

Wedding bells for Fedusa and Nactu?

Hundreds of delegates from Fedusa affiliates will gather on 15 September to debate their future and whether to endorse a resolution, which would signal the go-ahead for the much-anticipated merger with Nactu. The **Labour Bulletin** sets the scene for Fedusa's national conference.

The resolution on trade union unity and the proposed merger with Nactu will dominate proceedings at Fedusa's upcoming national conference, which will be attended by a number of cabinet ministers. There was some speculation as to whether President Thabo Mbeki would attend. However, the new deputy president Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka was to take his place but following a mix up over diaries this might not be possible.

Fedusa general secretary Chez Milani is confident that his affiliates will vote in support of the merger as reflected in an informal survey conducted. He believes a unification process with politically independent unions is happening seemingly on its own. Such a merger could potentially change the face of organized labour, which will be dominated by two power blocs - Cosatu and the merged Fedusa/Nactu.

Sociology Professor Eddie Webster says such a merger would not have been anticipated in the past. Nowadays there is a greater degree of fluidity in the labour movement. Both federations, he says, bring complementary elements to the table - Nactu brings colour while Fedusa brings a professional form of unionism.

Such a merger will not only impact on the labour movement but could also affect representation within the various tripartite labour market institutions such as Nedlac. A former Fedusa official believes that such a merger will put pressure on Cosatu. The issue of the merger was raised in the secretariat report tabled at Cosatu's recent central committee meeting. The secretariat report argued that there was a degree of competition between the three federations while Fedusa and Nactu 'resent the profile of Cosatu and the manner it dominates national and international debates... This fear of domination by a big brother appears to have thrown the two federations closer to one another... Nactu seems to find more accommodation with Fedusa than Cosatu... Leaders of both Nactu and Fedusa boast of a wonderful relationship with the President, with monthly exchanges of telephone discussion and meetings. Cosatu on the other hand has not managed to develop this relationship as reported elsewhere in this report. The question that arises is whether we are beginning to witness the emergence of a 'new worker' divorced from engaging with the political transformation in favour of only focusing narrow workplace issues.

Aside from unity, the conference will consider a range of other resolutions dealing with HIV/AIDS, tax on retirement funds and gender representation. Delegates will also have to deliberate on the election of national office bearers as a number of positions are being contested.

RESOLUTION ON TRADE UNION UNITY

The following is the draft resolution to be debated at the upcoming Fedusa conference on the proposed merge with Nactu.

This Congress noting that

- South Africa needs a strong politically independent and non-aligned labour movement.
- Fedusa is currently the largest politically independent and non-aligned trade union federation in South Africa.
- Nactu is the second largest politically independent and non-aligned trade union federation in South Africa.
- Cosatu is aligned to the SACP and ANC in the Tri-partite Alliance.

And believing that

- Unification between Fedusa and Nactu will bring about a large trade union federation that is properly resourced, administratively efficient and a strong activist for the advancement of worker issues.
- Unaffiliated trade unions will be attracted to join this merged entity.
- Unification of Fedusa and Nactu will be in the best interests of building a stronger South Africa.

We therefore resolve that

- Nactu should merge with Fedusa.
- The merger must be subject to Nactu having sufficient paid up members and no liabilities that will place the new entity at financial risk.
- The new entity should be known as Fedusa/Nactu.
- Fedusa/Nactu should become operational by the 30 January 2006, or as soon thereafter as is practically feasible.
- The National Executive Committee is mandated to oversee and finalise or terminate the merger process, in all respects.