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The Interests Of The Workers And Landless Peasants Shall Be Paramount

NUMSA ON A CRITICAL PATH

The expulsion of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) from COSATU is probably the most significant event in recent years of the ongoing liberatory struggle in South Africa. The leadership of NUMSA deserves applause for their courageousness and resolution in defending the interests of the working class. Casting personal ambitions aside, they have embarked on a road that could prove critical for themselves and the future of the organisation. But the road ahead is far from being cut and dried. NUMSA's leadership has repeatedly stated that what is needed is a united front of trade unions and social movements/community organisations. Further, there have also been expressions of the need for a new workers party which can contest the municipal elections in 2016. It is not yet clear whether this is intended to simply be a parliamentary party or a party that is primarily committed to work for a radical change in South African society.

The first battle that the union faces revolves around COSATU. NUMSA does not accept its expulsion but it remains to be seen whether it is now regarded as a fait accompli. Together with seven or eight unions in COSATU, who support NUMSA's stance, there is now a fight for a special congress of COSATU. After the expulsion of NUMSA the COSATU executive concurred that this conference could be held sometime in 2015. If it does materialise the possibility is that NUMSA may be reinstated and a new leadership of COSATU may be elected. This will seriously change the complexion

of these developments. Alternately the congress may end in a stalemate, leaving those unions currently supporting NUMSA to decide whether they should stay in COSATU or leave to join a new federation. The situation could become more clouded by the reaction of the rank and file members of all parties concerned.

In the mean time NUMSA is determined to press ahead with its call for a new united front. It is not yet clear whether left wing, extra-parliamentary political groupings will be welcome in such a front. Secondly, NUMSA's continued adherence to the Freedom Charter and the mythical completion of National Democratic Revolution (NDR), as originally espoused by the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP), is certain to cause problems. Nevertheless, APDUSA applauds this drive unreservedly. We argue that for a progressive united front to take the struggle of the oppressed and exploited forward, a transitional programme is required with the central demand for a new constituent assembly that will be governed by the interests of the workers, the unemployed and the landless peasantry .

The Democratic Left Front (DLF), which itself has been working for the establishment of a full blown united front, should now be on its guard not to tail-end NUMSA and to boldly voice its own conception of what this front should be. Many different viewpoints can be expected but the only way forward is for a broad agreement to be reached via vigorous and open debate. ●

Promises and Reality

In his State of the Nation Address President Jacob Zuma trotted out a Nine Point Plan to "ignite growth and create jobs". In one way or the other, this plan merely echoes or rehashes the aims and promises of:

1. The Growth Employment and Redistribution policy (GEAR), adopted in 1996
2. The official embrace of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals with the key aim of halving poverty and unemployment by the year 2014.
3. The new Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (Asgisa) adopted in 2006

4. The National Development Plan (NDP) and the New Growth Path adopted in 2013.

The first three have failed miserably in ➔

Inside

◆ Skirmishes in the Trade Unions	P.2
◆ Rhodes Must Fall, UCT Must Change	P.3
◆ Instability in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro	P.4
◆ The Energy Crisis	P.5
◆ The Demand for a People's Budget	P.5
◆ Plight of Unpaid Workers in N.Cape	P.6
◆ and more	

➡ achieving their stated goals. If anything, matters have only become worse. The NDP has just about been started in name. Judging by the grandiose, glorious and positively astonishing promises in its Executive Summary, of a stronger economy – jobs, education, health and generally a far superior existence for all citizens and businesses compared to the present by the year 2030, a veritable paradise on earth for all within the capitalist system at that, one cannot but conclude that these are just another set of facile, empty promises or nothing more than wishful thinking. (See www.gov.za/issues/national-development-plan-2030)

In the early days of his tenure as Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel declared that a minimum annual economic growth rate of 6% rate would be required if unemployment was to be reduced. This growth rate has never been achieved and in the NDP the 6% has conveniently been dropped to 5%. In 2014 the growth rate was a mere 1.5%, while the present minister of Finance, Mr. Nhlanhla Nene has revised the former estimate for 2015 to 2% with expected growth rates of 2.4% in 2016 and 3% in 2017. The government excuses itself largely by putting the blame on the world economic recession over which it has no control and more immediately, the mismanagement at the ESKOM power utility. With all the economic and financial expertise within reach then why the empty promises in all their plans?

