The poor and the rich do not play together

Numsa youth forum’s hands on deck

Bua

The poor and the rich do not play together

Numsa Lite

Talk about a Jazzy Gospel revolution

Karl Cloete

ARREST THE CORRUPT: Numsa anti-corruption march in Johannesburg. PIC: NUMSA

Constitutional Court on Jacob Zuma — Where are we?

Karl Cloete

Much has been debated in the press and broader society since the Constitutional Court’s ruling that President Zuma and the National Assembly acted incorrectly and unconstitutionally when they decided to set aside Public Protector Thuli Madonsela’s remedial action which recommended that Zuma pay back some of the R246 million spent on “security upgrades”, at his private residence in Nkandla.

Numsa along with many other organisations in civil society welcomed the judgment and the finding that Zuma must repay part of the money looted from state coffers that should have been used to improve service delivery in our communities. Numsa said that there is no justification for spending R246 million on the home of one family, particularly someone who sells himself as a man of the people, when, 20 years after our “democratic breakthrough”, four million African families are crammed into one-roomed houses and more than 25 million Africans live in houses with less than three rooms.

We reject the simplistic view of opposition parties and many others that this scandal is confined to President Zuma and a relatively small number of corrupt cronies, such as the Gupta family, and that the cancer of corruption can be resolved just by getting rid of them.

For 20 years now we had to contend with corruption in the private and public sector, for 20 years now the working class and rural poor were subjected to ANC’s neo-liberal policies which deepened poverty, unemployment and inequalities and for 20 years we have seen the capitalist class and the parasitic black elite becoming the biggest beneficiaries of our freedom.

Numsa has been at the forefront of condemning corruption and indeed organised a demonstration of 50,000 workers in 2015 on this issue and specifically on the subject of Nkandla. As far back as our special national congress in December 2013, we raised the question of the neo-liberal policies of the ANC government linked to the looting of tax payers’ money.

This is therefore just another, more public exam ple, of a vast network of institutionalised corruption in both the public and private sector, rooted in a structurally corrupt system of white monopoly capitalism, funded by the super-exploitation of workers, whose labour creates the wealth of the rich.

On Tuesday 5th April 2016, the South African parliament once again made a mockery of the voters who entrusted them with advancing the values of the South African Constitution, as liberal as it might well be. All consciousness and morality was placed on the altar of defending one man to whom they are beholden for their huge salaries, perks and luxuries.

Whether we like it or not AND whether we agree with their approach or conduct or not, (1) the opposition in parliament knows they cannot win a vote of no confidence or impeachment against the President of the RSA given the numerical strength of the ANC in the National Assembly BUT (2) the opposition in parliament is putting up a political and theatrical show to canvass and mobilise the citizens against the rot that has set in. Arrogance makes the ANC blind to this tactic and strategy of their opponents for which they will pay dearly. But if truth be told, it is not only the Jacob Zuma who must resign, the entire ANC needs to fall for its failure to champion the struggle for total emancipation and instead it gets co-opted and captured by white monopoly capital and pursued neo-liberal policies which didn’t just destroy jobs and industries, but kept millions who are blacks and African at the bottom of the food chain. When the Workers Party for Socialism enters the fray, South Africa shall never be the same again.

Let us discuss in our workplaces, union structures, students and the broader progressive civil society how we shall shape and offer a mass working class program of action (particularly through the new federation, united front and the soon to be established workers party) to remove corrupt politicians, dishonarouble parliament and capitalists from looting taxpayers money.

It is instructive to reflect on the following wisdom; “If your enemy is secure at all points, be prepared for him. If he is in superior strength, evade him. If your opponent is temperamental, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest. If his forces are united, separate them. If sovereign and subject are in accord, put division between them. Attack him where he is unprepared, appear where you are not expected.” — Sun Tzu, The Art of War.

Forward to a UF linking workers’ and community struggles
Forward to a New Federation
Forward to a Workers Party for Socialism
Forward to Socialism
Welcome to the first edition of NUMSA News.

