



THE

APDUSAN

Vol 11 No 1
March 2005

AFRICAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC UNION
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Interests Of The Workers And Landless Peasants Shall Be Paramount

AN INDEFINITE WAIT FOR THE HOMELESS

South Africa is in the throes of the worldwide process of urbanisation. Given the lack of a workable plan for rural land reform, the tendency for rural dwellers to migrate to urban areas, especially metropolises and bigger cities in the country is rising steadily. Once settled in these urban areas, people would hope for respite from the abject poverty and deprivation they experience in the rural areas and countryside. What they do however encounter is lack of shelter, and worse, lack of a means of subsistence. The recent developments around housing in the Western Cape province testifies to the lack of political vision and the ad hoc approach of the provincial government, informed as it is, by the national housing policy of the ANC government.

Central and provincial government maintain that they have systems in place to address the problem of homelessness, the huge housing backlogs that exist (to the tune of 800 000 housing units nationally i.e. those on a waiting list to receive houses) and the eradication of squatter camps (called informal settlements). Firstly, a commitment has been obtained from banks to grant credit for those in the lower income brackets. Government is willing to offer credit guarantees for those in the R3500 – 7000pm income bracket. The South African reality is that the majority of households have a monthly income below these levels. These figures should also be read in conjunction with the 2.4 million households that are classified as 'informal' in the country. Somewhere along the line 1.6 million households are left out of the equation. Secondly, the national housing department in 2004 adopted the National Housing Programme for the Upgrading of Informal Settlements. Part of this programme involves the rolling out of a new 'human settlement plan'. Two schemes per province are envisaged with the N2 Gateway programme being the pilot one in Cape Town. It involves collaboration between the three tiers of government in the provision of housing.

On closer inspection, however (in the case of Cape Town), the housing backlog stands at 261 000 units with a delivery capacity of 11 000 units per annum. Rough calculations therefore put the time to eliminate the backlog at this rate at 23 years and a

bit. The express purpose of the N2 Gateway project is the beautification of the access route from Cape Town International airport into the city. The intention to eradicate squatter housing by 2010, as stated by the national housing minister Lindiwe Sisulu is directly related to the hosting of the soccer world Cup tournament in 2010. Thirdly, with the aid of a subsidy scheme that only recently saw the subsidy amount being increased to approximately R30 000, the state has since 1995 assisted in the building of 1.614 million housing units providing housing to 7 million people. Many of these houses measure 3m by 6m. Most are structurally unstable with walls cracking up, foundations sagging, etc. To add to the problem, since 1994 the housing budget has on average been less than 2%. Moreover, Statistics South Africa puts the current growth rate of informal settlements at 14%; this, it is expected, will continue until 2010 and thereafter decline to an annual growth rate of 3%.

The abdication of responsibility by government to adequately house the population and leaving it instead to the banks and private developers to step in the breach should be clear for all to see. For households in their hundreds of thousands, to be living in the backyards of others, and paying rent as well as surviving in squatter camps is considered quite normal for those in authority. Their haste in accelerating the N2 Gateway project was induced by the fire that devastated the Joe Slovo squatter camp. Under normal circumstances officials would reason that they do not want to 'raise expectation' of the homeless - some who have been on waiting lists for up to 20 years. The attempts at solving these problems raised above is characteristic of the piecemeal type of governance practices that feature in neo-liberal practices the world over.

Lip service is paid to solving the problems of the workers and downtrodden classes whilst systematically oppressing those classes, making them believe that the solutions to their problems can only be found in the words of wisdom and actions of great leaders and elites the world over.

The resentment of the squatter communities and backyard/waiting list households and families at the incompetent handling of the allocation of ➔

➔ houses linked to the N2 Gateway project by the city council and the provincial government runs deep. Inter-community competition for houses to be built has now become the norm. Long established communities are at odds with relative newcomers to the city over the allocation of houses. The corporate media has hinted at racial undercurrents and overtones becoming more a permanent feature of the conflict. The mainstream (bourgeois) political parties have been shown to be singularly incapable of providing political guidance on the issue. Instead of assisting the homeless, the provincial premier opted to launch a court interdict against families who occupied an unoccupied school hostel. The singular lesson to be learnt is that government officials such as this premier, who espouse a 'pro-poor policy' will not hesitate for one moment to use the state's repressive forces to ensure implementation of their reactionary policies.

