



**Speech by FEDUSA President Godfrey Selematsela**  
**2019 Leadership and Collective Bargaining Conference**  
**Building Workers Power: Changing the Rules**  
**Garden Court OR Tambo Hotel**  
**2 Hulley Road Isando Kempton Park Gauteng**  
**7 – 8 March 2019**

**The Programme Director**

**The Fedusa National office bearers**

**The Acting General Secretary**

**Presidents from our affiliates**

**Secretaries and Chief Executive Officers**

**Invited Guest**

**Fedusa Staff**

**Ladies and Gentleman**

**All Protocol Observed**

**Comrades and friends**

Allow me to express my gratitude for the opportunity to deliver the Fedusa opening address for the Collective Bargaining Conference. We meet here today to discuss issues that are intended to promote the welfare of our members, equally so we must be delighted that our country's President, H.E. President Ramaphosa is Co-chairing the global commission on the future of work at the ILO. It is pleasing that last week from 01<sup>st</sup> march 2019 the president launched the

future of work global commission 's report and the centenary celebrations for 100years of ILO existence Globally and 60 years of existence if Africa. The new forces are transforming the world of work. The transitions involved call for decisive action, as labor we must seize the moment and reinvigorate the social contract.

Despite formal commitments by both government and business to save current jobs and put a moratorium on retrenchments at the Presidential Jobs Summit in October last year, up to 30 000 public servants might find themselves with no choice but to accept the so-called early retirement packages as announced by the Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech in February.

Thousands more workers are threatened with retrenchments in the mining and manufacturing industries. To say these developments will have devastating impacts on the workers, their families, FEDUSA and the broader organized labour movement is to state the obvious. Less obvious but equally devastating is the fact whatever traces of whatever trust existed between ourselves as organized labour and government and business going into the Jobs Summit has been broken, hopefully not irretrievably so. It is against this background and context that the theme of this Conference: Building Workers' Power: Changing the Rules is a fitting framework for grappling with the task before us, that of changing the rules of engagement and rebuilding workers power by responding strategically to the challenges facing the union movement in South Africa today.

In building workers' power and changing the rules of engagement, the tasks before us are many and varied. Firstly, colleagues do we meekly turn the other cheek and accept Minister Tito Mboweni's so-called early retirement and natural attrition packages for our colleagues in the public service or do we demand that any action by the state as an employer that materially affects our members should solely be ventilated within the confines of the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Chamber and not outside it?

Secondly, the large scale retrenchments threatened by Anglo, Lonmin and other mining houses that might see our members in these companies lose their jobs require that we demand the reinstatement of Training Lay-off Schemes without any further delay.

Thirdly, the coal industry, which is the main mode of electricity generation in our country and employs thousands of workers, many of whom are FEDUSA members; cannot be replaced willy-nilly by renewable energies without just transition plans negotiated with labour have been put firmly in place.

Fourthly, the rules for bailing out ailing SOEs and the criteria for investing hard earned workers' pension money housed in the Public Investment Corporation (PIC) need to change immediately with the fully participation of labour. In view of recent developments, some of which directly affect us FEDUSA, the PIC can no longer be given carte blanche to jeopardize workers' pensions by throwing money into dodgy deals.

Last but not least, the 4th industrial revolution will introduce profound changes in our workplaces, especially through the replacement of manual tasks by digitized and automated processes that will threaten many jobs unless our members are re-skilled appropriately to take advantage of new technological opportunities.

Colleagues, in order for us to be able to respond successfully and strategically to all these challenges that I have mentioned, it is worth our while to equip ourselves theoretically by revisiting some of the frameworks of power that are available to workers. Social scientists speak of structural/economic, associational, institutional and societal as forms of power that as labour we can use to protect and advance our interests.

Structural or economic power is the main source of worker power and originates from the relationship of mutual dependency between the worker and the employer at the workplace.

### **Structural/Economic Power**

According to Brinkmann (2008), worker economic power is exercised primarily through collective bargaining, is disruptive in nature and is mobilized through industrial strikes, sit-ins and a trade union's general refusal to continue working when employers fail to meet their wage demands and other conditions of employment.

### **Associational Power**

Associational power arises when workers unite to form trade union or workers' associations (Brinkmann and Nachtwey, 2010: 25) and in contrast to structural power requires organisational instruments such as Recognition Agreements to be in force at the Workplace and the emergence of union leaders who are capable of producing and executing strategies (Silver, 2003: 13ff.).

### **Institutional power**

Brinkmann and Nachtwey (2010) define institutional power as favourable labour laws and progressive pension fund rules that exist as a result of workers' struggles that used a combination of structural power and associational power.

### **Societal power**

According to social scientists, societal power we mean the latitudes for action arising from viable cooperation contexts with other social groups and organisations, and society's support for trade union demands. The exercise of societal power is essentially a question of the ability to assert hegemony, that is to say to generalise the political project of the trade unions within the prevailing power constellation so that society as a whole adopts it as its own. This entails a deliberate departure from the level of the workplace and opening up the trade union's social environment as a battlefield (Ganz, 2000: 146f.; Lévesque and Murray, 2013).

*In conclusion*

*We here today as leaders from different affiliates, and we have taken the responsibility to lead our organization, and we must lead effectively and efficiently by leading by example in complying with our constitutions. We must display servant leadership so as we address the cadres that will take our organizations forward in the future.*

*Thank you  
Ke a lebga*

*Baie dankie*



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