In this first edition of NUMSA News, NUMSA deputy general secretary Karl Cloete outlines NUMSA’s position on the Constitutional Court on Jacob Zuma. NUMSA said that there is no justification for spending R246 million on the home of one family, particularly someone who sells himself as a man of the people, when, 20 years after our “democratic breakthrough”, four million African families are crammed into one-roomed houses and more than 25 million Africans live in houses with less than three rooms.

NUMSA general secretary Irvin Jim summarises NUMSA national key programmes for 2016 in parallel with political developments, and looks at the challenges ahead of us. He outlines NUMSA staff and leaders about the service charter adopted in December 2013 SNC. This means that all NUMSA leaders and staff have a duty to quality service to members. This is compulsory. We are calling on NUMSA members to demand this service. NUMSA members must not tolerate poor service from all levels of NUMSA as an organization. All of us as members, leaders and staff of NUMSA must be held accountable to the service charter.

NUMSA president Andrew Chirwa amongst other things congratulates all the newly elected shop stewards for the current term and also to thank all the former shop stewards who were not re-elected for their dedication and sacrifices during the past term which are really appreciated by the organisation. The union makes a clarion call for all the former shop stewards to continue sharing their experience, skills and expertise with the new shop stewards and the national union for the benefit of our members. The shop stewards in NUMSA are the bedrock of the organisation because they are the first line of defence for our members when they face up to uncourteous or brutal employers.

Lastly, NUMSA members and controllers highlight pertinent issues from shopfloor level and other departments within the union.

Happy reading,

Sandra

Editorial

Introduction

As General Secretary of NUMSA and on behalf of all National Office Bearers (NOBs), I salute metalworkers across the length and breadth of South Africa. Indeed I take this opportunity to offer belated New Year greetings, as this is the first edition of NUMSA News in 2016.

As a workers’ controlled union we must readied ourselves for deep thinking and robust debate to deal with the complex and difficult tasks facing NUMSA and its leadership in 2016. I hereby issue a clarion call to all NUMSA structures to convene plant-level general meetings. Members must attend to engage in debate and deliver a mandate to fulfil the principle of worker control to succeed in dealing with the challenges of the year ahead.

We closed 2015 battling to stop the job-loss bloodbath in the steel industry. It’s a task we pursued with vigour and in the best interests of our members. We can report that ArcelorMittal has been closed. In 2016, we remain confronted by similar challenges, with the economic crisis, which is in a terrible state and continues to destroy jobs. Evraz Highveld Steel has been closed and we are doing our best to re-open it. Vamark and Mapasco are in crisis.

For NUMSA, this is a year for collective bargaining in critical sectors, such as the automotive and tyre sectors. You can read more about this below. This year the chickens have come home to roost for the ANC and its alliance partners. Read more about this in the section below that exposes the truth about the ANC and its friends. Indeed recent developments make a mockery of the ruling party and its allies who are now troubled by disunity and in-fighting. These developments simply serve to underscore the incompetence of NUMSA making a clean break from the ANC/SACP/Cosatu alliance structures. These developments make it all the more important for us to forge ahead with launching a new trade union federation that will genuinely champion the interests of workers and the working class. These developments bolster the need for us to forge ahead with the work of building a Workers’ Party for South Africa. Read more about our plans for the new federation and workers party below.

Collective Bargaining in 2016

In these difficult economic times and as a national union confronted by an economy that is shedding jobs, we have the serious duty of having to negotiate an improvement in wages for our members.

The union has just adopted a new bargaining strategy. In the last National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting we adopted a strategy informed by our past experience. We are now organizing as a union along the value chain as our sectors are interconnected and also because capital has restructured and outsourced all labour intensive jobs.

