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The Interests Of The Workers And Landless Peasants Shall Be Paramount

COVID-19 AND ANTI-CAPITALIST STRUGGLES: TOWARDS AN EMERGENCY PLATFORM FOR WORKING PEOPLE

The COVID-19 pandemic, a virulent and lethal infection of a person's respiratory tract, is real. Globally, this pandemic has already infected more than 1300 000 people and claimed the lives of over 74,000 – statistics that are unevenly spread across countries! It is highly uncertain when the global and local new COVID-19 infections and fatalities will begin to fall and stop completely.

Around the first week of March 2020, South Africa reported fewer than 10 positive tests of travellers who had returned from Europe. Two weeks after these initial cases, the numbers of travellers entering the country from abroad who tested positive for COVID-19 multiplied six-fold. In response to this explosion of imported cases, the state hastily imposed travel bans from countries where the pandemic was spreading like a wild fire. Coupled with the travel bans from the 'high-risk countries', government also prescribed quarantine and self-isolation for people with mild symptoms or who have had close contact with COVID-19 patients. Despite these panaceas, the numbers of COVID-19 patients quickly leaped over 1600 as healthcare workers struggle to trace, test and isolate symptomatic individuals.

Accurate information about local transmissions and spinoff viral infections became difficult in the weeks preceding the 21 days lockdown, decreed two days after Human Rights Day. Tracing and testing, so crucial to block the spread of COVID-19 infections started overwhelming South Africa's broken public health system, crippled by austerity and the irrational privatisation of the healthcare industry – including health research laboratories. This neoliberal offensive is not only devastating South Africa's broken healthcare system. The global scramble for test kits, basic protective wear for healthcare workers, ventilators to keep COVID-19 sufferers in intensive care alive and the lack of a vaccine attest to the neoliberal destruction of access to health on a global scale.

COVID-19 spreads in similar ways as other respiratory infections like influenza and tuberculosis – through the invisible droplets from the cough or sneezing of an infected host.

COVID-19 droplets can live on door handles and other contaminated surfaces for a few hours or several days. Touching any contaminated surface and thereafter touching your face inadvertently transfers the virus to you. According to health experts, people with some chronic illnesses and the elderly are acutely vulnerable to become COVID-19 victims. Unlike influenza and TB, COVID-19 is far more dangerous mainly because of the lack of natural antibodies to it, the nonexistence of vaccines to immunise humans against the virus and treating severely ill patients with ventilators now confront enormous availability and affordability crises.

Confronting South Africa's 21 Day Lockdown

Ramaphosa's anti-COVID-19 lockdown follows the principles and logic of how states subservient to capitalism counter economic and other disasters. It is a template to safeguard corporate profits and capitalist domination, enforced by fully armed military and police forces. First, the state reinforces the leadership of the capitalists in the design and execution of the anti-disaster measures, bolstering corporate balance sheets with state funds and sureties. Second, they force workers to pay the costs of the COVID-19 crisis and economic slump. Government's reliance on the labour relations framework of the bosses to "protect workers' rights and compensate them for lost wages" during this crisis does the direct opposite in reality: it insidiously attacks the working class and their families.

Physical distancing and prohibitions on large gatherings make the advancement of anti-capitalist struggles in the chokehold of COVID-19 very complicated. But this physical confinement should not and does not ban prosecuting anti-capitalist struggles by other means, starting with defeating the despair and socio-political paralysis now spreading with COVID-19. This health crisis merely compels us to seek new alternative ways to build the self-confidence of anti-capitalist movements. Instead of mass rallies and face-to-face meetings which are reckless and fatalistic tactics while this health disaster rages – ➔

➡ use costless and cheap phone networks to communicate with people outside your home. Gains of past struggles must not be given up in the battles to defeat COVID-19.

As society combats the spread of COVID-19, APDUSA fights at the forefront to uphold and defend the interests of workers and peasants to counter the impact of this viral disease on their working conditions and quality of life, including their social wellbeing. Anti-capitalist movements need an emergency platform to combat the free fall in the living standards of the labouring majority as a result of COVID-19 and the economic slump. Expose and oppose the machinations of the bosses and their state to impose the costs of fighting COVID-19 on the workers and peasants.

Defend and support workers in ‘essential sectors’ at the forefront of fighting COVID-19.

Regulate the hours of work without wage cuts and ensure working conditions that protect the health and safety of these workers. Every worker in these sectors deserve adequate training combined with necessary protective wear to prevent COVID-19 infection. Measures to quickly upscale the production of the best quality protective wear for essential sector workers must include reorienting factories most suitable to overcome the shortages. This includes mass production of crucial health equipment to scan for fever symptoms and radically upscale reliable COVID-19 testing. Lessons from history show that the best way to do this is through the socialisation of factories, distribution outlets and essential services on the principles of democratic workers’ control.

No worker combating the spread of COVID-19 by ‘observing the lockdown’ must sacrifice any socioeconomic benefits.

Wages of workers temporarily laid off to slow the spread of this virulent disease must be fully covered by accumulated corporate profits and reserve funds rather than a worker’s saved unemployment insurance or injury benefits. In fact, these workers are neither unemployed nor physically injured and must not carry the costs of this societal health crisis. Companies bankrupted by the owners must be nationalised and affected workers must be eligible for full state support until the worker finds a suitable job, including reskilling assistance.