Members of other homeless communities have been seeking out and attempting to occupy empty houses vacated by the state as part of its downsizing of operations in the field of health and education.

The common demands for housing has cleverly been sidestepped and the focus placed on the plight and interests of one community as opposed to that of another. Communities have yet again been compelled to take up struggles for decent housing through the establishment of crisis committees.

The government's expanded public works programme is meant to alleviate the plight of the millions of poor citizens. Does it in any way make adequate provision for the homeless - in the short to medium term? If not, why not? The demands around housing cannot be anything else but based on a public works programme to develop and service new residential areas. These areas should all have the necessary social amenities and the housing units should be fit for human occupation. This must be coupled with a meaningful and progressive land redistribution program; one which is driven by the critical needs of the landless in and from the rural areas and not by fanciful notions of willing buyer-willing seller arrangements in a "free market" or black economic empowerment for the benefit of a few. ●

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND SERVICE DELIVERY

It has become standard practice for the national government to turn to all manner of subterfuges when faced with critical issues of governance. With local government elections looming, the ANC government appears to be jittery about the problems of non-delivery of basic municipal services. The revolts in the Free State during late 2004 and other protests during this year in response to this failure in service delivery has raised a number of important questions.

When government speaks of 'lack of capacity' what does it really mean? If after 10 years in government the ruling party is still fumbling on the issue of employment of suitable personnel to run local government then seriousness of intent should be questioned. Does the privatisation of municipal services (e.g. water and electricity provision) induce a sense of abdication of these elected officials. If not, are they simply acting out their role of sham representation in a system riddled with corruption and self-aggrandisement? How is the

problem of 'lack of capacity' to be addressed? One solution offered by national government is to dispatch experts to struggling municipalities to save the abysmal situation many of these municipalities find themselves in. A government audit conducted late in 2004 revealed that a staggering 44.4% (126 out of 284) of all municipalities were found to have 'little or no capacity' to serve their communities. This 'dispatching of experts' means the transfer of skills away from another centre of government, which will in turn induce a lack of capacity at that level. The entire process eventually ends up being a series of stop-gap measures to plug holes in a system that cannot and will not function as their inventors would want. 'Project Consolidate' is meant to address mismanagement, incapacity and corruption and instability in local government. Its eventual failure in the fullness of time will be addressed with yet another 'project, or as has happened in this instance, the promulgation of a bill to overcome the

communication gap between councillors and the people. More laws, more bureaucrats, more fat cats to administer these regulations. And, as is standard practice with the ruling party, the participation and contributions of communities, through their own representative organisations is not considered an appropriate way of dealing with and overcoming 'lack of capacity'. The more the talk of democratic inclusivity, the greater the degree of exclusivity practised.

In the mean time government is merrily going ahead imposing yet more 'solutions' onto the population of the country. As if the pre-paid system for water was not causing enough pain and suffering for the poor majority, along comes the proposed regional electricity distribution system (Reds). While still in its infancy, this system is bound to cause more hardship for the already struggling urban and rural poor. In many instances communities find themselves in situations where they are compelled to respond to these ➔

<p>➔ types of undemocratic government practices. Some opt to take to the streets to vent their anger at these hammer blows on their living standards. Others such as the residents of Evaton West (EWCCC) and Wallacedene</p>	<p>(Inimba Yamakhosikazi) become involved in self-help projects to soften the blows of deliberate state non-involvement in the affairs of the community. People are therefore standing up to claim their rightful place as human</p>	<p>beings and citizens of the country in the face of the systematic rolling back of the political gains achieved over the last decade and more. Their organisational efforts should be applauded and consistently supported. ●</p>
---	--	--

‘RED OCTOBER’ AND THE FIGHT FOR LAND

Every October in recent memory the South African Communist Party (SACP) has had a Red October campaign as its way of commemorating Russia’s socialist revolution in October 1917. This event usually spans a number of meetings and marches staged through the month of October, all culminating in a National day of Action on 6 November, one day before the birthday of the first workers state in human history. Traditionally, Red October is organised around a theme, like ‘the transformation of the banking and financial sector’ (2000) or ‘social security rights and food security’ (2002). An overarching goal of these campaigns is to recruit as many members as possible to party structures before the planned actions start fizzling out around the beginning of December.

