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AFRICAN PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC UNION
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

20c

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

A BUDGET FOR THE RICH

Trevor Manuel received a lot of pats on the back from the captains of industry for his latest budget. How does it affect the working masses? Firstly, a comparison of tax revenue in the 1980/81 budget with the current one shows how our present government has continued the job started by the old apartheid regime to shift the burden of tax onto the backs of the victims of capitalist exploitation.

Tax Source	1980-1981	2000-2001
	%	%
Individual tax	16.6	42.8
Gold mines	20.9	0.1
Companies	18.1	12.1
VAT	12.5	25.7
Customs and Excise	12.7	4.0
Other	19.8	2.8

The three sections of tax revenue; gold mines, company and customs and excise have decreased greatly, while individual tax has increased by 26.2%. We thus find that the working people of this country are being bled dry by individual tax and VAT while companies are being rewarded for their "entrepreneurship".

The lowering of company taxes aims to lure international companies to the country, while the strengthening of labour laws which is envisaged this year will ensure a flexible workforce. In other words workers must accept lower wages and won't or can't react to attacks on their conditions of employment.

Secondly, the restructuring of state assets (privatisation) has realised R2.7 billion more than the previous year and this has enabled the government to pay back on their loans from national and international lenders. The sale of national assets are not being used in the interests of the population. The expected payment of interest for this year alone is 5.3% of GDP. The total amount of money owed by the government is 45% of the GDP. Tax rebates are given to the owners of railway lines, power lines and oil pipelines. These assets are owned by the government through parastatals but when they are sold the rebates will be for the benefit of the new private owners!

Next we find that social services spending has been increased by only a few percent. But looking at these increases against the inflation rate (+7%) we find that an increase of 8% for health in fact only represents an increase of 1 percent. The same thing applies to

FLOODS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

The Plight Of The Rural Poor

The floods which have recently ravaged Southern Africa highlight in particular the plight of the rural poor. Their wretched situation of deprivation, bad housing, chronic malnutrition and inadequate access to clean water and sanitation has further deteriorated. Hundreds have lost their lives, their animals and personal possessions have been swept away and they have been left homeless. With only five helicopters from South Africa, the government of Mozambique was unable to mount a very effective rescue operation. As in previous crises in Africa, such as the famines in Ethiopia and the Rwandan genocide, the governments of the imperialist states virtually ignored the crisis in Mozambique. It was only the pressure from their own citizens who saw the pictures on television of people clinging to trees while the raging torrents flowed below, that forced these governments into action.

In South Africa, although the floods have not caused as much devastation as in Mozambique, many lives have been lost and the damage is considerable. An article in the Sunday Independent of the 5th of March written by Malcolm Ray contrasts the havoc wreaked by the floods on the lives of the black rural poor in Siyandhani in the Northern Province, with the white middle class living in the nearby suburb of Kremetart being relatively untouched. Ray comments "What is striking is how history has armed Kremetart with the infrastructure to withstand natural disasters but left Siyandhani vulnerable to catastrophes". The residents of Siyandhani are bitter at the inaction of local government to their plight "We have not seen anyone from the government. A plane flew over the village a few days ago but no one came here," said Bennet Ngoveni. The rural poor remain helpless against natural disasters and defenceless against the exploitation they suffer as a result of their landlessness. The resolution of the land question is a matter of life and death for them. ●

spending on education and social grants.

Comrades this budget of Trevor Manuel is not for the benefit of the exploited but in the interests of the capitalist class which the South African government represents. The IMF and World Bank dictates that the state must spend less money on social services while processes must be put in place to enable companies to make super profits at the cost of the workers. ●

UNEMPLOYMENT GROWS

When the Department of Labour introduced GEAR, they made certain projections. 126 000 jobs would be created in 1996 and a further 252 000 in 1997. Instead, at the end of June 1996, 60 000 jobs had been lost. (The Star 16.04.97). Then in 1997, according to a study conducted by WEFA South Africa (an economic consultancy), another 142 000 jobs were lost. This was despite an economic growth of 1,7%. On top of these job losses the labour force grew by about 320 000. (Cape Times, 29/02/2000). 380 000 jobs has been shed by the labour market in the last 5 years. (Mail & Guardian, 9/3/2000).

The unskilled and semi-skilled bear the brunt of job losses. Haroon Borat (of the Development Policy Research Centre at the University of Cape Town) says that the unemployment figure in S.A. is estimated at 4 million (21% - compared to 5% in Brazil and Ireland). He also said that most had less than a matric education, resulting in a mismatch between labour demand

and labour supply. (Business Report, 20/02/2000.)

Tony Twine (an economist at Econometrix) said: "Any jobs created have been swamped by job destruction and now government and parastatals are set to join the spiral. Quite frankly, there's nothing on the horizon which points to more people being employed at the end of 2002 than there are now, even if we have growth of 3,5%. The best we can hope for is that the increase in the rate of unemployment will decline - in other words that things will get worse slower." (Business Report, 20/02/2000). ●

THE WEALTH GAP WIDENS

The gulf between the rich and the poor has widened since 1994. A study on income distribution between 1991 and 1996 (carried out by WEFA), shows the following: "The income of the poorest 40% of black households was 20% lower in lower in 1996, than it had been in 1991". (Cape Times, 29/02/2000).

