

Who is really a comrade?

What do we mean by the word 'comrade'? How do we conduct ourselves as comrades with one another? Our first *Organiser's Notes* was written for *COSATU NEWS* in 1989 by COSATU's education officer, KHETSI LEHOKO.

Discipline

We need structural meetings to set goals, evaluate, and practice democracy. There are some who believe if they cannot control a structure, they should not attend meetings. We saw how this paralysed the Wits region in 1986/87. We see how this affected so many locals in 1988.

Democracy

In meetings we practise democracy. To do this well, we need to give mandates and get report-backs. People must feel free to discuss and debate. Everyone has the right to be heard. It is wrong not to listen to someone just because they come from a certain union. It is also wrong to support someone whether they are right or wrong.

Decision-making

There are different styles of decision making:

A clique: this is a small group which moves into an organisation with a position. All those who disagree with the position are isolated. The methods used to iso-

late people can be a smear campaign or destructive criticism. People have a right to hold discussion outside of structures, but whatever they decide does not automatically become a position of a structure. You have to win your position.

Majority decisions: this can also be a problem if the minority did not have a chance to express its position. If an item is raised and quickly passed over, there might be some people who aren't happy. They won't go out and build that decision. But if the procedure is right, if they have a chance to speak, they will feel better about abiding by the majority position.

Consensus: when there are sharp divisions, we must try to compromise. This does not mean that we compromise our principles. It means we are building unity in the organisation. Consensus comes when both sides compromise so that everyone is happy with the decision. Everybody must respect and implement majority decisions and consensus decisions. For example, we have adopted the

Freedom Charter - we must all work to implement it.

Punctuality

Our meetings don't start on time. Why? Organising under repressive conditions needs discipline. Many people find it hard to adapt to repression, because they did not build their discipline when repression was not so bad.

Labelling

People used to talk about 'workerist' and 'populist'. If you didn't feel like arguing against someone's point, you just called them one of these names. Comrades, if political work is trying to influence others, you don't do this by intimidation. We label because we are unable to win others over.

Criticism and self-criticism

Are we able to accept the con-



structive criticism by other comrades? Are we ready to admit mistakes and weaknesses. Constructive criticism means that you must also try to provide a solution. People who just criticise must watch out - you'll end up standing on the sidelines removed from struggle.

Self education

No-one has the monopoly of knowledge. No person has *The Line*. This is what we are challenging in the education struggle - that the teacher has full power over the pupil. Everyone learns - even facili-

tators in seminars. As activists we must not become stagnant, we must develop. If you think you know everything you become stagnant.

Qualities of leadership

Leadership must be honest to the organisation and to ourselves. Other comrades must have no difficulty in approaching you. There must be a collective spirit.

Full-time officials

Full-time workers must be able to discipline one another. We cannot just look at someone's political position when deciding who to employ. We must also look at ability to do the work.

In building an organisation, it does not depend on how many times you recite the Freedom Charter. It has more to do with whether we are servicing members on a day to day basis. ☆



Workers meeting - people must feel free to discuss and debate. Everyone has the right to be heard!

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