The SACP’s latest Red October campaign, under the slogan “*Mawubuye umhlaba: Land, Food, Jobs!*”, however, seems to break from the previous ad hoc routine. Already in its sixth month, the 2004 campaign is set to roll along at least until government, through NEDLAC, convenes a National Land Summit to debate ways to ‘speed-up land and agrarian reform’. At this summit there will be representatives of landless peasants, farm workers, government bodies, and commercial farmers. In preparation for this summit, there has to be a People’s Land Conference to enable people’s organisations to craft a common platform of their demands for the land summit.

Meanwhile, the SACP has been meeting with commercial farmers associations to win them over to its demand for a land summit, as well as to woo the National African Farmers Union (NAFU) and traditional leaders over to this multiparty indaba. Gauging from the multi-class character of this land summit, which is modelled on several jobs summits that failed to curb rising unemployment, it is likely to frustrate rather than accelerate ‘access to and ownership of productive land by the landless’. As with the job summits, the land indaba will dilute the genuine demands of the landless poor and offer apologies for neo-liberal policies!

Nevertheless, on the face of it, support for the 2004 Red October campaign and its demands have been expanding. The number of organisations that have joined in, rose from 44 to over 50. About 80% of these organisations are NGOs (including the National Land Committee and its affiliates, SANGOCO, etc), trade unions (ranging from COSATU to FAWU to NUM) and political organisations (ANC, AZAPO and PAC). Social movements fighting for land, like the LPM and

LAMOSA that are smaller and less militant than a few years ago, are also participating. Despite this impressive array of groups involved in this campaign, coupled with the financial backing of donors, it has been unable to reach more than 25,000 people to date - less than 2% of landless people. This weak rural base stems partly from decades of demobilisation and depoliticising land struggles and the popularity of service delivery organisations.

Noticeably absent from the list of participating organisations are the APF, urban allies of the LPM, and the Trust for Community Outreach and Education (TCOE), a NGO network active on agrarian issues in the Eastern Cape. TCOE organised a tribunal against landlessness and rural poverty in the Eastern Cape at the end of 2003, which was attended by more than 300 representatives from rural communities across the country. Like those involved in the SACP’s Red October campaign, it has exposed the ‘willing seller and willing buyer’ approach that government follows as the chief obstacle to pro-poor agrarian reform. Has TCOE been excluded because it called on government to scrap the property rights clause in the Constitution, a demand that runs counter to the SACP’s kow-towing to bourgeois law? How representative and democratic will the Peoples Land Conference be if critical social forces in the land struggle are excluded from the start?

To sustain this “*Mawubuye umhlaba: Land, Food, Jobs!*” campaign in the longer term, People’s Land Committees must be created. These committees are envisaged as ‘popular local centres of power’ uniting grassroots organisations around local demands and struggles. In 2005, SACP branches will go into rural districts to set up these land committees that must engage government, farmers and traditional leaders. What kind of grassroots power will land committees, created in the exclusionary image of the SACP, have in reality? In the real world, far away from the current fads with ‘popular grassroots power’, militant mass movements of landless have to be built from below instead of from above. Democratic control of such movements must rest in the hands of the rural population, who must be prepared to seize political power instead of just engaging the ‘state, farmers and traditional leaders’. After all, in Russia’s great October revolution, the peasantry allied itself to the workers in the towns to overthrow the bourgeois state as a first step to address the agrarian question. ●

Mbeki Defends Black Economic Empowerment

The ANC policy of Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) has come under strong criticism from various quarters, not least from its alliance partner, Cosatu which objects that BEE only benefits a few at the expense of the majority. In an interview with the SABC after his State of the Nation Address, President Mbeki objected to this criticism. (Cape Times 14/02/05). He said that the government was not responsible for Black businessmen who brokered their own deals and became billionaires as a result (as if the ANC does

not favour and encourage such business deals).. Mbeki argued that, on the contrary, instead of the government BEE program benefiting only a small elite it was aimed at “broad based” BEE, for example, through municipal contracts for road repairs and laying water pipes. So he wants us to believe that those who have benefited and become relatively rich through his “broad based” BEE are not a minority. The fact is whether this sector of wealthy blacks achieved their new economic status through private deals or via government contracts they remain a minority. The majority still suffer joblessness, low wages and economic insecurity. ●