The budget does not provide a social safety net for the poor. "Sally Timmel of Fairshare (a unit of the

School of Governance at the University of the Western Cape) points out that the R20 a month increase state pensioners will receive in real terms amount to a decrease of 1.5%, if one takes inflation into account." (The Sunday Independent, 27/02/2000).

Against this backdrop one learns that millions allocated for the poor were left unspent. A report by Shaukie Fakie, the auditor-general, states: "Of the R204 million the national welfare department was allocated for poverty relief in 1998/9, only R1 423 304 (or 0,7%) was spent." (Sunday Independent, 27/02/2000). The report also disclosed that R11,7 million (from the Dutch government) for transforming the child and youth care components of the juvenile and youth work system also went unused, because the department failed to make the necessary arrangements. The report further shows that of the R27.5 million budgeted for child support benefits only R2.3 million (8.4%), was used.

Since the widening of the gulf is ever increasing, we should demand that the funds that are available for the poor should be spent properly.

WORKERS FIGHT TO WORK - AND LIVE

On the occasion of a protest march by COSATU workers in Cape Town, the provincial secretary of the SACP, a certain Gwebinkundla Qonde is reported to have said that there is a "danger of our democracy increasingly being enjoyed by fewer people at the expense of the poor working class." (Cape Times of 16/03/2000). He neglected to add "... and the poor landless peasants."

Why he regards it as a "danger" and not a reality only he will know. So assuming that what he's saying can broadly be agreed with, the next question that needs to be put to the provincial secretary is, what is to be done about this "democracy for the few and privileged"? Are we to continue making more noises about the lack of "real transformation" and utter other tired political clichés? Or set on a political path where a democratic system is built where these "few" are replaced the "many". He has to decide. As for the rest of his Communist party comrades, the choices facing the class they are supposed to represent are rather stark: fight for the overthrow of this system, or starve and die. Full stop. ●

"BACK TO BASICS!"

This call is always made like a war-cry by shopstewards and worker leaders during General meetings of workers or Shopstewards Councils. It recalls those times in the 80's when workers themselves took the initiative in struggles instead of waiting on their leadership.

This war-cry is more relevant today as it is clear that workers have less control over their organisations. Officials, especially national ones, seem to hold full control over union policy matters. One has to observe how the COSATU leadership approaches the struggle today: Half-measures, ad hoc and poorly planned strategies and above all, ineffective action. This must be attributed to the leadership's acceptance of the political policy of co-optation of the black petty bourgeois intelligentsia in the running of the bourgeois state machinery. It is a policy embodied in the Tripartite Alliance - that unfortunate Alliance where the mighty working class is made a junior partner of the petty bourgeoisie.

The cry "BACK TO BASICS!" must be interpreted as a cry against the collaborationist stance of the Union leadership with the bourgeoisie. It will thus be proper to compliment "BACK TO BASICS" with "NON-COLLABORATION WITH THE RULING BOURGEOIS CLASS!" ●

A REGIONAL MILITARY POLICE FORCE?

With the announcement of an armaments shopping spree by the government not so long ago, the South African population was warned of the big increase in defence expenditure reflected in this year's budget. Military expenditure will grow sharply by an average 15.5% for three years as new weapons are bought to modernise the South African Defence Force and to bolster the country as a regional superpower.

Budget estimates for the first three arms deal instalments are R2.89bn in 2000/2001, R4.05bn in 2001/ 2002 and R5.05bn in the year 2002/2003. Thus the defence budget which currently stands at R13.7bn, will

increase to R15,2 bn next year, and in the third year the total will be R16,4bn. The tax payers will have to pay for this extravagance as well as the interest on the big loans involved.

Why is the South African government prepared to spend such a lot of money on armaments while there is a huge backlog on infrastructure such as schools, clinics and roads? It does not make any sense, since an external enemy is non-existent. But the South African defence force was recently involved in two military training exercises with America, in which it is being trained how to become a peace keeper in regional conflicts. Imperialism has a

major interest in exploiting the vast resources of countries on the African continent and any conflict there endangers their profits. It is not easy for the imperialist countries like America to send in their own troops to settle these conflicts as they have lost the respect of most of these countries. It therefore wants to use South Africa as a bastion of imperialism on the continent. Only recently, America urged South Africa to send a Peacekeeping Force to the Congo. As the South African government falls in line with this scheme the population will have to foot the bill.