To make matters worse, South Africa is sinking deeper and deeper into a debt trap. Nene has stated that “Over the next three years, government’s gross debt stock is projected to increase by about R550 billion, to R2.3 trillion in 2017/18. Redemptions on debt issued over the past decade will add R190 billion to the medium term borrowing requirement. Interest on state debt will rise from R115 billion this year to R153 billion in 2017/18...” and “Net loan debt of the national government is expected to stabilise at less than 45 per cent of GDP in three years’ time”.

In an article in Business Day Live (“SA walking into a debt trap as its fiscal deficit mounts” 01/11/2014) a Mr. Dawie Roodt earlier warned that “State finances are in a mess. Since 2009, the state has been running a huge fiscal deficit. Every year since 2009, the size of the deficit relative to the size of the economy exceeded the rate at which the economy was growing. What this means is that if the rate at which the state borrows exceeds the rate at which the economy expands, the state’s debt relative to the economy will continue to increase, and interest on debt will go up.”... Eventually we will reach a point at which we have “too much” debt. We are probably there now.” He further declared that “In the February budget, the minister budgeted for total revenue of R963bn for the full fiscal year — which will end in March next year. Already there are signs that weak economic growth is having a negative effect on state revenue”. We can make further observations that by the year 2014 the debt-to-gdp ratio had increased to 43.2% . This implies that for the year February 2014 to March 2015, the government has had to spend about 12% of its revenue just servicing debt, and rising.

These are the warnings of a bourgeois economist, at that, which is an admission that their hopes that the ANC government could manipulate capitalistic economic control according to their wishes has gone hopelessly awry, as has happened in Greece, Spain and elsewhere. Politically, the facts are enough for anyone to conclude that the government is once more trying to fob us off with vacuous promises which cannot be fulfilled by the year 2030 or even much later, as long as it continues on its neo-liberal economic path. Instead, the country is heading for a critical socio-economic-political crisis. The radical left will have to contemplate putting serious and concrete political demands before the nation, instead of only relying on supporting issue-based, localised, economic struggles in the attempt to win attention. ●

SKIRMISHES IN THE TRADE UNIONS

Conflicts inside South Africa’s most prominent trade union federation, COSATU, have grown more acute in recent months. Its leadership finds itself trapped in faction fights, fuelled by self-seeking bureaucrats desperate to cling to or capture more perks rather than advance the democratic demands and aspirations of workers. Political big shots have thus far failed to resolve the public spats and bitter infighting in the COSATU leadership, including its bigger and influential affiliates. Some unions have already split and the breakaway unions are determined to recruit workers within the same industries and workplaces where rival unions are well entrenched.

These troubles engulfing the trade unions took centre stage at the 2014 end-of-year General Council meeting of the Democratic Left Front (DLF) in Cape

Town. The Western Cape Steering Committee invited a panel of union leaders to discuss what is happening in the trade unions with an audience of 50-odd activists from DLF affiliates. Speakers included dissidents in COSATU-affiliated unions sharing the stage with leaders from two Western Cape based unions that are not affiliates of any trade union federation.

A National Executive Committee (NEC) member addressed the gathering on behalf of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). Before delving into the essence of his main political message, which ignited sharp exchanges during the open discussion, this NUMSA official fleetingly reminded the DLF activist assembly of the resolutions adopted at the 2013 NUMSA Special Congress. Without sober ➡

➡ reflections on these resolutions, the speaker reasoned, the war-talk between NUMSA and the COSATU Central Executive Committee will be incomprehensible to the uninformed.

Against the backdrop of the Special Congress resolutions, our NUMSA office bearer then leaped into a defence of NUMSA's call for and envisaged role in the United Front. He argued that NUMSA will *facilitate* rather than *dictate* the actual formation of the united front. Leaders in NUMSA believe that a united front leadership will arise 'from below' instead of the union imposing a blueprint about the content and constituent forces making up the united front.

In NUMSA's view, the united front is simply about finding synergies between or uniting community and workplace struggles. But as participants in the assembly challenged this oversimplification of united fronts, our union leader was quick to concede that trade unions cannot lead a socialist revolution but then kept silent on what kind of organization workers need for this historic task. In his self-defence, he just echoed the hollow cliché that too much theorisation about the united front is counterproductive.