Rapidly upscale the distribution of nutritious foods and healthcare products to needy communities without endangering people’s health and lives.

Stringent action against businesses that inflate prices of foods and essential health items (like sanitizing gels, etc.) must go hand-in-hand with free access to water in all working class communities. The COVID-19 crisis once again exposes the irrationality of private profit accumulation which is behind soaring prices of health equipment, medication, food, communication and transportation services during this crisis. To defeat COVID-19 these items and services should qualify for a 100% subsidy. Democratic economic planning is crucial to produce and distribute these necessities on the vast scale needed, including an inventory of idle establishments that can quickly be converted for this purpose.

Share the best available and easy-to-understand information about COVID-19 and how to combat it with everyone.

Scale-up the publication and circulation of evidence about the struggles of workers in essential service sectors, neighbours in need of urgent care, any abuse by the armed forces, the best scientific evidence about COVID-19, etc. It is urgent for trade unions and social movements to wealthy telecommunications corporations to implement charge-free airwaves for frequent communication and use of social media in social solidarity struggles against COVID-19. Progressive media outlets like Workers World Media Productions and journalists in their network have a crucial role to advance this working class emergency platform against COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a societal health crisis and defeating it demands the broadest possible socio-political solidarity and struggle against it.

There is now abundant evidence that private corporations and their governments cannot be entrusted to defeat COVID-19 on behalf of the labouring majority because they protect their self-interests and insatiable greed first and foremost. The economic, ecological and political dimensions of this health disaster call for united action from the broadest possible network of progressive organisations; it calls for self-organisation. Trade unions, community social movements and anti-capitalist political organisations must use resources at their disposal to socialise the anti-COVID-19 campaign. Mobilise our collective capacities to unite more progressive forces around this emergency platform to strengthen social solidarity and defend the interests of the labouring majority.

**BROADEN THE ANTI-COVID 19
CAMPAIGN IN THE INTERESTS OF THE
LABOURING MAJORITY**

**FIGHT FOR DEMOCRATIC ECONOMIC
PLANNING!**

**THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKERS AND
LANDLESS PEASANTS SHALL BE
PARAMOUNT**

HEALTHCARE WORKERS OF THE WORLD UNITE AND FIGHT

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has truly brought out the best of humanity and exposed the immorality of the capitalist system. Since the outbreak in December 2019 we have witnessed the heroism of healthcare workers in fighting the disease across the world. We pay tribute to those who have paid the ultimate price and salute those who continue to put their own lives at risk to fight the spread of the disease and to provide life-saving services to treat the sick in clinics, hospitals and their homes.

The outbreak of the pandemic has also exposed the elevation of profit above human life by greedy capitalists. This is in a sector of society which is supposed to place the value of human life above all else. The entire health care industry is being run on the principles of private business, which is supposed to make a profit, rather than the provision of a basic human right.

The health industry has known for decades the impact coronaviruses can have on humans. Pharmaceutical companies have, especially in the wake of the 2008 world financial crisis, however refused to do significant research into the development of vaccines against coronaviruses. This is despite the devastating effects of previous outbreaks. In the period September 2012 to November 2019, 2494 cases of infection with the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-Cov) were reported. 858 deaths in 27 countries were recorded in the same period. After these outbreaks receded there was simply no more profit to be made from developing vaccines and serious research by pharmaceutical companies came to an abrupt halt. If research continued into developing vaccines for those coronaviruses the world would have been better prepared to develop and roll out a vaccine against the SARS-CoV-2 virus which causes the COVID-19 disease.

It became evident that severely affected countries simply cannot provide healthcare for the majority of its citizens. Their healthcare systems have been drastically weakened due to annual decreases in government spending on health. Wealthy

people in those countries have for some time now opted to take out private healthcare. The vast majority have however been forced to depend on fragile healthcare systems. While the virus affects rich and poor alike, only the rich are able to afford quality private healthcare, while the labouring classes are made to wait in line for treatment.

As at 8 April 2020 the official worldwide infection rate surpassed the 1.4 million mark and the number of deaths exceed 78,000. An increasing number of healthcare workers who are at the frontline of fighting the disease are becoming infected and have made the ultimate sacrifice. *Business Insider* of 4 March 2020 indicated that nearly 3,400 Chinese healthcare workers were infected and 13 have died. On 18 March *Al Jazeera* online reported that at least 2,629 healthcare workers have been infected by the coronavirus since the outbreak in Italy in February. The *Mail Online* of 3 April reports that this figure increased to 6,205 and more than 60 doctors have lost their lives.

South African Health Workers' Fight-back

In South Africa the number of people who have tested positive for COVID-19 by 8 April have exceeded the 1,700 mark and 13 people have died as a result of the virus. The Minister of Health, Dr Zweli Mkhize announced on 28 March 2020 that a total of 13 healthcare workers have been infected. On 31 March the disease also claimed the life of world renowned scientist and HIV-AIDS activist, Professor Gita Ramjee.

These figures paint a grim picture of the devastation caused by COVID-19 and the plight of healthcare workers. Hospitals and clinics have for years been understaffed and underfunded. Hospitals and clinics could become new epicentres of spreading the disease as more people who are infected seek medical healthcare. With healthcare workers already having to work long hours under extreme pressure, the risk of infection becomes greater. There is also a huge shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE), and no indication that sufficient ➡

➔ supplies will be made available in the short term.

