

SPEECH: T MONTOEDI

DESIGNATION: DEPUTY GENERAL SECRETARY

DATE: 23 FEBRUARY 2013

EVENT: SHOPSTEWARD COUNCIL WESTERN CAPE REGION



Dear comrades, members, and friends

The past year and the present constitute the most difficult period facing NUM after 1987 during the 21 days strike that shook the chamber of mines. Thus while noting that our members are from construction and energy sectors, I would like to focus more on the mining industry given the critical challenges it poses today as I speak.

During 1987 strike the workers were under direct attack launched by the employer in the mining industry .Part of this direct attack saw some of our members die and thousands losing their jobs .It was made possible because mining companies enjoyed the protection of the state. Hence the involvement of police and their brutality in breaking the strike at the time.

Plurality and Peaceful Coexistence

26 years later NUM again has to fight for its survival from a different quarter with more killings of its members dying at the hands of alleged rival union which you know by now. We have had peaceful coexistence with Solidarity, UASA and this shows that we accept plurality .We believe that competition for membership only improves service to workers, including in the case of construction and energy sectors .

Competition for members has actually helped the NUM to improve its service to members. It is crucial in sharpening our mobilization techniques. We don't fear competition but we survive through it .In some instances we have even created a united front with Solidarity and UASA where we share common demands or concerns on working conditions in the mines.

We have made common demands against the employer during collective bargaining processes in the past .Nothing more can elaborate clearly our appreciation of the idea of peaceful co-existence with our rivals. This appreciation goes to all those who want to compete with NUM for members including AMCU .We fear nothing but ourselves, which is our members to whom we owe our existence.

INDUSTRIAL TERRORISM:

But it must be clear that we will reject violence, the strategy of forcing people to join unions through intimidation, through threats, and even killings though we love plurality. Such conduct has nothing to do with peaceful co-existence .Actually the perpetrators of killings or any union rising through such conduct poses a threat to peaceful co-existence.

We know that our members are being maimed, gunned down, and shop stewards not sleeping in their homes ever since a rival union emerged in Rustenburg .Some have seen their relatives being killed who were not working in the mines .Families are on the run for safety and all this is

happening against our members and the question is why? The answer is: we are dealing with the spectra of terrorism .Terrorism is a crime and not an industrial upheaval or labour protest.

Terrorism comes from the French word *terrorisme* .It evolved from the word *terror* .*Terror* means great fear or to frighten. The gunning down of NUM members or anyone who is wearing NUM T-shirt, the destruction of NUM offices in the mines by AMCU members is intended to spread terror in the mining operations. So we are dealing with a state of terrorism and grave crime .It is not an industrial relations matter it is a criminal matter it must be treated as such.

COURAGE AND HOPE

At some point law enforcement agencies will have to take responsibility and bring criminals to book and no one can wish that day away. The day will come and the terrorist will be behind bars. NUM must soldier on to represent our members and not miss sight of the real enemy of the workers .The real enemy of the workers is the employer.

You can't miss the point that in some instances employers prefer a situation where there exist a weakened NUM in the mining industry .NUM has been vociferously calling for mining transformation which mining companies do not like. So a weak NUM will make only noise and have no impact in pushing the transformation agenda aggressively and this will benefit mining capital. Yes, they hope that the issue of family units for miners will end, struggle for zero harm in 2013 will collapse, and de-racialization of the strategic power centers of mining economy will not be threatened anymore.

We must continue to address our members to explain to them the organizational view .So that you are not victims of developing an understanding influenced by newspaper articles .You must be informed by the politics of your organization which is NUM. With this understanding you are then duty bound to defend what you understand which is your union, NUM.

Your ability to fight back requires courage. Ambrose Redmoon once said ***“Courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear”***. Comrades, our members are more important than our fears. Without them the struggle of total emancipation will not reach fruition .Our fear to be killed, our fear that our houses will be bombed, and our fear that terror will be visited upon our families if we don't leave NUM is a figment of our imagination .Ambrose Redmoon`s words is our inspiration everyday every hour.

DEFENDING OUR FUTURE THROUGH SOLIDARITY

We call upon our members to unite and defend the union of their choice not the union in which they are forced to join .We call upon our members in the different unaffected regions to hold ***solidarity meetings*** and join ***solidarity marches*** as a show of force in calling upon the police to enforce the law in the affected areas.

These solidarity actions will put pressure on the police to act decisively on terror and criminality. I expect that this year before May 2013 the Western Cape will initiate and lead a solidarity march in defense of affected members in Rustenburg through true comradeship. It is not impossible comrades you can do it.

SOCIAL DISTANCE

Comrades, we must **not reject** the view that there may have been some social distance between leaders and members particularly in the branches. Where leaders no longer attend to concerns of members in the operations or in the branches. Or where members feel suppressed when they want to raise concerns or dissatisfaction.