Factional strife also runs deep in other COSATU affiliates, like the public sector unions for municipal workers and teachers. A litany of scandals appears to be fomenting these feuds. Allegations of corruption, financial mismanagement and authoritarian suspensions top the list. Speakers representing dissident factions in SAMWU and SADTU revisited the histories of their divided unions before updating the assembly on the course of their bitter opposition to the entrenched bureaucracies in these unions. Interestingly, both dissident groups initially appealed to the constitutions of their unions in their protracted campaigns for democracy inside their unions.

The "Save Our SAMWU" (SOS) representative spoke of an unbridgeable gulf between the leaders and rank-and-file in SAMWU and the disappearance of workers control over the affairs of this elementary organisation of municipal workers. The SOS campaign has invested a lot of its energy in pursuing charges against the SAMWU bureaucrats in the high court. But how does this type of courtroom tussle mobilise the rank-and-file to bring the union under workers' control? The SOS speaker never answered this question.

Unlike the dissidents clustered around the SOS campaign, those suspended from SADTU argued

that they had exhausted the judicial route to democracy in their union. Indeed, indefinite court battles can demoralise a union's rank-and-file members who in these instances become distant spectators. This faction has thus taken the decisive step to break from SADTU and begin the groundwork for a new union, known as USAWE (Union of South African Workers in Education).

Spokespersons from the two independent unions told the gathering of victories and setbacks in their struggles to defend the economic interests of their members. This is the traditional terrain of trade union resistance albeit narrow from an anti-capitalist political perspective. With its members recruited mainly from electrical, chemical and construction workers in Cape Town, the panellist from a general workers' union also highlighted the participation of their shop-stewards in various community protests.

The general secretary of CSAAWU riveted the attention of the assembly to the aftermath of the 2012 farm workers rebellion which had its epicentre on export-oriented farms in the Western Cape Province, close to the Cape Metropole. A key gain from this strike has been the 60% hike in the minimum wage floor for farm workers. But government's employment commission found that even after this increase, the average farm worker family still falls short of what it needs to make ends meet, let alone enjoy a decent living. Farmers have stepped up their campaign to not pay this new minimum wage – exploiting loopholes in the minimum wage regulations for agricultural workers. From the start of the strike, the speaker stressed, the enemies of farm workers strategised to break the strike and destroy the self-confidence of the workers. Strike leaders were hunted down and imprisoned. Dismissals and evictions of farm workers from farms increased sharply. CSAAWU evidently became a prime target and victim in this merciless assault on farm workers. Court cases to defend workers have bankrupted the union financially and saddled it with a debt burden that threatens the survival of the union.

This DLF panel discussion has thrown the spotlight on the crisis facing South Africa's trade union movement today. It also confronts workers with finding a genuine anti-capitalist path out of this crisis instead of placing hopes in the bankrupt politics of "Socialism from Below" or the "National Democratic Revolution". ●

RHODES MUST FALL, UCT MUST CHANGE

Statement by the University of Cape Town Workers Forum and the UCT Workers Solidarity Committee

Black workers built UCT with their own hands in the colonial past. Black workers were oppressed at UCT in the Apartheid past. Black workers were

retrenched and outsourced at UCT in the post-Apartheid past. The first people to know about racism and sexism and exploitation at UCT are ➡

➡ the black women workers. It is there in workers' lives every day. There is no UCT without the labour of workers. Workers stand with the students in struggle and solidarity and say together: **Rhodes will fall! UCT must change! Together in struggle and solidarity we must change UCT!** It cannot be that students can only learn if workers suffer. It cannot be that academics can only do their work if workers suffer. It cannot be that there is only education if capitalist bosses can make a profit. But it is all happening here at UCT.

Workers' Demands:

- **R10,000 pm minimum basic as a step towards a living wage. In the spirit of Marikana.**

UCT powers must commit to a living wage. Get rid of Supplemented Living Level which maintains poverty. Get rid of CPI to decide increases. It means that wages never really increase and workers are forever left in poverty.

- **Outsourcing must end. The bosses must go. All the workers must stay.**

This is a public sector institution. There should be no capitalist companies brought here to make profits. Education must be free. UCT must directly employ everyone working here. Workers must know that their job is safe. With decent working conditions. And comfortable lives.