From Around the World

THE FIFTH WORLD SOCIAL FORUM RETURNS TO PORTO ALEGRE

If we were to plot the yearly mass participation in the World Social Forum on a graph, it will display a steadily rising curve. It climbs from a low of 16000 participants at WSF-I in 2001 to more than 155000 participants from 135 countries that registered for WSF-V that took place in Porto Alegre from 26-31 January 2005. Thus, from the first to the fifth WSF gathering, participation shot-up nearly 10-fold!

In the days leading up to the opening march on January 26, the debate about whether the WSF has reached its peak was buzzing in the air. Maybe due to lessons from the past, many people started asking how, if at all possible, to sustain this spectacular mass support for the WSF? From the third day, after 19 high profile intellectuals released a kind of political manifesto, questions concerning the political direction of the WSF became more openly posed. Finally, at an assessment meeting of leftwing groups after the closing march the problem of how to ensure that the WSF moves along a revolutionary anti-capitalist course, topped the agenda.

At Porto Alegre in January 2005, Brazil's radical left drew the attention of thousands of activists from across the world to the swelling opposition to President Lula's eager and unashamed perpetuation of neo-liberalism. President Lula's failure to break with neo-liberalism and the expulsion of leading activists from the Workers Party (PT) undoubtedly sharpened the differences between the rightwing and leftwing in the PT, with an emboldened radical left exposing the reactionary shifts in its political trajectory.

Presidents Lula and Chavez spoke at events under the official organisational program of the WSF, which is indicative of the easing of restrictions on heads of state and political parties from speaking

at events under the banner of the WSF. They appeared at separate events and these two leaders met with completely different responses. There was of course massive advertising for both events, including the screening of 2 new documentaries about Lula's political career as a metal worker and his victorious election campaign. However, attendance at the mass rallies was worlds apart and the moods that these two world leaders triggered among participants were quite different.

Lula's appearance at the World Economic Forum of imperialism in Davos, one day after speaking against poverty at the WSF enraged people. The Economist magazine depicted the atmosphere like this: “Lula's compromises have sharpened the division between those who think the current order can be fixed and those who insist it must be overthrown.” (The Economist, 5/02/05). Then, with a greater sense of trepidation and alarm hidden behind its cynicism, it states: “The real leader seem to be a leader untainted by realism, Venezuela's leftist president, Hugo Chavez...” (ibid)

Any person who caught a full aerial picture of the huge opening march will confirm two facts: the predominance of red flags and the dwarfing of PT flags by flags of the non-PT left. Large numbers of Brazilian workers still see the PT as the Party through which they can realise a life free from exploitation, inequality and misery. This is a complex and fluid situation, as the Lula administration is discrediting and undermining the image of the Workers Party. After two years the anger with PT policies seems to be running deep as the following observation ought to show: At the centre of the PT's red flag is a yellow star with the letters PT stitched on it in bold black. ➡

➤ Several activists carried these red flags that had the letters PT cut out from its centre, leaving a square hole in the centre of its yellow star.

This is a case in point where internal political strife appears to overshadow the internationalist orientation of the WSF. It might be further argued that this event exposed the fracturing and feuding among left parties in Brazil and will take the movement nowhere. Indeed, this event seemed to have played into the hands of the anti-political party hacks attracted to the WSF. But their gloomy description of what is happening in Brazil is extremely superficial.

Contrary to their depiction of the situation, a leftwing regroupment is in fact underway in Brazil

as evidenced in the formation of PSOL (Partido Socialismo e Liberdade), a new and powerful regroupment of radical left forces and initiated by those expelled from the PT. While it is far too early to conclude that PSOL has wrested the leadership of the workers and social movements from the PT, this new force has certainly left an indelible imprint on the WSF-V. During the WSF it held its second national congress. On the final day, it was instrumental in setting up the meeting where the revolutionary forces that understand the importance of the WSF at this juncture could strategise how to fight for the 'political soul of the WSF. ●

World Social Forum 2007

From Porto Alegre to Africa

In 2007 the World Social Forum (WSF) will take place in an African city, moving this 'global anti-capitalist assembly' outside Brazil only for the second time since its inception. This will raise anti-capitalist mobilisation to a new level in Africa, although the speed and depth of its process will vary from country to country. Africa's own contribution to the international social forum process will depend both on the impact of the WSF on Africa and on the state of the African Social Forum (ASF).

