

To be a **winning** nation or not to be ...



South Africa is desperate to be a "winning nation". This was no more evident than the way in which millions of South Africans united to cheer for Bafana Bafana during the recent Soccer World Cup. South Africans, from all walks of life, have been glued to their television sets in the hope of seeing the South African team winning. The ever-patriotic Cosatu even cut short a weekend meeting (to discuss the divisions in the public sector unions and their approach to public service restructuring) to watch Bafana Bafana play its first game.

This desire to see the country achieve and excel in the field of sport is not always evident in other areas. There are clear differences between various constituencies on how to take the country forward. Hence, calls for tough choices to be made to become a "winning nation" are not always welcomed or accepted. It is not only the tough choices that are questioned (as to whether they will achieve the desired outcome) but also the concept of a "winning nation" and who ultimately wins.

Differences over transforming the South African economy and society, raises some fundamental questions as to the link between consultation and

being a winning nation and whether the two are synonymous. Everyone agrees in the abstract to consultation on key areas of policy so as to put the economy on a potential growth path. However, the reality is often different. Labour argues that business and government think they can make better decisions without labour because it has no capacity. The recent public hearing on the dti's proposed integrated manufacturing strategy (IMS) surprisingly reflected a lack of capacity in business to engage. The parliamentary committees expressed their disappointment over businesses failure to use the process to engage properly. Business has the resources to bring in the necessary capacity. Does its failure to do so imply that perhaps it is not a priority?

This edition focuses extensively on the IMS as part of an attempt to broaden debate between key decision makers in labour, government and business. This is after all the new focus of the dti – to ensure proper engagement, debate and for all "stakeholders to contribute new and innovative solutions to the challenges outlined in the document." On the surface, the dti's position differs from the approach adopted by the

department of environmental affairs and tourism (deat) in its handling of the plastic bag dispute. Deat could argue that it has consulted on this issue but this has not led to a meeting of the minds. The complex issues surrounding the plastic bag dispute are explored in an article by Ceppwawu's Bengeza Mthombeni.

Differences have also emerged around other key areas of policy relating to privatisation and the restructuring of the public service. On the face of it Cosatu "lost" out on the privatisation strike. But elements in labour believe that it forced government to accept that it could not continue in the way it was without bringing labour on board. What remains unanswered is whether social dialogue will help contribute towards South Africa achieving its desire of being a winning nation.

Remaining on the theme of "winning nations", some of you might have noticed that the bulletin has been undergoing a face-lift. Comments on the new format, in the spirit of true engagement, would be welcomed and can be sent to salb@icon.co.za.

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