For example, if auto assemblers or manufacturers embark on a strike for three weeks, despite not being on strike, workers in the supplier value chain are also unable to work because there is no one to supply. So they become involved in the strike by default. But when that strike ends after three weeks, these workers may also embark on a strike, which takes another three weeks. So the whole industry ends up in a six-week strike. This way South Africa (SA) and NUMSA both look bad to those making investment decisions.

New Bargaining Strategy

As a result, the new bargaining strategy is made up of a number of parts.

We have crafted a new bargaining strategy that clusters and positions collective bargaining in line with industry value chains and clusters. We will still demand that employers come to NEC meetings for a discussion of what we would like our members to discuss and debate is whether we should extend the current agreement by a year. In other words, we have a one-year agreement of negotiated wages in the rest of the sectors, but for the auto industry finalise current demands for medical aid and housing only. And then negotiate in all our sectors together again in 2017.

This enables the union to conduct thorough research in all our sectors because concrete demands on what wage differentials should be—for example, between auto workers and workers who are component suppliers or logistics and material handlers.

The other alternative would be to negotiate in the traditional manner where we collect a list of all demands for bargaining. In this case, the upcoming bargaining conference will take a final decision based on a mandate from workers on the shop floor.

Over and above wages, there are other demands that we will make for employers.

1. We will demand from all auto employers and suppliers that they stop shifting production to neighbouring countries. This destroys jobs in companies such as John- son Control. We will declare war with employers on this issue, demanding that they keep their plants in SA, failing which they will not be allowed to supply local manufacturers.

2. NUMSA will be engaging government in a serious debate about incentives given to the auto sector. These incentives must be conditional on companies agreeing to the following:

- Companies must agree to respect labour standards
- Companies should not shift production to Lesotho and/or other neighbouring countries
- Companies must stop the tier exploitation agenda, which reduces workers’ wages to Motor Industry Bargaining Council (MiBCo) entry rates
- All workers must be made permanent with all benefits and conditions of workers

3. NUMSA recognises the notion that the current poor economic climate can be used by employers in all our sectors to demand wage freezes or roll back already agreed wage commitments. In fact, we demand that any employer who requested exemptions in both the engineering and auto sectors and who have not given our members increases, open up their books. We are of the view that our members deserve wage increases.

4. It is our members who are victims of continuous interest rate hikes imposed by the right-wing Reserve Bank. It is our members who are victims of transport costs, which consume 40% of their wages.

NUMSA’s members are victims of Eskom’s high tariffs, still petrol hikes, food inflation and skyrocketing student fees. Fittingly NUMSA supports the students’ #FeesMustFall campaign.

5. We are obviously extremely worried by the state of the SA government and its leadership of the economy. This government is in a permanent state of stagnation because of poor policy choices that are destroying jobs. We must engage government, as we did last year by marching. Our union has mandated us to demand responses to all the matters we marched for. In this regard, we will be organizing meetings with the national Treasury and the economic clusters’ national departments of Trade and Industry and Economic Development. We will urge them to stop demanding that the whole country prostrates itself to the gods of profit, the bosses and ratings agencies. Instead we will urge government to reform the ANC and the DA to stop giving subsidies to companies that have moved production to other countries.

- Provide us with decent public transport, education and health services, all of which will also create jobs.

Exposing the Truth about the ANC and its Alliance Partners

For two decades now NUMSA has been a vi- sionary union that has radically advanced the working class perspective that capitalism is a system of crises and that its neoliberal agenda has failed people all over the world. Indeed the neoliberal model crashed in 2008. We are experiencing its worst effects today.

The False Dilemmas of the Ruling Party

This is a year for us to be wary of false dilemmas. At the beginning of this year we saw the new South African Congress of Trade Unions (SADTU) and Democratic Alliance (DA) jumping on the anti-racism bandwagon purely for political point scoring purposes following the shockingly racist comments on social media by unionists Pat finn. Now it has logically advanced that racism is because the ANC refuses to fully implement the Freedom Charter. In this they have the support of the DA. Both parties have failed to support the empowerment of Blacks in general and Africans in particular in our economy.