In addition to poor working conditions, healthcare workers also have to face the repression of the state machinery. The *Daily Maverick* reported on 3 April that two doctors in Limpopo who were in self-isolation were forcefully removed from their house and placed in quarantine in a state hospital. After testing positive for COVID-19 they followed the national protocol to self-isolate. However, the MEC for Health accused them of bringing the virus into Limpopo province from Mpumalanga where they work. She obtained a court order forcing them to be detained in a provincial quarantine facility. On 31 March *Times Live* reported that two nurses who work at Bongani Regional Hospital in Welkom were injured when police shot them with rubber bullets. The incident took place when nurses were protesting about arrangements to transport them during the lockdown period. As with Marikana, the state prefers to repress workers' legitimate demands. Workers are left with no choice but to resist and fight back.

All healthcare workers demand:

- **Free public transportation;**
- **Personal protection equipment;**
- **Sufficient training in the use of personal protection equipment to prevent infection;**
- **Reduction of their working hours without a reduction in their wages.**

Healthcare workers reject with contempt the government actions that neglect these

necessary requirements for workers to do their work. Workers are not willing to be sacrificial lambs who are expected to make a dysfunctional health system appear to be functional.

- **Labour legislation and regulations must be changed to provide for adequate health facilities and sufficient healthcare workers, to provide progressive healthcare in South Africa.**

The systematic cuts in healthcare budgets, as part of state austerity measures are directly responsible for the parlous state of healthcare in SA. Healthcare workers – through their representative organisations – must have their demands incorporated in all healthcare legislation.

- **Democratically elected Worker Committees must urgently combine forces with trade unions in all workplaces. Together they must**
- **Agitate for decent and appropriate working conditions**
- **Establish linkages with progressive community and political organisations**

The struggles of healthcare workers cannot be fought in isolation. The fragmentation in the trade union movement must be countered through unity in struggle. Independent, self organisation of healthcare workers is important for the struggles of all workers and peasants in SA.

COVID-19: EXPOSING THE LIES OF CAPITALISM

The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the inability of Capitalism to solve the problems of humanity. The responses of most of the Western democracies, who are also the ardent practitioners and advocates of this economic system, have fallen gravely short of protecting the majority of their citizens. In contrast they have bent over backwards to appease business at the dire expense of workers, who risk not just infection for themselves, but their families too. These governments argue that the economy should run as normally as possible and disruption to their profits should be curtailed. This curtailment includes: that workers must go to work with the bosses taking responsibility for the provision of workplace hygiene, self-isolation, minimizing physical contact, following an immune boosting diet and washing of your hands with soap and water or using hand sanitizer. Almost all of these

measures pose a serious problem to our poor working class who have been fighting since 1994 for proper service delivery, access to clean running water, proper refuse removal and waste management, proper jobs, decent housing, a reliable public transport system and proper health care, amongst others. Meanwhile, the moneyed classes have the luxury of stockpiling essential goods, private health care, home schooling and most can work online from home. The really wealthy can comfortably live off their investments. In stark contrast, the working class, due to their inability to access the above requirements to survive the pandemic must once again bear the brunt of this crisis.

The western democracies have also spread some serious lies about their inability to help the poor to effectively survive this pandemic. One of the major lies exposed is that a privatized ➔

➡ economy is the answer to all our socio-economic woes. Britain is now facing a serious economic crisis with their private healthcare system being too costly for the working class as well as proving inadequate for the treatment of the geometrically growing numbers of infected. Their privately run public transport system is another casualty of this COVID-19 war as both local and international travel have severely declined. Like the financial sector in 2008, these private companies are now asking for bailouts from their government to the tune of billions of pounds in lost revenue. Spain has also seen the dreadful shortcomings of its privatized healthcare system and was forced to temporarily nationalize its healthcare system.

Another major lie is that the economy should run normally to minimize the resultant socio-economic impact of COVID-19. The truth is that the capitalist economy must be kept alive at all costs. This is the self-same economy that generates extreme wealth for a few billionaires (1% of humanity) at the expense of the poor working class, who either languish in dire poverty or slave daily for a mere pittance. This is an economy that produces tons of non-essential toys for the rich. Where it does produce essential goods like food, these are sold at a profit and thereafter, if unsold, is dumped to keep prices artificially high; this, while millions die of starvation! This is a system that denies millions of people lifesaving health care simply because they cannot afford it. This is a system that evicts millions of people from their homes in the face of homelessness for hundreds of millions! This is a system that punishes the real producers of wealth

in the factories, mines and farms with meagre slave wages while the rich accumulate scandalous wealth, which they gamble with on the global stock markets.

