Natalspruit the election machinery moved onto a school in the area to address educators. Whilst a relatively large number of educators were present there was little or no discussion from them on the upcoming elections. Does silence mean consent?

# Elections in the Western Cape

## Which way will it go?

*All eyes will be on the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal to see whether the ANC can make further inroads in the upcoming elections. **Tony Ehrenreich** explores some of the dynamics within the Western Cape - including those within the alliance.*

It is 2004, the election date has been announced and everybody is working feverishly for an ANC victory. Cosatu is being taken seriously by the ANC and courted like a new lover; it brings back memories of the days when our partner was loving and faithful to the main motor force of the national democratic revolution. These elections are important because it comes at the end of our first decade in power, a decade of liberation, and an opportunity to celebrate what is indeed a remarkable achievement in the history of our nation.

But it is also a time that we must be frank and honest when proclaiming we have achieved much, but a lot still needs to be done, hence the centrality of the alliance and the ongoing programme of deepening transformation. It is the outcome of ten years of policies that drives home the unfortunate truth that whilst we have been largely successful in changing the political construct in South Africa the



challenge remains to change the economic construct. To ensure the participation and centrality of working families in the economy as the measure of our success. We cannot claim to have concluded the task of liberation if only a small black elite has been taken

up into the mainly white economy, whilst the majority of working families remain marginalised and impoverished.

In 2004 the results will probably be very similar to the 1994 and 1999 elections at a national level, with the ANC securing between 60-66% of the vote whilst the other parties contest the spoils. It is at the level of the provincial government election that there is a fair amount of uncertainty, especially in those provinces not controlled by the ANC. In the Western Cape the polls are starting to gel around the ANC getting between 34-40% of the vote, the DA at 20%, the NNP around 15% and the Independent Democrats at around 10%. This is very different to the outcome of the 1999 elections in which the ANC had 42% of the vote.

*The breakdown of the electorate in the Western Cape is broadly as follows:*

*White voters 22% of the electorate*

*African voters 24% of the electorate*

*Coloureds 52% of the electorate*

The white vote will be shared mainly between the DA and the NNP, with the DA getting the lion's share. The African vote will go to the ANC, the outcome of the elections to a large extent hinges of who wins the so called coloured vote which historically has been the main support base for the NNP, especially from the working class communities. Middle class coloured voters have generally tended to support the ANC. In many instances these voting patterns are not related to the policies of the parties but some latent racism and anti-ANC sentiments.

Ten years of democracy and a lot of work around breaking down racial stereotyping has had an impact on this unfortunate trend. We should be able to secure positive change in what drives people at the polls. The new danger however that is emerging is apathy or a

refusal to vote for any of the parties. As Cosatu we have consistently confronted the question of racism and tried to ensure that it is an issue-based campaign, where people take an informed decision about which party best represents and advances their interests. It is our view that this has led to a significant shift in the voting patterns of working class coloured communities into supporting the ANC. We hope to improve on this in the upcoming elections.

The NNP is a declining party and correctly so, given their sordid past. We are however caught in a dilemma where because of our relationship with the NNP we would like them to gain a significant proportion of support and at least have the kind of numbers at the polls that would secure a continued governing coalition between them and the ANC. The DA is making huge inroads into some of the communities which have been anti-ANC, they are now getting the vote that is moving away from the NNP because of a sense among voters that the relationship with the ANC is too cosy. The DA however is its own worst enemy given the ramblings of its leader Tony Leon, whilst their promise of jobs and support for a basic income grant may have led to some confusion amongst our members, the attack on the labour laws has clearly demonstrated to workers that they cannot be the party that represents our interests. The Independent Democrats are probably the dark horse capable of the most surprises in the Western Cape. Its leader Patricia De Lille has used the question of AIDS and the arms deal to try and expose weaknesses within the ANC, as well as presenting an image of a gutsy fighter. It would seem that along with middle class white support they will get support amongst both coloured middle class communities and sections of the working class.

The coalition in the Western Cape between the NNP and the ANC has brought about some stability and more credible governance. However, we have not started sufficiently to acknowledge and address the huge inequalities that exist amongst the white community in the shadows of Table Mountain and the black community on the Cape Flats in any meaningful way. In some respects this coalition mobilises our members in the election campaign because they feel that a deal has already been done and no matter how hard we work for a victory the deal would not be able to be undone.

Cosatu supports the coalition government but is uncomfortable with the fact that the ANC as the majority party does not lead the coalition, or hold the premiership position. Cosatu is also having a discussion about whether in the event of a coalition government needing to be formed that the NNP is the natural choice. We should as a matter of principle be seeking a coalition with the most progressive party whose policies are closest to our own, this coalition must be crafted together when the result of the elections has been made known.

Cosatu will be focusing on our workplaces in both the metropolitan and rural areas, and this will mainly take the form of member's general meetings at lunch time, which will be addressed by the ANC and Cosatu comrades. Our shop stewards and activists are linked up with the branch election teams. Where they are not active members of the branch they will then play a roll in canvassing. In the rural areas the focus will be on farm workers and the Cosatu locals will lead these campaigns along with the BET's in those areas. Our focus is to reach out and engage all of our members on why it is important to vote for the ANC. This engagement must



ensure that our members are equipped to advance our position in their workplaces and communities.

The focus of the ANC is to mobilise various communities and sectors, here we will ensure our support. The difficulty in the discussion around an election strategy is the ANC's insistence on a targeted approach that essentially excludes communities who had historically voted against the ANC. As Cosatu we have a difficulty with this because we believe that electioneering

and elections are a fundamental part of the democratisation approach and we must engage with our people with the view of extending our hegemony. The second difficulty we have here is that we much prefer an election strategy that ensures our efforts are designed to win the elections, rather than hoping that our opponents would lose the elections. This has been an ongoing philosophical difference between Cosatu, the SACP and the ANC. This however has not detracted from our

commitment to work in the elections. Of critical importance is to ensure that our efforts as the alliance in the elections are not undone by ongoing battles within structures or within the ANC itself.

Election time is always interesting for Cosatu because we have to explain to our members that even though we have disagreements with the ANC with growth, employment and redistribution strategy (Gear) and privatisation the ANC is by far the most progressive party which can advance the interest of working families. Contextualising our support for the ANC becomes a central feature of the Cosatu election campaign. The relationship with the ANC is at an all-time high during the elections because the ANC needs us most, and so takes us seriously. We are caught up in the excitement of a dynamic that was the basis of our powerful movement that many people sacrificed their lives for and will continue to serve with great energy.

The question is when the elections have come and gone and we have worked to secure a victory for the ANC, will we again be ignored, our views on policies ridiculed as being ultra left. We would certainly hope not, but only time will tell. Should the alliance not be able to find expression in government it will be especially ironic given the fact that our slogan for these elections is 'a contract with the people'. The task for all Cosatu and ANC comrades is to swell the ranks of the ANC and drive their policies. The ANC after all is our organisation if it is not serving our purposes we only have ourselves to blame. Forward to an ANC victory, forward.

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