- **NO VICTIMISATION. No worker must be penalised in any way for supporting and joining protest action, including strike action, at UCT.**
- **NO VICTIMISATION. No worker must be penalised in any way for refusing to act against protest or protestors at UCT.**
- **Workers must be able, without penalty of any kind, to refuse work that is a danger or hazard to their health and safety.**

These are demands against UCT management. They are demands that UCT must change. And the lives of workers must change. Whether workers are outsourced or not, UCT is the real boss. UCT had the power to retrench all the workers and bring companies here to make profits. UCT has the power force the companies to meet these demands. UCT has the power to get rid of the companies and directly employ the workers according to these demands without loss of jobs, pay or benefits.

Workers must not suffer so that others can learn and teach. Bosses must not make profits when others learn and teach. **Education must be free!**

There is no real transformation if workers must continue to live in poverty. There is no real transformation if workers must continue to risk their health and safety just to put food on the table. There is no real transformation if workers must walk in fear of voicing their views and their demands, facing intimidation and victimisation. It cannot be that there is transformation if poverty continues and nothing changes in the lives of workers.

Rhodes will fall! UCT must change! Together in struggle and solidarity, workers and students, we must change UCT!

Published with acknowledgment to and the permission of the UCT Workers Forum and the UCT Workers Solidarity Committee. These bodies were formed to unite all workers in struggle against outsourcing and to fight together in solidarity for their needs, regardless of employer and/or union. The UCT Workers Solidarity Committee is part of the UCT Workers Forum and supports the United Front and opposes the expulsion of NUMSA from COSATU.

INSTABILITY IN NELSON MANDELA BAY METRO AFFECTS SERVICE DELIVERY

Access to basic services appears to become increasingly difficult for the workers and landless peasants in South Africa due to instability in municipalities. This was again proven in December 2014 when a high-powered delegation of the ANC led by Jacob Zuma arrived in the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro to disband the ANC Regional Executive Committee (REC). This followed several visits made to the municipality since October 2014. On 18 January 2015 a task team was eventually announced that would take over from the REC. At the press conference called to announce the task team, Jesse Duarte openly stated that business interests of councillors resulted in the conflict between opposing camps.

These moves are yet another attempt aimed at stopping years of infighting between bigwig ANC rivals in the region. Open clashes erupted between a camp led by former chairperson of the region, Nceba

Faku and those led by then mayor, Zanoxolo Wayile. For three years the metro functioned without a permanently appointed municipal manager and senior directors critical to the functioning of the municipality. This resulted in a paralysis of the administration, financial mismanagement, labour unrest and a decline in the delivery of services to the poor people of Nelson Mandela Bay Metro (comprised of Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage and Despatch).

In March 2013 Zanoxolo Wayile was removed as mayor and replaced by the 81 year-old Ben Fihla, who was serving in the provincial legislature. It was hoped that the "redeployment" would bring stability to opposing camps within the ANC in the region. The municipality appointed Lindiwe Msengana-Ndlela as municipal manager and started to appoint senior directors in vacant posts. Hardly three months into her job Msengana-Ndlela was placed on ➡

➡ “precautionary leave”, a euphemism for suspension. She returned in August 2013, only to resign after a few days. In a letter to the MEC for Local Government she blamed political interference and intimidation. She indicated that she hit a brick wall in her efforts to improve financial management and accountability.

The Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs seconded Mpilo Mbambisa to step into the job on a temporary basis. He was soon afterwards appointed on a five-year contract by the council as municipal manager for the municipality. Stability returned to the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro, but only for a short period. Continued competing business interests have resulted in intimidation and even murder. In August 2014 the portfolio councillor for human settlements was assassinated. The human settlement programme of the municipality has been rocked by mismanagement, fraud and corruption. Hundreds of defective houses have been constructed and little or nothing is being

done by the municipality to hold those contractors accountable. Huge amounts are spent on rectifying these houses instead of constructing new houses.