Another blatant lie is that the capitalists cannot afford to let workers stay at home. According to an article on the internet that refutes this claim: “South African companies listed on the JSE have performed exceptionally well over the past few years, with the 25 largest companies now worth over R10 trillion, combined.” [*Business Tech, 16 March 2017*]

And:

The top executives’ earnings on the JSE are even more incredulous: “Together, the top twenty executives own more than R280 billion in shares – about R50 billion more than the market capitalisation of Vodacom. Their share investments are also worth more than South Africa spends *a year on* all social grants (R259 billion), which are paid to 16.5 million individuals, and far more than the country’s total healthcare budget (R205 billion). [*Helena Wasserman, Business Insider SA July 30, 2018 Author’s emphasis*]

These startling facts give a clearer picture of the real situation that the working class is facing. The country can easily utilize private funds to secure the health and safety of the bulk of the population. Moreover, they can afford to let the workers stay at home for at least a month at full wages. But they are not prepared to do so as this system is based on the private accumulation of capital. Simply put, the wealth of the individual comes before the needs of the majority. ●

THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS’ ADVENTURES IN PERSPECTIVE

The second elective congress of the Economics Freedom Fighters (EFF) that took place in mid-December 2019 once again displayed the party’s Janus-faced politics. What, it might be asked, is a Janus-faced political party or politician? With its origins in Greek-Roman mythology, it refers to a two-faced monstrosity that looks in opposite directions at the same time.

Even though their December 2019 congress was advertised as a National People’s Assembly, it was anything but a genuine assembly of the people for the people. Restricted to EFF devotees, it was in effect a grandstand for its Commander-in-Chief, Julius Malema, to hurl insults and marching orders at more than 3000 provincial party delegates. It is unclear how scandals about ghost membership, fake branches and

other irregularities that plunged the proceedings into chaos got resolved. Do we need better illustrations of two-faced politics in action?

Popular EFF slogans that hide what the party really stands for are masterpieces of its duplicity. Its self-promotion includes endless streams of Facebook, Twitter and website postings to mislead the uninformed. To understand the two-faced politics of the EFF it is necessary to look beyond its social media rhetoric and ad hoc stunts to grab news headlines. It is crucial to question the logic of EFF statements, particularly how its deeds contradict its words, to strip away its radical leftist posturing. The spectacles at this EFF congress, its typical parliamentary antics and historical roots in the ANC shed light on what the adventures of the EFF mean for the ➡

➔ real struggle of the working people against capitalism.

Flaunting of money and wealth overshadowed the EFF congress and stand in stark opposition to the so-called “working class image” which it attempts to drape itself in and portray. The exorbitant costs of the congress and business holdings of some of its prominent members raise many questions. What kind of party can splurge more than R32m on the luxurious travel and accommodation of so-called VIP conference guests and then proclaim itself a party for working people? More importantly, who are the shady financiers of the lavish spending that the EFF leaders indulge in so commonly?

Wealth accumulation by the black elite is not foreign to the EFF. On the contrary, the party actively promotes *Black Elite Enrichment* as repeated in its 2019 election manifesto, among other EFF policy statements. It sloganeers against ‘white monopoly capital’ and calls for the transfer of economic wealth ‘from the few to the many’ that will ‘give black people real ownership’. This rhetoric echoes what we hear from the aspirant black bourgeoisie determined to enrich itself at the expense of the working class and landless peasants. Are black capitalists like Patrice Motsepe, Tokyo Sexwale, Tito Mboweni and Cyril Ramaphosa not operating according to laws of profiteering, exploitation and dispossession intrinsic to capitalism?

Hopes that the EFF faith in wealth accumulation by black elites will be broken by the enlarged ‘Central Command Team’ that emerged out of its 2nd elective congress are pipedreams of ‘left entry-ists’ without consistent programmatic principles. For it is impossible to overlook the fact that infighting that has plagued the EFF leadership since its inception has always

been about retaining Malema-evangelists and brutally axing dissidents. The election of Marshall Dlamini, a wealthy business tycoon and EFF MP, to the position of Secretary General, epitomises this EFF routine.

Besides this opportunistic enlargement of the EFF leadership to 40 disciples, the congress also geared the party for its 2021 local government election campaign. Unsurprisingly, the December congress also celebrated the EFF electoral gains in the 2019 national and provincial ballot. Increasing its number of votes from 1,1 million in 2014 (6.35% of all votes cast) to 1,8 million in 2019 (10.79%) enabled the EFF to almost double its seats in the National Assembly to 44 members of parliament. This begs the question: what has the EFF accomplished beyond stunts to disrupt parliamentary proceedings for some self-serving publicity?

These stunts coupled with its ad hoc alliances with the Democratic Alliance and ANC are in line with its “readiness and preparedness to govern on behalf of the people.” (EFF 2019 Election Manifesto) What does it mean to ‘govern on behalf of the people’? If one ignores the patronising arrogance of this EFF ambition, then it amounts to relegating the oppressed and exploited to spectators to the spectacles of the EFF, the self-appointed leaders of voters. It is an insidious ploy to mislead working people away from the necessity of programmatic struggle and principled self-organisation. Furthermore, it betrays the deep ideological subservience of the EFF to bourgeois liberalism (‘liberal representation’) and how its adventures subvert the importance of revolutionary parliamentary strategies to advance the anti-capitalist struggle. •

AN EFF INSPIRED “LEFT UNITY” ARRANGEMENT?