When the 2004 WSF was moved to Mumbai, a poor Indian city, many doubted that it would be successful there. All subsequent assessments though have rated the WSF in India a remarkable triumph. It gave a platform to the oppressed and excluded to voice their demands and encouraged the spread of social forums in India and elsewhere in East Asia. But what was India's unique contribution? It introduced an improvement in the methodology that allowed many revolutionary left currents to organise panels in the official WSF programme. From India onwards, the WSF seems to have shifted leftward and this was quite visible in the political atmosphere at WSF 2005 as compared to the past.

The general lack of information about the state of the ASF has created uncertainty about the capacity and preparedness of Africa to host the 2007 WSF. Surely, if any problem appears to threaten hosting this event in 2007, the International Council of the WSF and other continental forums will rally to the aid of the ASF. This kind of support is consistent with the international solidarity so fundamental to the world anti-capitalist movement.

Next year, although the WSF will still take place on the same day, it will be decentralised. In line with this new format, continental social forums should be smaller replicas of the massive gatherings we have seen in Porto Alegre and Mumbai. From its continental forum set for January 2006 in Morocco,

the ASF is likely to gain some logistical know-how to organise the 2007 event. All things considered, there is no fundamental reason why Africa should not be ready to host the WSF when the time comes.

With a major international anti-neoliberal gathering set to take place in Africa, it is natural to expect this event to propel mass mobilisation and the revolutionary left to the forefront. Or will it just be, as many of the detractors of the WSF say, a short-lived "carnival of the anti-globalisation rabble-rousers dominated by NGOs"? And maybe 'arts and crafts sales' will overshadow the 'art of leftwing political activity'? Despite what its enemies claim, the WSF has established itself as a political force building an alternative to capitalism. Porto Alegre shaped this image with its politics of the participatory budget, while Mumbai gave the radical left a more prominent voice. Is the ASF able to sustain this radicalising momentum? This is the decisive test.

Ultimately, even this minimal contribution to the global anti-capitalist movement will depend on the political orientation of the major forces inside the ASF and the nature of its activities. According to limited public information on the ASF, a few well-funded NGOs, academics and a couple of trade union officials dominate the secretariat. The trade unions, especially COSATU delegates, made a strong case for 'pluralism and inclusiveness' in the preparations for WSF 2007 at one of two big sessions that the ASF organised in Porto Alegre. Many participants at this session, including speakers from the International Council and other continental forums, endorsed this message as it echoed the spirit of the WSF. Other speakers who supported this slogan, however, raised questions about the 'secrecy' surrounding the functioning of the ASF secretariat. Speaker after speaker expressed the need to build a mass-based social forum process in ➤

➡ Africa that is rooted in socialist alternatives to neo-liberalism.

The presence of socialist militants in the ASF is heartening. Yet a broader and balanced view of its activities reveals worrying signs of weakness too. Although its secretariat now meets more frequently in different countries on the continent, it is unclear on what basis organisations are represented. In addition to this lack of internal democracy, the dominance of NGOs who must follow the dictates of their rich paymasters, is a legitimate point of division and conflict. At the recent WSF in Porto Alegre, less than half a dozen panels had some connection with the ASF, including a report back

session of its December 2004 meeting in Lusaka. Crucial issues ranging from civil wars and debt, to the status of women and youth in a continent ravaged by HIV/AIDS, were on the agenda at this report-back event. While the Zimbabwean Social Forum (under the control of NGOs) organised a lively session attended by large numbers of youth from across the world to seeking to understand the political situation in that country, no other African country attempted to do the same. These are indications of the slow and uneven evolution of social forums in Africa after the first four years of the WSF ●