There is absolutely no need for the ANC to appeal shocked by Sparrow’s racism. They
were warned by the then-revolutionary ANC of Oliver Thambo and Chris Hani at the 1969 Morogoro Conference which noted, “To allow the existing economic forces to retain their interests intact is to feed the root of racial supremacy and does not represent even the shadow of liberation.”

GEAR and the NDP

Thabo Mbeki’s 1996 Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) economic programme was cooked up by the ANC’s co-opted politicians, advisors and conservative economists, and endorsed by the ratings agencies. Obviously we campaigned to dump those policies during Mbeki’s term to the point that he was removed. Jacob Zuma, Gwede Mantashe and their leadership core created the impression that they would change these policies in the interests of the working class and the whole nation. But they betrayed us. Instead they continued with the same neoliberal policies.

They developed GEAR II in the form of the National Development Plan (NDP) and have been trying to fool the working class and the nation by creating the impression that they have adopted new policies when, in fact, the same old GEAR policies are just being repeated in the NDP.

NUMSA and its leadership in particular became public enemy number one for standing firm and exposing this truth. In fact, Cosatu’s current leadership formed an alliance with the South African Communist Party (SACP) and the ANC to destroy NUMSA. They plotted to form the sweetheart union Lismusa and then dismissed NUMSA whilst calling on our members to leave and join their fake union. Of course our members immediately saw through their deception and stayed with worker-controlled NUMSA: the union of John Gomomo, Mbuyiseloe Ngwenda, Vincent Mabuyakhulu, Jabulile Ndlovu, and Harry Gwala, our late honorary president.

Poor Economic Policies Destroying Jobs

NUMSA’s sin was to be frank and honest with the ANC and it’s alliance partners by telling them that their policies are a blueprint of the DA’s economic policies and that they were destroying workers’ jobs. These policies are directly responsible for plant closures. We know what can be done to defend these jobs. Once they are destroyed, these jobs will never come back.

The United States of America did the same thing. It destroyed jobs in Chicago. In 2010, we were shown an industrial area that used to employ more than 40,000 workers. Just as it is happening in SA, the imperialist government of George W. Bush destroyed jobs at the time. There is not a single factory in that area today. There is only a CNC machine for students to look at and imagine what a factory is all about. We can’t allow the ANC government to destroy workers’ jobs and the futures of workers’ children.

We must be ready to struggle for change and wage relentless war against government policies that destroy jobs.

There is no way that NUMSA could continue to lie to workers by encouraging them to vote for an ANC that has become the enemy of the working class. This is a party that has attacked workers’ rights, refused to ban labour brokers, failed to introduce a national minimum wage and privatized roads with e-tolls. This is the ANC government whose leadership of state owned enterprises (SOEs) has been engulfed by the cronyism of tenders with the president’s crooked capitalist friends, the Guptas, becoming the talk of the town.

At the end of the day, NUMSA has been dismissed from the ANC/SACP/Cosatu Alliance for simply demanding that they live up to the true revolutionary character of being a liberation movement and fully implement the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter calls for restructuring SA’s economy to ensure that both blacks and whites are its beneficiaries. This is the only way to overcome the on-going historical injustice of the African majority being at the bottom of the food chain as victims of mass poverty, unemployment and other inequalities.

It’s been tough for NUMSA to be dismissed from Cosatu for the simple reason that we are a founding member of the federation and we believe that workers’ unity is sacrosanct. However, we welcome our dismissal from a principled stand point as we are not willing to be part of turning both NUMSA or Cosatu into the conveyor belt of the ANC government and its state.

