

Whither the enigmatic Cosatu Zuma love relationship

When many thought it was necessary for Cosatu to review its enthusiastic but enigmatic support for Zuma in light of the damning Squires' judgement, we had yet another bizarre manifestation of such support. **Ebrahim Harvey** reviews the CC decision to call on Mbeki to drop the charges against Zuma.

In fact the Squires judgement so seriously implicates Zuma that it has probably irreparably compromised him in the eyes of the broader public, even if he was not dismissed as deputy president of the country by President Thabo Mbeki a few months ago. That Cosatu took such a decision despite this dismissal and the charges brought against Zuma has made their continued support for him even more untenable. Earlier they demanded that if indeed the state has a case against Zuma they should charge him and bring him before a court of law. But when he was charged they wanted the charges against him to be dropped. If they were confident of

Zuma's innocence why make such a preposterous call?

However, whatever happens to Zuma cannot deflect from the troubling question mark that hangs over the inexplicably close relationship between him and Cosatu. The unswerving support Cosatu has boisterously given Zuma demands clear answers which have not been given so far, aside from ongoing and mutating conjecture, innuendo and vagueness.

Furthermore, there are probably more compelling reasons to question the integrity of Cosatu's support for Zuma. For a socialist federation that has a strong stand against corruption and for democratic accountability and transparency Cosatu's support for Zuma was and is intriguing. Nowhere have we seen a strong argument by them for such support, but perhaps most surprising was their support for him to succeed President Thabo Mbeki in 2009 even after the Squires judgement. Is there something about Zuma that we don't know or understand that can explain such support? What has he done to help Cosatu resist and repel the conscious and ongoing attempts by centrist and right wing elements to marginalise them in the ANC alliance? Not once has he publicly supported Cosatu on economic policy, their stance on AIDS and Zimbabwe or when they were attacked as 'ultra-left' by Mbeki. That is what counts, not vague behind-the-scenes talk of support or that he is more 'open' and 'approachable' than Mbeki.

There is no tangible political policy and ideological evidence that distinguished Zuma from the rest of the neo-liberal African National Congress-led government to deserve Cosatu's support. Furthermore, he did not support Cosatu's fight against privatisation and retrenchments in the public sector, which resulted in them losing many thousands of jobs, members and much

of their strength. Besides, his extravagant lifestyle and implicit connivance in acts of corruption with Shaik, which may have fed it, cannot be condoned by a socialist Cosatu. What are Zuma's leftist credentials? That he was once a shop steward? This can hardly be grounds for a leftism that is little more than a populist shell. In fact it was Zuma, as head of government affairs in parliament, who harshly reined in any dissenting ANC MPs and as chairperson of the ANC's deployment committee also reined in critical voices or had them demoted.

It is time for Cosatu to unambiguously state what their support for Zuma is based on how their socialist policies were being advanced by him and why they want him to succeed Mbeki in 2009. For too long have they done little to explain their support for him, when there was as little to justify it. We need a clear and strong explanation and not rhetoric about Zuma's popularity with the 'masses' and a conspiracy within the ANC to discredit him in order that he not succeed Mbeki as president of the country in 2009. Besides, the support of workers does not contain impeccable logic not subject to wider public scrutiny, especially when it appears to contradict their own interests.

Cosatu and their allies must put aside facile racial and conspiracy theories behind the Squires judgement and media coverage of it and instead explain to and enlighten the public on the rationale of their support for Zuma. Instead of peddling leftist illusions about Zuma, Cosatu should build unity with social movements and thereby achieve what their relationship with Zuma cannot. Cosatu's faith in Zuma was and is dangerously misplaced.

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