THE ELECTIONS IN IRAQ

The elections in Iraq have taken place in a country where a bitter armed struggle is being waged by the Iraqis against the occupying US and British forces. The occupation has aroused the hostility of the vast majority of the population of Iraq, with some taking up arms against the invaders while others resist through demonstrations and strikes. As regards the elections, the population were deeply divided as to whether to take part in or to boycott them. The original plan of the US imperialists to rule Iraq through an unelected Iraqi governing council chosen by the US had to be scrapped because of the opposition of the Iraqi people. The armed uprising and the mass demonstrations in January 2004 called by Grand Ayatollah Sistani, the highest Shiite cleric in Iraq, against the plans of the invaders forced them to rethink their strategy. After a year's delay and with the help of the UN, the US reluctantly agreed to elections to an interim parliament taking place at the end of January 2005. The parliament is to draw up a constitution by August this year with a full scale election at the end of the year.

During the past year, the violence, chaos and anarchy in Iraq have escalated to almost uncontrollable levels. Poverty is deepening, there is widespread malnutrition and essential drugs and medical supplies are not available. There are serious water shortages, the electrical grid is

collapsing again, and the petrol queues greater than they were in the days following the imperialist invasion in 2003. More than half the population are unemployed. The myth of the invaders still "controlling" Iraq has been exposed by the hundreds of media reports of towns occupied by the Iraqi resistance fighters and checkpoints along main highways deserted and littered with burnt out American military vehicles. The US forces cannot even control the main streets of Baghdad. It is only in the Kurdish north of the country where there is any security.

To try to understand the division among the Iraqi population to the election process one has to look at the past history of the country with its multi-ethnic population. Under British rule and post independence, the Sunnis, who are a minority of the population (20%), dominated the political life of the country. Most of the Sunnis are opposed to the elections and it is from their ranks that the majority of those involved in armed resistance to the occupation have been recruited. The reports on polling day indicate that in the Sunni areas in the centre and north of the country the boycott of the elections was effective. Among the Shias, who form the majority of the population (60%) and who live mainly in the South and the centre of Iraq, most supported the elections and turned out in large numbers to vote. The Kurds (20% of

population), mainly live in Iraqi Kurdistan, which has benefited, since the end of the first Gulf War in 1991 from a real autonomy and a privileged status in comparison with the rest of Iraq. They have escaped the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and prospered economically. Unlike the Sunnis and Shias, most of the Kurds accept the occupation. They thronged the polling booths on election day to cast their votes.

The elections, taking place under an occupation and where there is a state of emergency, were to say the least held under the most restrictive of conditions. The locations of many polling booths were only made known in the last days before the election. The names of candidates on over 100 lists (from which the voter had to choose one list) were made public, if at all, a day or two before the elections. Without policy statements from the candidates, virtually no public meetings and relatively few placards, the "election campaign" was mainly confined to television adverts, which few of the parties could afford. The occupation, which is a central political issue, did not feature in the elections.

US imperialism's strategic objectives in occupying Iraq were to establish twelve large military bases in the country and to control its oil wealth. This assumes a permanent US presence in the country. Having control of the levers of power, the US will try to ensure that a government ➡

➤ that emerges through the political process set in motion by the elections, follows a path which suits its interests. But the future in Iraq for them is riddled with imponderables. A coalition of Shia parties is likely to play a dominant role in any future government. The expectations of the Shias will be high, and are unlikely to be fulfilled given the agenda of the US occupation forces. The US fears the influence of Iran on the Shias. The Kurds, having run an autonomous region since 1991,

will at the very least demand autonomy within a federal state with plenty of room for disagreement over its precise borders within the Iraqi state. Militarily, the US finds itself in a quagmire, which can only get worse. In the absence of a political solution to Iraq's problems, it faces the stark choice of greatly increasing its military forces to try and overcome the armed resistance to its occupation or withdrawing from the country. There is one other option that it

has been considering and that is trying to provoke a civil war between the Shiites and the Sunnis and then posing as the only force capable of bringing stability to the country. In the struggle against the US and British occupation of their country, the Iraqi people look for the support of progressive forces internationally. The global anti-war demonstration that took place on March 19 could not have come at a more opportune time. ●

Letters

THE INDEPENDENCE OF PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION

Comrades

The independence of people's organisations is one of the most important principles in the class struggle. It comes from the fact that the interests of the working class and the capitalist (bourgeois) class cannot be reconciled. It signifies, on the one hand, an organisational independence (e.g. a trade union) in which the workers democratically control their own organisations. It also means ideological independence such that when workers take any political decision they base it on their own interests without any fear of what the bourgeoisie might say.