Developments Beyond NUMSA’s Special National Congress

NUMSA’s Special National Congress (SNC) argued that the ANC/SACP/Cosatu Alliance had failed the working class. We’ve been proven correct and a few things have happened since then, which confirm our view of the ANC-led alliance:

a) Capture of pension funds: Despite many actions they have taken that are anti-worker and anti-poor, most shocking of all was the state’s deliberate attempt to take away workers’ provident funds. For the moment, they are delaying implementing this, as there is an election coming up. But they will implement the new provident fund laws as soon as the elections are over.

b) Deepening deindustrialisation: The ANC’s macro-economic policies are directly responsible for many firms and companies that are closing and leading to worsening levels of mass poverty, unemployment and a deepening of de-industrialisation.

c) Defeat of Cosatu & SACP in Alliance: Our adversaries in Cosatu and the SACP, the core grouping that championed the...
From page 3
dismissal of Numsa and destroyed Cosatu by weakening and fragmenting it, have lost their hegemony in the ANC. In fact they have declared war with a particular grouping within the ANC made up of provincial premiers called the "Premier League". This fight can be compared to the fight between Tsotsis who go out and commit bank robberies and steal the money but then start fighting amongst themselves about how to share the loot.

d) Struggle over the gravy train: The raging fight now taking place in the ANC is not about changing political direction to pursue class struggle in the interests of the working class. It is about who will control politics as the future president of the country and who will be in his or her cabinet. That's why, out of blue, both Cosatu and the SAPC opportunistically used their national congresses to endorse Cyril Ramaphosa as the next president. This is a struggle over the gravy train. It is a fight for the political positions of the members of parliament. Both the SAPC and Cosatu are for a Zuma- endorsed future president.

e) Distraction of state capture: We are obviously not surprised by the behaviour of this pseudo-left front. They are "Pseudo-left" because they’ve been ready to destroy working class organisations to pursue their right-wing interests and agenda, whilst portraying themselves as "left". They are now experiencing problems because their positions are not secure. This is why they are making a big noise about "state capture".

f) Ministerial musical chairs: As a result of poor policies and President Zuma choosing "right-wing" cabinet ministers. Both the SAPC and Cosatu endorsed the next ANC president.

h) Persistence of white monopoly capital: The real reasons behind President Zuma changing ministers are his selfish interests in SAA and the nuclear deal. This has been widely publicised. But lets face it, finance capital’s reaction, which was to take billions out of the country, is an open demonstration that white monopoly capital and finance capital are still in charge. This is why we rejected the SAPC’s ideological confusion suggesting that the Guptas are responsible for state capture. We have been blunt and honest. We say “no” to opportunism. Yes, we have been threatening to further downgrade our grade.

b) Persistence of white monopoly capital: The real reasons behind President Zuma changing ministers are his selfish interests in SAA and the nuclear deal. This has been widely publicised. But lets face it, finance capital’s reaction, which was to take billions out of the country, is an open demonstration that white monopoly capital and finance capital are still in charge. This is why we rejected the SAPC’s ideological confusion suggesting that the Guptas are responsible for state capture. We have been blunt and honest. We say “no” to opportunism. Yes, we have been threatening to further downgrade our grade.

b) Persistence of white monopoly capital: The real reasons behind President Zuma changing ministers are his selfish interests in SAA and the nuclear deal. This has been widely publicised. But lets face it, finance capital’s reaction, which was to take billions out of the country, is an open demonstration that white monopoly capital and finance capital are still in charge. This is why we rejected the SAPC’s ideological confusion suggesting that the Guptas are responsible for state capture. We have been blunt and honest. We say “no” to opportunism. Yes, we have been threatening to further downgrade our grade.

c) Rand’s collapse: The new finance minister has been calling on all of us to pray for the gods of profit through the budget and in every other respect. We must make sure that we restore profits for the bosses. But a Rand that has collapsed means that “not spending” is the way to achieve this. The ANC government has been further exposed by the fact that their failure to restructure the South African economy has come back to bite them. For instance, Goldman Sachs decided to bet against the rand in the global currency market. As a result, the rand was so weakened that it almost reached R18.00 to 1 US.

The Way Forward

Our way forward is very clear. It is to advance the struggle that the ANC has failed to take forward.