The ANC has once again shot themselves in the foot in Nelson Mandela Bay Metro. They have proven that the system of handing lucrative contracts to themselves can only result in inferior services being delivered to the people and infighting amongst themselves because of greed. Their intervention can only result in a redirection of those lucrative contracts to other tenderpreneurs, while the workers and landless peasants continue to experience extreme poverty and inferior services. There can be no stability and development in municipalities while councillors voted into power satisfy their own business interests, rather than serving the interests of communities. We must demand that councillors must be accountable to and be bound by the interests the communities that elected them. ●

SOUTH AFRICA’S ENERGY CRISIS AND THE FAILURE OF GOVERNMENT TO GIVE DIRECTION

We can all recall how, during this year’s SONA (State of the Nation Address) debate, Lynn Brown, the Minister of Public Enterprises entertained us with her verbal antics, telling the nation that the energy crisis is not a crisis and that everything is in place to address this challenge. We were also told that we must switch off our freezers to save energy. The minister echoed the promises of Jacob Zuma, the president of South Africa, that the energy crisis will be solved in the next five years by using alternative energy; for example shale gas and natural gas as well as the use of nuclear energy. All these alternatives are currently under scrutiny by countless organisations because of the negative effect it might have on the environment and the economy. We were informed by the government that a “war room” was set up to deal with all these “challenges”.

Barely a month after this “good story to tell”, we were informed by the same Minister of Public Enterprises that the four top executives of Eskom were suspended for 3 months in order for an independent investigation to get to the bottom of the problems besetting Eskom. The reasons given for the suspensions were “poor performance of Eskom’s generating plant, the delays in bringing new plants on stream, the high costs of primary energy (*coal and diesel*); and cash flow problems”. The important issue to understand here is that these executives are in the main, players in the procurement process. We therefore need to ask what procurement contracts will be signed during the suspension period.

What led to this “challenge”?

The government was informed in 2007 that electricity demand was reaching levels beyond what could be generated and supplied; that new

generating capacity had to be added to the grid. These warnings were ignored. A few years later two mega projects were put out to tender namely Medupi and Kusile, which, once built, would be of the largest power stations in the world. The 2010 World Cup is another factor that brought this “challenge” forward. A decision was made at the time that load shedding should not be done for the purpose of doing necessary maintenance in order to keep the lights on. What we then experienced was that plants broke down because no maintenance was done.

Another factor is the policy of the government’s procurement policy where we found that Chancellor House was a direct beneficiary of vast sums of money as a service provider. A group of connected individuals was given tenders to provide services. There were subsequent complaints at various times that service providers were manipulating prices at a cost to the population. Long delays in completing these projects, due to limited project management experience was another fallout from bad cadre deployment. We were also bombarded with news of mismanagement at Eskom, with a yearly request for bailouts and an increase in the electricity price for all households. The start of April this year has seen another NERSA approved 12.6% increase in the electricity price, at a time that workers’ salaries and wages are increasing at very low rates.

The way forward

The population has been hoodwinked the last 3 decades into believing that their elected representatives have their interests at heart whilst these same representatives have sold out to neo-liberalism with all its trappings. The demobilisation of the independent struggles of the population, ➡ ➡ coupled with the belief in parliamentarianism,

where leaders are elected once every five years to represent their aspirations in these talk shops, have shown that their aspirations and the interests of these representatives are diametrically opposed to each other.

The hijacking of the people's struggles by the mushrooming NGO movement has lulled people into believing that their interests can be protected by these bodies to hold government to account. This has retarded a genuine movement towards the total emancipation of the workers and landless peasants. The task of all progressive forces in this epoch is to

unite all economic struggles under a programme of political demands to ensure that we eliminate opportunism and reformism. The workers, who are facing retrenchment in the energy sector, must combine their struggles with those against high and rising electrical costs in order to expose class exploitation. This is the fundamental task of any genuine progressive movement that believes in freedom from exploitation. ●

SEEKING GENUINE ALTERNATIVES THE DEMAND FOR A PEOPLE'S BUDGET

When we invoke the name of "the people" we must ensure that we are clear on what we mean. When we speak of the need for "a people's budget", for the calling of "people's assemblies" we must be clear on what we mean. Who are the "people" that we are referring to? The poor majority? The working class? The black working class? The working class and landless peasants? Without such specificity it is easy for the actual meaning to become totally lost. Slogans then become hollow political battle cries. Political phrases are taken from one situation and introduced in another without due regard for the real problems and difficulties involved. In South Africa a people's budget cannot and will not be drawn up by a parliament that serves the capitalist class and its allies. This much should be clear to any politically progressive person.