While organisational independence is easy to grasp, ideological independence is less so yet it is fundamentally important. To illustrate this, let us look at the decisions of the Cosatu leadership, be it in a strike or in defence of workers' interests. They always take into account what the ANC and the SACP will say. But the ANC is managing a bourgeois government i.e. politically managing the economic interests of the capitalist class. The SACP clouds this political arrangement. So, in a relationship such as the tri-partite alliance ideological and political independence of the working class is compromised, if not non-existent.

Some workers in the General Industries Workers Union of South Africa (GIWUSA), for instance, have split from one Cosatu affiliate - CEPPWAWU - for political reasons. These comrades have in fact broken away from the class collaborationist politics of Cosatu's leadership. In GIWUSA decisions are taken democratically, meaning that these workers rule themselves by their own interests.

To some workers, however, this independence means an independence from politics. This interpretation is wrong. No workers' organisation can be independent from politics. Politics in the democratic capitalist state means the democratic subjugation of workers' interests to the interests of the capitalist class

VOLUNTEERISM

The editor

The government encourages volunteerism in its departments. Business is forced to introduce learnerships in their companies. Setas have now been re-established from 1 April 2005 to 2010 to co-ordinate skills development. These strategies are supposed to lead to sustainable job creation or entrepreneurship and miraculously the problem of unemployment and poverty will be solved.

These plans will not succeed. Volunteerism is pure exploitation. The volunteer is required to work for nothing, while officials earn comfortable salaries and have many perks. At the end of the period there is no guarantee that the volunteer will be employable. In-service staff benefit from learnerships but few of the unemployed are trained by Business. Consultants are sprouting up everywhere earning enormous fees while the unemployed are left destitute.

Setas are working with huge sums of money spent on infrastructure, travelling, workshops and consultants. They have the power and control over who will and will not be accredited. With so much red tape small skilled entrepreneurs cannot compete with big firms, especially the Black Economic Empowerment power-houses.

Volunteerism, learnerships, contracts have been introduced as palliatives. The purpose is to make it seem as if government is seriously tackling the problem of unemployment. But this is a farce. In fact it is deplorable because these strategies raise false hopes. Youth do not stay young forever. They need to plan for the future. Life is not just about having enough for the next meal. It revolves around earning enough to provide a home, education for children, money for leisure activities and above all making life meaningful and secure.

Volunteerism and learnerships will not lead to sustainable job creation. The majority of the citizens of our country remain poor and hungry.

Not Gullible

Manuel's "Pro-Poor" Budget

Comrades

Our Finance Minister, Mr Trevor Manuel's 2005 budget has been hailed by the business world even while many have labelled it as "pro-poor". But we see that company tax has once again been dropped and now stands at 29% compared to the over 40% before the ANC took over the reigns of state. To see what this means we need only to look at the profits of the top 200 companies in South Africa as compiled by the Financial Mail in its 2004 survey. Here we see that the total profits, based on the last

financial year figures available for each of these companies, amounts to the enormous total of about R14 8550 million. Since these companies now pay about 12% less income tax than they did before the days of the ANC government this comes to about R17825 million (R17.8 billion), which could have gone a long way to relieve the plight of the poverty stricken masses of our country. Minister Manuel's budget is very generous to the rich but hardly helps the poor. His budget needs some manual labour.

Jake

APDUSA

APDUSA was established in 1961 by the Unity Movement of South Africa (UMSA) to raise the interests of the working class and landless peasantry as paramount in the national liberatory struggle. Despite the gain of political rights for all, the compromise of 1992 has not fulfilled the national 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. We have therefore adopted a programme of transitional demands for the completion of the unfinished tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution in an uninterrupted struggle for socialism.

APDUSA calls for the self-organisation and united independent struggle of the labouring masses. We further 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

We 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.
- 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.

The democratic demands and aspirations of the oppressed workers and peasants shall be paramount

Printed and published by the African People's Democratic Union of Southern Africa ; Email: apdusa@vfemail.net;
Contact: 021-9887182