The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) concluded its second national elective conference in mid-December 2019. While liberally employing socialist rhetoric, the leadership actively pursues policies that are a mixture of Freedom Charter inspired political backwardness, Black Economic Empowerment principles as enshrined in the current SA constitution and a reactionary Africanism. Irrespective of whether these political ideologies have historically been discredited many times over, we find adherents of it – like the EFF leadership –

clinging to these historically defunct ideas. The EFF is a fully fledged bourgeois political party; this, notwithstanding its radical sounding rhetoric and bastardisation of scientific socialism. The EFF is very much interested in advancing and defending the essence of the SA constitution – a tool of the bourgeoisie – to oppress and exploit the working class and peasantry. The organisation’s primary aim is to grow its parliamentary, provincial legislative and municipal representation. Once, as it argues, they are ensconced in government they ➔

➔ will implement their seven pillars that are presented as a condensed political programme used for making political propaganda.

It is an organisation with serious contradictory political perspectives and positions. On the one hand it declares itself as anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist, but then it hob-nobs with individuals like Robin Renwick and other arch-imperialists. It declares itself pro-working class but then it becomes embroiled in the scandalous VBS saga. As a splinter group from the ANC, it ostensibly opposes this organisation, but it still wholeheartedly embraces the politically anachronistic Freedom Charter. On the one hand it talks of 'unity in struggle' with left leaning organisations but want to do this on its terms only. All these contradictions between theory and practice are furthermore enveloped in a rabid racism that can only take the liberation struggle in SA backwards.

EFF's 'Left Politics': An Absurdity

We should then ask ourselves, what – in broad terms – informs the political attitude of the EFF on the question of "unity" with left formations and trade unions? It says in its founding statement (points 25 and 26) that the EFF is a movement "*that brings together revolutionary and militant activists, workers' movements, NGOs, CBOs and lobby groups under the umbrella of pursuing the struggle for economic emancipation*". It adds that "*it will be the vanguard of community and workers' struggles and will always be on the side of the people*". These pronouncements guide the political praxis of the EFF.

Nowhere in its official documents is reference ever made of struggling for or building 'unity' as a means to achieving political aims. The EFF's conception of "unity" is spurious, short term, ad hoc associations led by itself – for political reforms. The word 'unity' gets substituted by empty phrases like 'bring together' and 'be the vanguard'. A key element of workers' and communities' struggles is that a variety of forces, sometimes guided by quite divergent political motivations, usually emerge. The scope of this range of forces – from left to right wing – usually depends on the intensity or depth of the crisis at hand, and what the state's or bosses' responses are vis a vis the demands that emerge from these struggles. Like its mother body – the ANC – the EFF claims that it and it alone speaks or can speak for or on behalf of the millions of workers and peasants in SA.

The EFF's political narrowness is further illustrated by its repeated insistence in the founding statement that there is only one liberation movement in SA – the Congress movement. Hence the reference to it being the 'vanguard' of worker and community struggles. The argument is that the EFF has now become the 'vanguard' whereas in the past the ANC was considered the "leader of society". History has dumped the Freedom Charter and its reactive politics in the proverbial dustbin; as loyal adherents to the Freedom Charter, the EFF therefore – by association – belongs in this dustbin itself! This is tantamount to not only betraying workers' and community struggles upfront, but continuously propagating a political narrative that the oppressed and exploited should reject unreservedly.

Secondly, the unity with left forces and trade unions the EFF is trumpeting is one premised on extending or increasing the electoral support and representation of the EFF. This has nothing to do with building unity for the purpose of advancing workers', peasants' and community struggles. The elected bodies of the South Africa state are governed by rules and laws that are not in the interests of these classes and forces. Dishing out one or two seats to some left grouping as a reward for supporting the EFF electorally, simply means defending the present state of affairs instead of turning working people's political attention away from bourgeois political bodies. The current situation demands the development of independent political formations, like united fronts that can take the struggles for socialist democracy forward.

Thirdly, if the EFF is genuinely interested in 'left unity' it has been conspicuously absent from left formations such as the Democratic Left Front (DLF), the Radical Left Network (RLN) and other initiatives like the Numsa inspired United Front. A simple explanation for this is that the EFF wants to dictate its policies and perspectives to others. Any engagement with other organisations on an equal political footing is foreign to it. In this regard it is dutifully following in the traditions of the Congress movement which historically stood against unity of the oppressed and exploited. Documentary evidence of this abounds.

Fourthly, the EFF quite openly states that the demands of the Freedom Charter are "*above forms of organisation that the working class ... may fashion in the course of struggles; ... alliances are relevant to the* ➔

➡ *extent that they maximise our march towards realising the vision outlined in the Freedom Charter*". In short, this means that workers' struggles will perform have to submit to subordinate themselves to what the EFF shall dictate. So if the EFF tells workers to get into bed with the capitalist bosses, then workers will be expected to "toe the line".

The Road Ahead For The Left

The attitude of NUMSA, SAFTU, AMCU, APDUSA, WASP, and other organisations to these notions of a 'new left alignment' with the EFF in charge should therefore be of interest to all concerned. APDUSA for its part unequivocally states that it is guided by a set of transitional political demands that puts the

short and long term interests of the working class and peasants first. Its involvement in left unity projects is guided by building principled unity via forums and united fronts that will take workers' and communities' struggles forward. This involvement is aimed at achieving the goal of convening a Constituent Assembly tasked with addressing these specific class interests. All left forces in SA can learn from progressive left regroupment elsewhere in the world. 'Left unity' as advanced by the EFF leaders can therefore only amount to making a mockery of the idea. Mainstream media – who the EFF leadership supposedly detest – will no doubt have a field day propagating the idea on behalf of the EFF. ●

COVID-19 AND THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

The policy adopted by the Johnson led Tory government to the Covid-19 pandemic, has inflicted a heavy toll on the British people. Thousands of lives have been lost and the rise in the number of cases recorded has been inexorable. The government has ignored the advice of the WHO and pursued policies which run counter to the basic principles of combating the epidemic. It failed to act promptly, neither engaging the personnel nor ordering the equipment for tackling Covid-19. There is no systematic program of testing and isolating cases and their contacts. Many of the frontline NHS staff, doctors, nurses, cleaners and porters are dying needlessly because there has been no proper provision for their personal protection equipment (PPE).