Economic demands must be directed at the ruling class. We should agitate and mobilise around these demands. That we all agree on. But, in the same breath these demands must become the basis on which organisations of the oppressed and exploited advance their own independent struggles, in their own organisations guided by a forward looking political leadership and political programme. Their independent political demands –

based on working class political power – must be the ones driving struggles forward, not regurgitated, hollow ANC political rhetoric. In the absence of this, "people's organisations" are objectively speaking, essentially doing the same as what the official and unofficial parliamentary opposition is doing: criticise the government policies; making people believe that turning to and relying on parliament to present workable alternatives, is what is required. People's attention gets turned away from themselves to a ruling elite which has little intention of solving the problems of the poor majority. Casting your vote for the Economic Freedom Fighters or the Democratic Alliance then becomes the sum total of political struggle; something which it clearly is not.

In some circles the South African parliament has been portrayed as "a place of sanctity" that must be protected from abuse by the executive of the state. For 20 odd years this parliament has had the opportunity to pass "people's budgets"; it never did and never will. For 20 odd years it consistently legislated in favour of the bourgeois class and its allies, against the working class and landless peasantry. Why would it do otherwise now? ●

AFTERMATH OF THE ROAD FORUM ACTIONS AND THE KURUMAN EDUCATION CRISIS

The situation in the Kuruman area has returned to normal, subsequent to a decision taken by the Road Forum to allow learners to go back to class for the 2015 academic year. This took place against the background of no examinations having been written in the past year in all the grades, including the matric learners who were de-registered for the 2014 examinations by the Northern Cape Education Department. The reason put forward was that too much class room time was lost and therefore no catch up plan will prepare the learners sufficiently for the final examinations.

The matric learners have been re-registered to write their final examinations early in the year as part time learners. What it means is that there are no matric learners enrolled for the 2015 year-end examinations and no classes will be available for that grade going forward. All the lower grade learners have been compelled to redo their grades. All the learners have lost a whole academic year and several schools have been gutted by fire.

The Northern Cape Government, in collaboration with mining companies in the area has engaged a service provider to construct the road, but this was not without its own problems. ➔

➤ First the service provider is not from the John Taolo District and therefore started the project with his core employees who have always been in its employ. Now the argument has shifted from the road construction to the employment of local residents because the unemployment rate in the area is high and the project was expected to reduce unemployment levels. The Provincial Administration is once again expected to engage the Road Forum in a bid to resolve the situation.

What is lacking in this struggle, which in fact is directly linked to service delivery in the area, is political leadership. Although the leaders have an ANC background, they are not carrying out the activities under its banner. The surprising part is that the ANC has failed dismally to contain these protests and so has the Government, even though Ministers and highly placed ANC leaders were involved. There is a need to link all the struggles of

the people in local communities with the broader struggle in the country.

This will ensure that people understand that the problems they are experiencing are the same as that of other oppressed people in other parts of the country. All progressives should come together, combine their efforts and break the tendency of localising struggles and confronting the might of the capitalists in isolation.

We, as political activists should also take cognisance of the fact that service delivery protests in the country are a reflection that communities have been extremely patient and there has been a lack of accountability from the government.

Although the rights of the people are enshrined in the constitution of the country, these have been undermined. Parties participating in elections have a tendency to ignore the needs of the communities once they get elected to office. ●

THE PLIGHT OF UNPAID COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS IN THE NORTHERN CAPE

The Northern Cape Department of Health has once again failed to pay the Community Health Workers, including the Retired Nurses and Management of NGOs for the month of January 2015.

This is something that happens every three months, because the funds are transferred on a quarterly basis. The problem that health workers have is that this has been happening for too long. This impacts very negatively on their lives because they also have responsibilities like everybody else. They have funeral policies, children and other family members who depend on this meagre amount they receive per month for services rendered. Clearly the Department does care about Community Health Workers. The question that they keep on asking is why should these transfers always be late? Is it incompetence or just plain disregard of other people, or a lack of commitment?

Another niggling problem is the challenge of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). The Department does not comply with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which requires workers to be supplied with PPE every six months. They wait for a year or even longer to be provided with a T-shirt or a top of some sort.

It has been two years or more since the Northern Cape Department of Health ever supplied the health workers with a Dispensary, which is needed when performing their duties. The workers are forced to bed-bath clients without using gloves. This situation, coupled to that of very late payments is totally unacceptable and must be given urgent attention, unless this is an open invitation to Community Health Workers to take to the streets in

protest against these unfair labour practices of the Department.