The founders of NUM have never intended it to grow into an organization of dictators. The founders of NUM were active revolutionaries and democrats. They fought against exploitation but also joined the liberation movement to contribute in fighting against domination which results in dictatorship and suppression of alternative views. The successors of these founders continue in same spirit. But the current challenges require us to embark on introspection. The best way to retain and grow our membership is through best service to them.

The best way to provide this service is through **force of unity** and respect for each other leader or not leader. We need to build unity and cohesion in the NUM. Where there are concerns or sentiments of dissatisfaction we must attend to that and not isolate those who raise them. This is what will build unity and cohesion amongst us. This will close the social distance between members and leaders.

We are aware that being a leader in the NUM at all levels has brought about privileges. These privileges have created a social distance where leaders no longer serve members but themselves. For example fighting each other rather than fighting for members. This is wrong and it must be condemned.

Fighting for positions and privileges leads to leaders selling out members to the employer and it is therefore dangerous for the union because the union becomes a union of puppets. Where these tendencies develop we must be brave enough to condemn them. If we think we are not getting assistance from the branch when we raise issues, we must escalate the matters to the region. If we think the region is not helpful we must be brave enough to escalate the matters to the head office.

We want to keep you in the organization because NUM is you so we will definitely attend to your frustrations. But don't simply jump the structures I have mentioned and rush to head office. Follow the processes as I have mentioned it. Don't jump out of NUM because you are

frustrated by poor service, communicate through the structures and contact the Office of the General Secretary for assistance as final resort.

CULTIVATING THE CULTURE OF HONESTY AND TRUTHFULNESS

Lenin once said that *“A lie told often enough becomes the truth”*. Today many people have fallen victim to the mentality that NUM is not serving the interest of the members. Others allege that NUM is in bed with the employers .So a lie told often enough becomes the truth.

Comrades, it is not the responsibility of the leadership in Head Office to speak about our successes as a union .Members must speak out about the benefits they enjoy by being associated with this giant union. We must praise our successes, glorify our victories so that there is little space for those who denigrate and talk lies about NUM. It is clear that if we keep quiet people tend to believe in the lies they are told.

I must admit that NUM has not been preaching to the public its successes .Do you know why? We have taken to heart the emphasis by Amilcar Cabral that ‘claim *no issue victories*’. In full, Cabral says *“Tell no lies, claim no easy victories”*. I want to say where lies are told we must preach our victories now in the Western Cape.

TAKING CHARGE NOT WALKING AWAY

Most of you simply give-up when you feel dissatisfied about service in the branches or regions .Talk out the issues .We are not afraid of ourselves and we will attend to the issue if they are organizational and threaten our organization .

If any of your leaders is not providing leadership as expected or is a source of divisions and conflict amongst you , we owe it to the union to raise such matters for attention without fear. When we do that we are *cultivating the culture of honesty* in the organization. We do so not because we hate individuals but because we love the union. No individual is bigger than the organization .Individuals come and go but the organization remains.

NUM must remain intact to serve the interest of our children and generations to come and we must build and protect and defend it now .We must not be like DR Frankenstein who created a monster he could no longer control.

Nigel Hamilton says *“Cultivate honesty about oneself and the quality of one's work. Over self-criticism can be debilitating, but insufficient self-criticism is the handmaiden of mediocrity and, often, failure”* .Comrades we should not fail to defend NUM so a balanced self critique is a necessary evil to our existence as NUM members and NUM leaders

2ND PHASE OF TRANSITION

Comrades, 2013 marks the centenary of the 1913 Native Land Act .This act was the epitome of the land dispossession of the indigenous people who were forcefully removed from land and their right to land taken away. This process led many of the African people to go to mines as migrants .Ever since they have lived in squalor conditions characterized by poor wages in the mining industry.

We must support increased taxes in the mining industry , push for the building of family units and access to education , skills and training .We must support the calls for more state involvement in the economy .The mining economy can not be truly transformed to serve the poor and working class without us . The attacks on NUM by rivals is intended to weaken us to fail in changing mining economy .We will resist! We will do all legally plausible to reclaim our leading position in the industry.

Our struggle is not limited to the shop floor; our struggle is about the means of production and the land. We must support all initiatives by government to stabilize the mining industry without us as NUM being compromised

We support centralized bargaining for platinum sector. We are fully aware that companies in this sector prefer **company –by-company arrangements and this is recipe for disaster** .We support the peace accord initiated by Minister Susan Shabangu which has been signed by all stakeholders except AMCU.In peace we know we will prevail as NUM.

RISE AND DEFEND THE JOBS RISE! RISE AND DEFEND NUM RISE!

RISE AND DEFEND THE JOBS RISE!

FORWARD WITH SOLIDARITY MARCHES FORWARD!

DOWN WITH TERRORISTS DOWN!

AMANDLA!

I THANK YOU ALL