The Johnson government pursued a policy of deliberately allowing more people to be infected, creating a so called 'herd immunity'. Implicit in this policy is the death of large numbers of the most vulnerable and older sections of the population. This policy was calculated by the Tory government to cause the least damage to the British economy. Johnson was forced to change his policy when he came into increasing conflict with the British people and had to order a lockdown, shutting down non-essential industry and confining people to their homes. Parents had been faced with many teachers absent from school because of illness, having to take their children out of school. The professional football association had to cancel their league football because of Premier League footballers falling ill.

Tory governments and the one led by the Tories in coalition with the Liberals, operated neoliberal policies, inflicting harsh austerity measures on the workers, while rewarding the

bosses with handouts and tax breaks. The NHS, like other public services had been starved of funds. Faced with the epidemic, it was the frontline staff of the NHS, against all odds, who treated tens of thousands of patients with Covid-19 and saved the lives of many thousands. The figures provided in mid-April for the number of Covid-19 cases in Britain since the beginning of the epidemic were more than 98,000 and the number of deaths, more than 12,000. Britain has the highest death rate in Europe for the epidemic. The Institute of Health and Metric Evaluation, Washington University estimated that Britain will have 37,000 deaths by 4th August this year with Italy 20,000, the second highest and Spain and the Netherlands 18,000 each. There is a crisis in care homes which are mainly run by the private sector. Covid-19 has spread to over half of the care homes and there are more than 4,000 deaths. The crisis is aggravated by hospitals discharging Covid-19 patients into care homes full of frail people and the staff woefully short of PPE.

The British government is intent on making the working class pay for the costs of the epidemic. In opposing government policies, the working class has discovered that the status quo is not tolerable. Movements of volunteers sprang up during the epidemic to shop for and help the vulnerable members of the community living in isolation. The self organisation of the workers and the movements of volunteers as well as other resistance groups is important in the struggle against the Tories.

The crisis in health created by the Tory and other capitalist governments during the pandemic arises from the ecological crisis and global warming. Capitalist governments are incapable of coming to grips with the ecological crisis and ➡

➡ global warming. The working class is faced with the task of tackling the ecological crisis and global warming. It needs to discover that it has to

turn to ecosocialism to deal with this crisis and the overthrow of capitalism. ●

REORGANISING CAPITALIST ECONOMIES FOR PROFITABLE WARS: LESSONS TO COMBAT COVID-19

Part of the international ruling class myth making is that we did not have time to prepare adequately for this pandemic. When it suits the purpose of Capitalism, they can prepare for *anything*. China, with its State capitalist model, could easily build two hospitals in ten days. History also attests to this. During the Second World War, the United States government established what was known as the *War Production Board (WPB)*. This was the most powerful of all war-time organisations whose task was to control the economy. Established by President Roosevelt on January 16, 1942 by executive order, its purpose was to regulate the production of goods during World War II in the United States.

The WPB converted and expanded peacetime industries to meet war needs, allocated scarce materials vital to war production, established priorities in the distribution of materials and services, and prohibited nonessential production.

The WPB and the nation's factories effected a great turnaround. Military aircraft production, which totalled 6,000 in 1940, jumped to 85,000 in 1943. Factories that made silk ribbons now produced parachutes, automobile factories built tanks, typewriter companies converted to machine guns, undergarment manufacturers sewed mosquito netting, and a roller coaster manufacturer converted to the production of bomber repair platforms. The WPB ensured that each factory received the materials it needed to produce the most war goods in the shortest time. Commercial institutions that

had bought billions of dollars of bonds and other treasury paper during the war years were estimated to be holding more than \$24 billion at the war's end.

What is clear from the above is that the war served the interests of Capitalism and extreme measures were taken to prepare for this aim. The question remains: Why could industries not be commissioned to produce the basic medically required necessities for COVID-19? Worsening matters is the fact that instead of investing in the building of humanity globally, *war* has become a major global industry. It amounts to 1822 billion US Dollars with the USA spending \$649 billion in 2018 alone! [*Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 29 April 2019*]

What the COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted is that a Capitalist economy, based on the whims and fancies of the invisible hand of the market, is not designed for the needs of humanity. It prioritizes amongst others (and as demonstrated above) the industry of death and destruction, from which it profits. More importantly, it uses its superior military complex to maintain its dominance over the world. It has no place for the basic needs of humanity. This has been seen with the dismal treatment of the working class all over the world with the outbreak of COVID-19.