United Front, New Labour Federation and Workers Party

This is why we are building a United Front in some areas. The United Front is contesting local government elections in the Nelson Mandela Metro, Starkspruit and many wards. Numsa’s NEC has resolved to support these comrades.

Secondly the SAPC is worse than the ANC. As we know the ANC is made up of capitalists, communists and social democrats being a multi-class organisation. But the SAPC was always the hope of workers and the poor. It was supposed to stand in the ground in the interests of the majority, who are dispossessed of their land, economically marginalized and exploited. Unfortunately, similar to what happened to the ANC, the SAPC was convinced to support the ANC’s right wing policies and it became a force that protected the status quo that jeopardized the interests of imperialist forces, in particular, white monopoly capital. The ANC which enjoys the support of the SAPC, made a deal with capital. The ANC which enjoy the support of the SAPC made a deal with capital that it would hand over the real economic struggle and take political power without economic power.

Unfortunately, this meant that we never defeated apartheid. Instead we demobilized the masses and killed the struggle just so that we can have black faces in parliament. Of course, we will continue to celebrate this hollow victory because it gave us rights. It allowed us to express ourselves freely and take our children to schools of our choice. It removed the Group Areas Act, which banned us from towns and cities after 6pm. It allowed Africans to swim at previously white beaches and buy houses anywhere.

But we quickly learnt that accessing all these bourgeois rights is determined by one’s economic position in society. If you are not living a middle class life, you are paid starvation wages. You and your family are permanently doomed to live in townships with inferior infrastructure. Your children are condemned to attend inferior schools under a broken education system for blacks. You will always stand in long queues in filthy foul-smelling hospitals. Overcrowded prisons will be filled 100% by the African majority for this or that crime, as a result of the misery they are subjected to.

This is a continuation of apartheid. It is racism by any other name. Of course, real communists who were in the ANC warned us about this. Two points from the 1969 Merger Committee report are worth repeating:

Firstly, they did not underestimate the enormity of challenges that would face the ANC government when it came into power to meet the needs of the oppressed majority. That government would have to ensure that the basic wealth of the country was restored to the people as a whole and not manipulated by individuals, be they white or black.

Unfortunately the ANC alliance today is plagued by racism. If one looks at what has engulfed the country in terms of the Gupta or so-called “Zuptas”, it means nobody took these warnings seriously.

Secondly, the warning went further to say, “To allow existing economic forces to retain their economic power is to feed the root of racial supremacy.” This is why we must reject the ANC appearing to be shocked by racism purely to create an opportunistic political platform for campaigning for local government elections.

The ANC refuses to take measures that would destroy racism by affirming both blacks and whites. Instead, the ruling party opportunistically rallied the whole country. They marched to Pretoria against themselves to protest about racism.

But they are the ones who refused to nationalize strategic minerals. It is the ANC who refused to fully implement the Freedom Charter. Fulfilling the principles of the Free- dom Charter is what will free our people from the chains of racism.

This is why Numsa has resolved to forge ahead and launch a new Workers Party to take up the space abandoned by the SAPC. The SAPC are fighting to fight. They create confusion when they say that the Guptas are responsible for state capture. But they attack the Guptas only because they are not sure that the Premier League, which supports Jacob Zuma, will guarantee their positions in parliament.

As Numsa, we have called on all community activists that will be the volunteers, the DRC, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia and the Alba region, to commit to work with liberation movements and their neoliberal policies, the purpose of the schools will be to determine how we should build socialism.

4. Member recruitment drive: We are calling all community activists, locally and regionally to go all to recruit workers for Numsa and the new union in the public service for the sole purpose of building an independent federation.

5. Retail recruitment: We are convinced that workers must ready themselves for many battles, including rolling mass action in the form of militant strike action to defend workers’ provident funds, to defend jobs and to stop current plant closures. In conclusion, in order to save jobs, we are ready to work with mining unions who are ready to work
with us, including AMCU.