This problem is not only confined to the Northern Cape Province. It occurs in other provinces as well. Some of the people in the government posts should actually be sitting at home or employed in less challenging jobs. The reason for this is that some are deployed by the African National Congress, others are recommended by their relatives and this is not done because the person has the requisite skills to perform the job, but because he/she is politically connected.

Currently community health workers are seen as a mere extension of workers of the Northern Cape Department of Health. As a result they do not qualify for any benefits, except UIF. They are not covered by insurance which means that when they fall ill with communicable diseases, they have nowhere where they can get help.

The programme does not even have an exit opportunity. There is no training and development taking place so that the workers can move on to other more sustainable positions. Some of them have been in the programme for more than 10 years and yet they still earn less than R2000. This is worse than starvation wages. All the training they are provided with is not meant to assist in upgrading their skills but to be better slaves for the Department.

Community health workers call upon the Department of Health to organise a conference which will review the working conditions of Community Health Workers, the monthly stipend and put in place exit opportunities. This should be done as a matter of urgency. ●

APDUSA 2015 ANNUAL CONFERENCE GALESHEWE, KIMBERLEY

APDUSA held its 2015 annual conference at a time in which youth and workers alike are questioning, disputing and seeking alternatives to the main political narratives of “transformation” and “a better life for all”. Members and delegates from all the regions constituting the national organisation attended the gathering which saw papers introduced by worker/trade union members and the emerging, youthful leadership of the organisation. These papers dealt with the crisis in the workers’ movement, the lessons to be drawn from the Greek, Portuguese and Spanish upheavals and a special paper on the United Front as being propagated by the NUMSA. An abbreviated presidential address refocused members’ attention on the immediate political educational issues and practical tasks at hand.

Many APDUSA members belong to trade unions and play a political role in those unions. In conference deliberations it emerged that the fragmentation of trade unions is a major concern and weakness. The organisation resolved to advocate and advance democratic workers’ control of the trade unions as well as freedom of political association inside the unions.

As part of the international struggle to defeat and destroy the capitalist system, APDUSA learns from struggles across the globe. Deliberations on the Greek situation raised the issue of the acquisition and wielding of state power (in reference to Syriza’s

electoral victory in January 2015). The regroupment/realignment of radical left parties in Greece and elsewhere was another central point discussed. The conference observed that the ongoing austerity attacks on the working classes in Europe must be resisted and that we in South Africa should assimilate the lessons of the anti-austerity programmes and struggles of radical left formations in Europe.

The United Front as propagated by NUMSA, and supported by the DLF of which the APDUSA is an active participant, came under close scrutiny in the introduction and discussion on the topic. Conference concluded that although the UF represents a pathway beyond the narrow, neo-liberal inspired, tri-partite alliance GEAR/NDP programme, that its reaffirmation of the Freedom Charter as a charter for liberation represents a false political proposition. This initiative is therefore likely to be misdirected by careerists, opportunists and reactionary forces. The flaws in this UF process must therefore be exposed through APDUSA’s propagation of its transitional demands for socialist democracy. This it will continue to do through political united fronts like the DLF. ●



From Around the World

Radical Left Advances in Greece

The coalition of radical left parties known as Syriza, won the majority votes in the general elections held on 25 January in Greece. This followed a prolonged period of social upheaval stemming from the effects of the implementation of austerity measures by the former government headed by George Papandreou (see *APDUSAN article “The Crisis in Greece and the European Union” – Volume 16 ,No 2*). Syriza based its electoral platform on burning social issues: changing the country’s electoral laws, getting rid of austerity measures, nationalising banks that receive state funds as well as auditing Greece’s sovereign debt. More specifically the party adopted a 40 point program which contained a mixture of progressive socio-economic demands as well as demands relating to the country’s international relations, such as withdrawal from NATO.

The electoral victory of Syriza came in the midst of a deepening capitalist crisis in the world and, in

this instance specifically in Europe. For the first time in the post WWII period an anti-capitalist, radical left party took political power through electoral means in a west European country. The anti-austerity platform of Syriza appealed to the millions of Greeks, the workers, youth, peasants and others, who were expected to pay for the failure of a system designed to benefit a minority. Syriza, as a coalition of radical left groupings/parties emerged as an electoral force to be reckoned with, essentially displacing the social democratic parties like New Democracy and PASOK who ruled Greece in the recent past.

