

Mandela and deteriorating economic conditions only exacerbated the conditions of extreme poverty for millions of South Africans. COSATU's focus quickly shifted from a central focus on workers rights in the post-apartheid economy to the greater battle of restructuring an entire economic system characterized by gross inequality.(Marx, 1998: 234) The union federations extended their scope of activities and worked further with the ANC to ensure that all policy documents emphasized the need for economic reforms and extensive social programs. When the National Party government ended negotiations with the ANC and other political parties, COSATU organized more mass stay-aways which essentially shut the economy down nationwide and forced the government back to the negotiating table.(Benner, 1995: 2) Jerome Barrett, a former bureaucrat in the Department of Labour notes these accomplishments made by organized labour during this period;

"the trade unions were involved in numerous political activities such as: getting the government to free political prisoners, developing a mechanism to create a new constitution, drafting the new constitution, educating South Africans about government processes and voting procedures, conducting public debate about democratic institutions, aiding in plans for the 1994 election, persuading the United States and other countries to lift the international trade ban, convincing foreign private investors to increase their investments in South Africa and encouraging companies within South Africa to invest more in private development companies."(Barrett, 1996: 4)

Compromise and peaceful negotiation did not always characterize the means by which COSATU and other labour organizations achieved such goals but it is integral to note that these advancements provided an influential example of cooperation among opposition groups. Emerging from a period of intense repression and covert activities, COSATU faced major internal challenges as the federation struggled to organize administrative structures, increase communication systems, consolidate mass support and become self-sufficient without foreign sources to rely on. Nonetheless, the labour movement remained relatively united and kept the population informed and mobilized until the April 1994 elections.

THE SUCCESS OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

The exploitation of cheap black labour was at the heart of the apartheid regime. Spending on healthcare, education and all other social services was discriminatory and Africans could expect to live on average a decade shorter than their white counterpart.(Barrett, 1996: 15) The system of apartheid was also economically inefficient which increased levels of poverty due to a