6. Resisting relocation of production: Numsa members must ready themselves for a strike in the auto industry. We must reject the relocation of production to neighbouring countries by the auto sector whilst they are beneficiaries of South African taxpayers’ money in the form of incentives and the privatization of state assets like Eskom.

We reject Eskom’s electricity increases that have closed our smelters and demand that Eskom stop its economic sabotage of the economy. As Numsa members, we reject the nuclear deal that will be built on nothing less than a trillion rand. We must unite and mobilize workers for action.

Members must also assist by making sure that they don’t allow the abuse of any Numsa member by any employer. Members must assist organizers who are taking up these fights by standing firm in solidarity with all exploited workers.

Numsa’s Investment Company Numsa formed an investment company in 1998. Our purpose was and remains very clear: The investment company must make money inside and outside our sectors without compromising our bargaining rights.

As a union that prioritizes its members, the money that Numsa’s investment company makes is invested back in our members. For instance, we bury our members and their spouses. We make insurance cheap not just for our members, but also for their extended families.

We demand that the money, which goes to brokers to educate and sort out our medical queries, must be handled by the Numsa investment company. We are unapologetic about this because all these benefits are delivered back to our members. The reason we remain firm on this issue is because most investment companies remain lily white. They are completely untransformed and in most cases managed and run by untransformed white male chauvinists who are not subjected to any charters for transformation.

Indeed, Numsa will be using the coming review of the Automotive Production Development Programme (APDP) to push the transformation agenda.

Numsa’s investment company is a tool for workers to democratize the workplace.

An Invitation to Join Numsa

We call on all workers from the following sectors to join Numsa without fear or favour:• Power stations under construction - Medupi, Kusile and Ingula as well as power stations that are already supplying power to the national grid• SAA & Transnet workers• Workers in the mining industry• Workers in the cleaning, material handling and logistics sectors• Workers in garages and petrochemical companies (such as Sasol)• Workers in road freight transport, buses and trucking• Workers do not need to seek approval from anyone including government or CEOs to join Numsa. They can join Numsa as a recognized union. Numsa is an un-bureaucratic worker-controlled union. All our leaders are accountable to workers or elected democratic structures. If workers want to elect or remove a shop steward, the union’s constitution makes provision for this. All Numsa’s leaders can be elected and removed democratically.

Irvin Jim, General Secretary

NUMSA News No 1 • April 2016

5
Dear Numsa News,

Fearless leaders of the organisation, we cannot remain agents of factionalism! Whether from the shopfloor, locally, regionally and nationally. With passion, integrity and fearlessly we come into this organisation, but as time goes by we get “used” to it and most of us especially “old” shopstewards think they own the organisation. Newly elected shopstewards are not given a platform or even considered a space to attend congresses and functions of the union, because the “old vocal” shopstewards do not want to be left behind! Soon factionalism have left newly elected shopstewards with “sense of not even wanting to attend local shopstewards councils or even wanting to execute the functions and responsibilities within their plants. They then give up the “I don’t care” attitude in their plants towards members!

We cannot allow factionalism within the organisation to reign supreme. This belongs to the working class! Let us go back to the basics of a firm, solid and united union of the 21st century!

Lucien Windvhaai, Numsa shopsteward at Vanya Automotive Products, Uitenhage

Dear Numsa News,

I am forwarding these pictures because I want to motivate our shopstewards to improve their education. I have graduated in a NQF 6 Labour Law Diploma with Da Vinci Institute.

Our so called ‘President’, Jacob Zuma, thinks only for himself, and nothing for the citizens of this country. This is evident with his new “pension fund tax law” that he wants to implement solely for the benefit of his government and he is doing so without our consents! Now we are faced “head to head” with the “president” of this country. We call upon the Numsa leadership to prepare us as the foot soldiers of this union to fight against Zuma’s apartheid law, which he is trying to force on us. Zuma is trying to control our hard earned monies! Who gave him any right to implement this apartheid law? Zuma, our provident funds are for us and our families to survive when your capitalists’ friends retrace us, or dismiss us, and close their companies! That money was at least going to assist in paying off our mortgages.