The first indication of this eventuality was the outcomes of the 2012 elections in which it obtained 27% of the national vote. Not having the political and economic clout or power to defeat reactionary forces decisively, it abided by the Greek constitution and adopted the policy of gaining political power and capturing the state ‘from inside and outside; from above and below’. The feasibility and ➡

➡ appropriateness of this approach is a contentious issue in Greek radical left circles. Inside and outside of Syriza, but within the radical left arena, there are open debates about what to do and how to approach the debt repayment/cancellation issue. Strong arguments are advanced in favour of a refusal to repay the debt. There is also an acknowledgement that abiding by the terms of the February 25 agreement with the “troika” in fact ties the Greek labouring masses even more tightly to the apron strings of the “troika”. Currently the Greek parliament is investigating the exact nature of the debt that must ostensibly be paid to its creditors.

In a situation of deepening class antagonisms and accentuated class conflict there is broad agreement in radical left circles that the Greek radical left agenda, based on anti-reformism, be supported by progressives across the globe, especially in Europe, where a general rightwing surge is occurring. An inherent danger exists of the Syriza government being “captured” by the capitalist state apparatus, and in the process neutralising or nullifying the gains of global left advances. ●

FROM THE ARCHIVES

*From “The Problems of Africa”, published in the Apdusa Journal (abroad), Vol. 2 No. 12, June-Sept. 1967
Also published in “The Imperialist Conspiracy in Africa” - Selected Works of IB Tabata, 1974*

Our first task is to know ourselves, who we are and what we are. We have no need to be apologetic about our being. We have no need to prove our being. We have no need to prove ourselves, least of all to the ex-colonialists. We are part of the human species; we (i.e. our States) are born at a particular stage of development, the product of a particular conjuncture of historical forces in the development of mankind. In the context of world economy that has long outstripped its national boundaries, and a highly developed means of communication, no one country or people can live in isolation, uninfluenced by the processes that are actually world-embracing. Africa is part of that world, with all its contradictions, its convulsions, its uneven development. We cannot escape the logic of this situation.

We cannot retreat into an isolated limbo of our own blackness. We have to face up squarely to our problems as they are, to the enormous problems of belonging to that world. As an inseparable part of it we have our contribution to make, though, due to the accident of history and the machinations of imperialism, we belong to a backward continent that has a big leeway to make up. This does not mean that we have to be slavish imitators of a civilisation that is in the process of playing itself out; nor does it mean that we require centuries to catch up. The very fact of belonging rules this out. What we have to bear in mind is that there is no need to go outside the mainstream in search of something uniquely African or some other mystique as a way out of our difficulties. Mankind possesses a body of knowledge which is our heritage. It has accumulated an arsenal of ideas from which we can draw our weapons to forge the path of our development. But first of all we must clearly define which of the ideas are suitable for our progress. To do this we must be aware of our position and how and why it came about.

..... It must be realised that most of the nationalist organisations that led the struggle to the stage of negotiated independence are totally inadequate for the new tasks of reconstruction. They either have to undergo a complete political re-orientation, or new parties have to be formed with a new outlook, capable of grappling with the complexities of the new stage of development. We have said above that mankind has a body of knowledge that is our heritage. It is up to us to choose which ideas are necessary for our progress. The world is divided into two economic systems, the capitalist-imperialist and the socialist system. Africa has to choose which of these is suitable for its own development. The choice itself will decide the overall strategy that must be followed in the day-to-day development.

It has to be borne in mind that in the present epoch the world productive forces are bursting asunder the capitalist integument, with all its social and political relationships. Other continents, which only yesterday were regarded as backward, have forged an extremely rapid development along the socialist path. Today they are regarded as world powers. From purely economic considerations, it is impossible for Africa to lift itself up by its own bootstraps and attain real independence, unless it takes the socialist road. ●

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.

If any of the articles in this newsletter have interested you then it should be worth your while to visit our website at www.apdusa.org.za for the latest postings. While the website is still under construction it already holds an array of archival material that is relevant to the ongoing struggle in South Africa.

Now available: "The Dynamic Of Revolution In South Africa" – Speeches and writings of IB Tabata, edited by Dora Taylor and published by Socialist Resistance UK. Available from APDUSA or from Socialist Resistance - socialistresistance.org

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