FISHING "RIGHTS"

The many communities along the South African coastline who have traditionally depended on the sea for their livelihood, had every reason to be excited when the ANC was voted into political power in 1994. The Department of Environmental Affairs promised a new policy on fishing rights that would be more democratic and equitable. These poverty stricken communities hoped that their marginalisation by the big fishing monopolies would be ended. But the new policy proved to be nothing but an unmitigated disaster. Indeed, a new policy on fishing quotas was implemented. But it did nothing to help the poor fisher folk. Instead the large monopolies continued to get big quotas, except that sizeable quotas were also granted to newly created "Black Empowerment" companies. Amongst these were those who had no interest in fishing at all. They merely sold their quotas to the big monopolies for huge profits. With no consideration given to their plight, the fishing communities found themselves worse off than before and many have had to resort to illegal poaching to sustain themselves. Things were made worse due to bureaucratic bungling which resulted in serious delays in the allocation of fishing rights in the last two years.

On 17 February hundreds of fishermen joined a protest in Cape Town led by the Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU) against what they called "a corrupt and criminalising" fishing quota system. In a petition addressed to the Minister of Environmental Affairs, they said: "Rather than providing a useful management tool for conserving resources and transforming the industry, quotas in South Africa are at best a lottery and at worst a means of self-enrichment for the corrupt". (Cape Times 18 February 2000).

Subsequently the Department of Environmental Affairs made a "concession" to these desperate fishing people. They may now engage in "subsistence fishing" from Mondays to Fridays. This shows the abysmal ignorance and callous disregard of the department for the realities. Anyone with the least bit of knowledge of fishing knows that it depends heavily on weather and sea conditions. So if no fish can be caught from Monday to Friday but conditions are ideal on Saturday or Sunday, then what are these poor people supposed to do? Play sport or go to church while their stomachs are empty?

This fiasco proves once again that the ANC government considers the interests of the minority black middle class and white owned industry as more important than those of the poverty stricken masses. ●

FIGHTING RACISM WITH RACISM

The frustrations of the black petit bourgeois members in the ANC government are growing. Just listen to the minister of Mineral and Energy Affairs commenting on the domination of white ownership of mines in South Africa.. She said, as reported in the Business Report of 28 February 2000, that "the 21st century African is not going to allow a white mining industry to exist". Echoing these sentiments was a certain Tokyo Sexwale, now involved in the diamond and platinum mining business after his tenure as Gauteng premier, who felt that these white capitalists are deliberately thwarting blacks access to the acquisition of mineral rights.

Here are the voices of those who pretend to speak on behalf of the thousands of black mineworkers, but who in fact are simply trying to become replacements of these mining vultures. And, failing that, to become co-partners in an industry which is highly exploitative. Here are the voices of the same people who negotiated a political deal with these white capitalists, and who today speak of the acquisition of mineral RIGHTS. First they allow these leeches to continue exploiting the country's mineral wealth at the expense of the toiling and suffering millions, and when they discover they are being short-changed, they cry foul play.

What they then do is to resort to the emotionally appealing racism issue to serve their own, selfish economic class interests. Suppose they were to get their way and they become bosses of all the mines in SA. Is that going to change the conditions of the mineworkers who have to risk life and limb in the bowels of the earth to enrich a handful of black- no longer white- owners of the mines? Remember that the industry needs to be "globally competitive". ●

COSATU SHOPSTEWARD COUNCIL ADDRESSES THE 2006 WORLD CUP BID

The Johannesburg COSATU Local was recently visited by some unknown characters. These two individuals came to tell workers about the impending arrival of a FIFA delegation in connection with the 2006 world cup soccer bid by SAFA (South African Football Association). Having made their presentation which was as usual filled with nice talk, glorious achievements, job creation promises, etc. (characteristic, indeed, of the petty bourgeois empty talk when wooing workers' support for their own battles or gains), the first response by shopstewards was: "The FIFA delegation when they land in South Africa should be stoned." The next: "All this shouting about 2006 will only be a gain for big business. Workers and the poor will gain nothing!" One worker having added a good piece of his mind, suggested that workers could support the bid as a gesture of patriotism. Another speaker stood up and shouted "What patriotism? We have none for capital!"

Such were responses by workers to the "sweet tongues" of the petty bourgeoisie. The last statement made in closing the subject was directed to the leadership. "You must never bring such people to come and address us without our knowledge!" Thus the shopstewards council moved from this item on the agenda to the next. ●

TRC FARCE EXPOSED AGAIN

In its February budget the government has failed to make any provisions for reparations to the victims of apartheid who placed their faith in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Desmond Tutu, Chairperson of the TRC, lamented that "we have a moral and legal obligation to make provisions for reparation. ... The victims gave up their rights to lodge civil claims against those responsible for their loss" . (Cape Times 25/02/200). The government has thus far only paid small sums of between R2000 and R5000 to about 7000 victims. Its allocation of R300 million for reparations falls far short of the R3 billion that the TRC itself felt would be a reasonable amount.

The government may say that it does not have enough money but ordinary people would say that the first place to start finding the money is in the enormous pensions paid to those who committed the horrible crimes against these suffering victims. With the amnesty that they receive they are free to go on living their lives in luxury while those who were brutally tortured and families whose bread winners were murdered by these thugs continue to suffer in misery. This is the truth, but where is the reconciliation? ●

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