

Flying the flag of a socialist tradition?



A recent article by the BBC News questioned whether the current tensions within the ANC represents a choice between the charismatic, down-to-earth Zuma and the aloof intellectual Mbeki – or whether a clash of ideologies between Mbeki's conservative economic policies and Zuma flying the flag for the ANC's socialist tradition. The *Labour Bulletin* attempts to explore this in light of recent comments made by Zuma.

In a rather amusing turn of events, former deputy president Jacob Zuma gave his opponents in Cosatu and other organisations some ammunition in which to question the federations' continued support. During a recent interview on radio Metro Zuma expressed his support for a strong rand (while Cosatu has been calling for a review of the currency) and indicated that he supported the way in which the economy was being managed. This implied his support for the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (Gear). Unbeknown to Zuma, Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi had sent out a general text message (SMS) to inform people that he was being interviewed on the radio so that they could listen. And listen they did to Zuma's view on the economy much to the embarrassment of Cosatu who then rushed to do some damage control and stated that the federation had never lobbied for his presidency. Rather their position was motivated by the need to defend Zuma on the basis of his innocence until proven guilty.

Zuma's comments on the economy, has led to some speculation as to what are his views on economic policy. Taking an example from Mbeki, an Internet search provided no clear indication of Zuma's position with regard to economic policy and whether he had openly expressed his opposition to Gear. What about his views on some his key responsibilities as deputy president? What were his views on HIV/AIDS, moral regeneration and the second economy? Yet again, an Internet search failed to reveal substantial insight into his views around these areas. Interestingly enough however, Zuma appeared to support Mbeki in 2000 around the question of dissident scientists in

relation to HIV/AIDS. It was reported that Zuma stated that it would be 'fundamentally wrong for the views of dissident scientists, who question whether HIV causes the disease, to be ignored. Speaking in a parliamentary debate, Zuma, who is spearheading the government's anti-AIDS drive, said he believed no scientists had a monopoly on all knowledge about AIDS.'

It is clear that it is not Zuma's policy positions, which is driving his support base within Cosatu or the SA Communist Party (SACP). Individuals in the two organisations not supportive of the stance taken around Zuma remain concerned and unable to understand the origins of the support. As associate sociology professor Devan Pillay argued (see p20) it remains very difficult to understand why Cosatu and the SACP - the 'champions of democratic accountability and the developmental state' continue to associate with a broad alliance of different interest groups supporting Zuma. He argues that Cosatu and the Party are associated with one set of aspirant bourgeois elites against another.

A SACP official who does not believe that Zuma represents the left but acknowledges that 'a wide range of quite different grievances and aspirations' have come together in support of Zuma, 'a Congress traditionalist, with a strong working class/peasant demeanour about him'. Zuma, he argues, contains all the contradictions inherent in the post 1996 Mbeki project. After all Zuma formed part of the Mbeki project with his task being to ensure popular mobilisation. He is now using his support base amongst mass-based movements or the so-called 'masses', built up initially to ensure support for the Mbeki project, to fight back and attack the very institutions he sought to legitimise. LB