The working class should actively fight for socialism with its planned economy; an economy based on the needs of humanity. This is a system that can effectively address pandemics like COVID-19. ●

CLIMATE CRISIS: A GROWING EMERGENCY

The warning of the climate scientists is that humanity is faced with runaway climate change as global warming increases. Their plea is that fossil fuel production must cease and be replaced by sustainable forms of energy such as solar and wind power. They believe that the environment can only sustain a 1.5 degree rise in temperature above pre-industrial levels, if climate catastrophe is to be averted. Their warnings have gone unheeded as the big banks finance ever more fossil fuel production. Today the younger generation to whom the prospect of irreversible

climate change appears increasingly likely, are rebelling against the older generation. Their revolt has been led by Greta Thunberg, a Swedish teenager. At the Davos summit in January she accused companies and "decision makers" present in the audience of making unimaginable amounts of money causing the climate crisis. She leads a movement, Extinction Rebellion, which is involved in a campaign to mobilize the world's population against the inaction of governments stopping the banks financing fossil fuel production. Counter-terrorism police in ➡

➡ England placed this non-violent movement on a list of extremist ideologies alongside neo-Nazi terrorism as a threat to national security. The report was concerned that the movement was attracting large numbers of individuals, who are engaging in actions challenging government policies on global warming.

The crisis on climate change stands out as the biggest threat to human existence and animal and plant life. Capitalism is responsible for the ecological catastrophe and the inaction of governments in doing anything about saving the planet. The richest countries emit huge amounts of greenhouse gases and it is the poor in the South, the women, the workers, peasants and indigenous people who suffer the most from

CAPITALISM AND THE LINK TO AUSTRALIAN WILDFIRES

2019 has seen the most devastating wildfires destroying precious Australian fauna and flora. According to a *Newsweek* article by Brendan Cole on 7 January 2020, 117 million hectares of land were burnt in wildfires in central Australia. The same article states that:

'The impact on wildlife continues to be felt, with the [University of Sydney estimating](#) that as many as half a billion mammals, birds and reptiles have perished.'

Bourgeois commentators were quick to link the fires to random acts of arson. What they failed to add is that the astronomic scale of the destruction is directly linked to Global Warming. This phenomenon causes disturbing changes in weather patterns and leads to record breaking increases in temperature. Leading scientists affirm the above Global Warming assertion.

'Australian National University climate scientist Imran Ahmed told the BBC there was a direct link "because what climate change does is exacerbate the conditions in which the bushfires happen.' [ibid]

And:

'Glenda Wardle, an ecologist from the University of Sydney, told the BBC: "It's not every weather event that is the direct result of

climate disasters. The increasing number of climate, economic and political refugees across the world is becoming more prominent. Only a radical alternative to capitalism can save the planet. Socialism encompassing ecology, eco-socialism can face up to the crisis created by capitalism. The Extinction Rebellion movement, founded by the younger generation has an important role to play in the resistance to the capitalist onslaught. There is a polarization taking place globally as the powerful right wing forces led by Trump confront the radical movements in the US, Europe and the South. It is the outcome of this struggle which will determine the fate of humanity. ●

climate change. But when you see trends...it becomes undeniably linked to global climate change.' [ibid]

It is clear that the main culprits in the escalation of Global Warming, the fossil fuel industry and most of the capitalist industries driven by this form of energy, are the direct contributors to the devastating destruction of Mother nature. Neo-liberal governments and other apologists for these greedy industrialists, petrochemical companies and Multi-National Corporations in general, deliberately deny the annihilating effects of Global Warming. They have invested too much money into these industries and are clearly more interested in profiteering from them than care for the preservation of life on earth. The felling of life giving forests, pollution of both oceans and rivers, depletion of food sources and air pollution are indicative of this wanton greed!

Only the working class, in its fight for eco-socialism and who have a vested interest in the emancipation of humanity from all forms of oppression, can guide that selfsame humanity out of the morass of capitalist greed, exploitation and environmental destruction! ●

BREXIT AND BEYOND

Boris Johnson's Government, the most reactionary since Margaret Thatcher was in power, has succeeded in negotiating the withdrawal of Britain from the EU. In the process, leaders of the "Remain" camp in the Tory Party who represent a section of the British capitalist class whose interests are tied

to the EU, have been driven out of the party. Having obtained Parliament's approval for a general election, Johnson's government has inflicted a crushing defeat on the opposition parties led by the Labour Party (LP). The British working class face a renewed onslaught from an emboldened, racist and ➡

➔ xenophobic Tory Government. The triumph of Johnson's government amplifies Trump's victory in the US presidential elections, the rise of fascist parties in Europe and the big shift to the right in international politics.

Johnson's Tory party represents that section of British capital, which is wedded to striking a trade deal with the USA, and to a low wage economy. Britain will not align itself to EU rules and rejects the jurisdiction of EU courts in any trade deal. The prospects are that the EU will defend its companies from British competitors and there will be the imposition of checks, tariffs and quotas, which will damage the British economy more than that of the EU. Trump has signalled to the Johnson government that when the negotiations on a US British trade deal take place, the NHS will be in the sights of US firms staking claims leading to further privatisation of the NHS. Friction between the US and Britain is developing over Britain's business dealings with the Chinese telecommunications company Huawei, which is involved in the development of the 5G telecoms network in Britain. Chinese technology in this field is way ahead of any commercial rival. The US is opposed to the British contract with Huawei for "security reasons" and the US Secretary of State Pompeo has warned Britain that US intelligence would only pass through trusted networks.

