

ADDRESS TO THE POPCRU 24th ANNIVERSARY GALA DINNER

05 NOVEMBER 2013

ST GEORGE HOTEL - CENTURION



Programme Director
Representatives from the Alliance
Government officials including representatives from the South African
Police Service, Department of Correctional Services and the Department of
Transport.
Members of the POPCRU CEC
The National Executive Committee of POPCRU
Delegates from the POPCRU Group of Companies
Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media....

It has been 24 years indeed since the inception of this giant organization which has brought change for many workers in the Police Service, Prisons and Traffic Department. Tonight we celebrate the triumphs, we celebrate the many times we rose again after we were engulfed by challenges and we celebrate the thousands of men and women who make POPCRU what it is, a great union in its own league of glory.

Comrades; we have transformed from being an organization that represented a Black members of the security services when the union was formed in 1989. Many of us remember that time like it was yesterday, when it was hard and almost impossible to be a police officer in this country as you faced the ruthless might of the Apartheid government and hatred from the black communities we were expected to service. POPCRU came along during a critical time and offered many of us hope in a country that did not consider our human rights to be paramount in the workplace. The journey to where we are today has been very hard and many who were there since the beginning like our founding President, Gregory Rockman sacrificed a lot in the interest of a democratic Criminal Justice cluster.

I stand here before you, rather grateful that I am a part of the story of how we arrived to this point. A few months ago we were at an International Police Symposium in Zambia, where we had to take a trip into memory lane, sharing with the comrades over there the struggles we encountered when we expressed the intention to unionise members of the security cluster to the government at the time. We told them that the road wasn't paved for us and we were often stripped of everything we had and our jobs threatened because we wanted to organise workers and ensure that their rights are recognised by employers.

In 24 years we have managed to grow our membership to over 160 000. This in comparison to the 30 000 membership base we had in the first 5 years since establishment. In 24 years, police officers in this country have in their majority chosen POPCRU to be their number one labour union and so have employees of the Department of Correctional Services and Traffic Department. We are creating jobs for many South Africans at both our offices and through the POPCRU Group of Companies. Despite the many awards we have received throughout the years for the work we do, there is no greater reward than the knowledge that we are positively contributing to the success of this country. Our functions are limited to the statutes of the country. Our members serve an important role in society, which is why we are hell-bent on ensuring their well-being so that they can serve the country as happy and productive employees.

In 24 years we have acquired five buildings across the country which houses our offices. Our members have access to our offices in every province which is certainly a great asset to them. This is just the beginning as we seek to broaden our base in ensuring that our members can get the services they need at just a click of a button from anywhere in the country.

Today we celebrate together with leaders from the Tripartite Alliance. We would not be here if it was not for the assistance we received from all three organisations and that is why no matter how much we grow, our roots will always be embedded in the ANC, SACP and COSATU. We appreciate the

guidance and wisdom we receive often times from the alliance and know that we have a permanent home in you.

Given the difficulties that we faced in the past ahead of making the strides that we have made, these 24 years are a worthy celebration. Despite having being founded in 1989, it was only in 1993 that authorities in our different departments recognised us as a functional stakeholder in labour relations. We therefore adopted the motto “Justice for All” in order to drive the ideological principle of the union that indeed we exist in order to fight for justice for all workers in the security cluster. We are still governed by our fighting principles which help us to remain focused on what is important to our members. When we say “a POPCRU member is our priority” we mean this in the strongest terms possible because we are grounded in that understanding.

In 24 years, ladies and gentlemen – we have grown into an incredible organization that seeks to always serve its members with excellence. We have created modern-day cutting edge systems that increase the efficiency of the organization and we have no doubt fulfills the needs of our members timeously. The constitution that guides us is still central to all our structures and we are truly impressed by the harmonious spirit of unity that reigns amongst us.

POPCRU has also recently affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), a step which has strengthened our presence internationally. We are honoured to be recognized elsewhere in the world for the work that we are advancing in our journey to ensure that we consolidate working class power within the Criminal Justice. We are happy to have reached this milestone and look forward to 24 more years of success and unity within the organization.

I thank you.

Amandla!