Following the defeat of the LP in the general election, Corbyn has resigned as its leader, and is now immersed in a leadership election to replace him. Corbyn was defeated in the election by a combination of the hostile forces of Johnson's Tory Party, the mass media and a section of the LP, including large numbers of MPs and councillors wedded to neoliberalism and the politics of the Blair and Brown government. The absurd accusation that Corbyn, a lifelong champion of antiracism, is an anti-Semite and that the LP is riddled with anti-semitism was made by Zionists in the LP, who feared a Corbyn government championing the struggle of the Palestinians against the oppressive Israeli government. The Zionists led a campaign supported by other rightwing elements in the LP and reactionary forces outside the LP, pressurising the party to adopt a definition of

anti-Semitism linking it to anti-Zionism. Succumbing to these forces, the Corbyn leadership permitted a witch hunt in which prominent anti-Zionists, Jew and non-Jew were expelled from the LP. This betrayal of loyal LP members by the LP leadership was one of the factors which led to the big defeat of the LP in the elections

In the election campaign, the LP put forward an even more radical program than in the 2017 election. It outlined a free care policy for the elderly, it pledged to repeal Tory anti-union legislation, to introduce a Green New Deal and reduce Britain's carbon emissions to zero by 2030. On Brexit, it accepted the verdict of the British people on the referendum to leave the EU. It was committed to negotiating a "leave" deal within three months of gaining power and placing this deal and the alternative of remaining in the EU in a second referendum before the people. However finely balanced the LP leadership believed its Brexit policy to be, it failed to satisfy many LP supporters. For the "Remain" LP supporters it did not go far enough because it was committed to negotiating a "leave" deal with the EU. The former disenchanted LP supporters in the de-industrialized north of England, turned to Johnson and helped to propel him to victory.

British Politics: More Turmoil Ahead

LP members are in the process of choosing a leader and deputy leader of the LP. There are sharp divisions in the LP with none of the contestants clearly ahead of their rivals. The Tory government is bent on a quick trade deal with the US once Britain leaves the EU. It is obliged to take the lead as the host country for the scheduled COP26 climate summit in Glasgow. The LP has accused the Tory government of not having an agreed plan for the climate summit, nor is it meeting its targets for reducing greenhouse gases.

Sinn Fein, the former political wing of the IRA has emerged as the party with the most votes in the recent election in Ireland and is committed to fight for a united Ireland. The SNP (Scottish National Party) which supported "Remain" in the EU referendum, has given notice to the British government that it wants another referendum on Scottish independence. Johnson is emphatic he will not agree to a second Scottish referendum. ➔

➔ The break up of the British state is on the agenda, which as a long term consequence of their policies should have been anticipated by the Tory government. This, together with their failure to provide

leadership for the climate summit at the end of the year, and their brutal policies leading to endemic poverty and food banks, are certain to lead to further turmoil in Britain. ●

APDUSA

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

Despite the gain of political rights for all, the compromise of 1992 has not fulfilled the democratic aspirations of the labouring majority and they continue to suffer in conditions of abject poverty and subjugation to the will of the rich who command the economic resources of the country. In the ongoing struggle we therefore demand:

- The convening of a democratically elected **Constituent Assembly**, charged with the task of drawing up a new constitution, governed by the interests of the oppressed and exploited working class and peasantry, based on the demand for full, unfettered political rights for all with majority rule in a unitary state, the removal of all artificially created regional political boundaries, the liquidation of all special minority rights and privileges which militate against the interests of the majority. The Constituent Assembly must have full powers to discharge these duties, untrammelled by any directions and constraints designed to serve self-interested minorities.
- A resolution of the **land question** in accordance with the needs of those who work and live off the land. This means the destruction of all existing tribal and feudal relations in the rural areas and the nationalisation of the land, without compensation. A new division of the land and its management, which excludes forced collectivisation, the payment of rent and the expropriation of small peasant farmers, must be undertaken by committees that are democratically elected by and answerable to the people.
- The **expropriation** of all major industries, banks and institutions of credit and their management by the state and representatives of the workers in the interests of the population as a whole.
- The revision of labour legislation for the liquidation of all discrimination against the worker. This also means:
- The **right to work**, which must be implemented both via the institution of necessary adjustments to the length of the working week to provide employment for all, without a reduction in wages, as well as by the institution of a progressive **public works program** with the full representation of the unemployed in its management.
- The fixing of a living **minimum wage** as well as a sliding scale to compensate for any price increases.
- The unconditional right to **strike** which includes the right of occupation of the workplace.
- Free and **compulsory education** for all up to matric with free books for the needy.
- Free **health services** for the needy.
- A single, progressive **tax system**, the abolition of vat and all indirect taxes that fall so heavily on the poor.
- The elected representatives of the people, at organisational level or in the local, regional or national political institutions of state, must be fully **accountable** to those who elect them and they must be fully bound by the demands and aspirations of the working class and its allies, the landless peasantry.

APDUSA calls for the self-organisation and united independent struggle of the labouring masses. We believe that the struggle can only advance decisively via the greatest ideological and organisational unity between the workers in the urban centres and the peasants in the rural areas under the leadership of the working class. The democratic demands and aspirations of the oppressed workers and peasants shall be paramount.

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Website: www.apdusa.org.za Email: apdusa@mail.org