Dear Numsa News,

I am a concerned regarding medical aid scheme, to me it seems like we are working against ourselves. The amount that is charged by these medical aid schemes is way too much, and yet we are taxed from our hard earned monies for public hospitals which we are not even using. This then means that we are financing two different institution for the same services. Public hospitals are already established and if there are problems they can fix with the kind of money that we are paying these institutions.

For example, I’m charged more than R3000 a month for me and my wife and three kids on top of that there’s a company contribution which makes the amount to +_4500. Meaning I pay +_36000 a year, with company contribution it will amount to +_54000 a year. Example two, 100 workers who contribute the same amount that is 36000 multiply by 100= +_3600000 a year. In a company where workers are +_3000 it will be +_108000000 a year collected from us.

If that same amount can be taken to a public hospital: that would not only help us but our parents, brothers and sisters who are not working. You must remember that once you retire or unfortunately lose your job all the benefits fall away and you are forced to go back to the government hospitals you didn’t want. There’s no guarantee that our grandchildren will be fortunate to afford medical aid. These schemes only take care of your immediate family not your extended family members. But if we invest in our already existing public hospitals, we will bring quality to public hospitals, we will bring quality to the low paid worker to prepare for this life’s what is charged by these medical aid schemes.

This is not a piece of paper that you sign and think that you will take advantage of it because we can’t read and write! I call upon the Numsa to unite and mobilise from the lowest paid worker to prepare for this war to make this country un governable.

Mr ‘President’, don’t assume that Numsa will dance when you blow your trumpet. We will never dance to your tune, NEVER!!!

Power to all Metal workers!!!

Comradely

Lucien Windvhaai, Numsa shopsteward at Vanya Automotive Products, P.E Local

S U B S C R I P T I O N  F O R M

If you want to get your own copy of Numsa News (6 editions) and Numsa Bulletin (3 editions) for a year posted to you at your factory or your home, then fill in this form and send it with R30 to: Numsa News, PO. Box 260483, Excom 2023

Name: .................................................................
Address: ...............................................................
Factory: ...............................................................
Code: .................................................................

(NB: this rate is for workers only. Write to Numsa News for rates for salaried individuals and companies.)

---

Letters

Do you have something to say? Write to us at: Numsa News, PO Box 260483, Excom 2023. The winner will receive Numsa gifts.

Na ho na le so o ratang ho re bolella sona? Re ngolle wa: Numsa News, PO Box 26048, Excom 2023 • Mofenyi o tla fumana le dimpho tse ding tsa Numsa.


Izincwadliziphano ofuna ukusho? Sibahlele wa: Numsa News, PO Box 26048, Excom 2023 • Ozonqoba uzhouthola ezipho ezivela kwaNumsa.
Dear Numsa member,

Compliments of the New Year to all Num sa members and their families. We must also bear in mind that a number of workers and their families have lost their lives in car accidents, and also in the line of duty. On behalf of the National Office Bearers, I would like to forward our sincere condolences to all those families who may have lost their loved ones. Allow me to firstly take this opportunity to wish you all the best for the year 2016, which like many that have passed promises to be challenging in many respects. I also want to use this moment to congratulate all the newly elected shop stewards for the current term and also to thank all the former shop stewards who were not re-elected for their dedication and sacrifices during the past term, which are really appreciated by the organisation. The union makes a clarion call for all former shop stewards to continue sharing their experience, skills and expertise with new shop stewards and the national union for the benefit of our members. The shop stewards in Num sa are the bedrock of the organisation because they are the first line of defence for our members when they face up to unscrupulous brutal employers. They are also at the cold front of rendering quality organisational service to our members 24/7. We wish you success in the struggle against the capitalist exploitation of our members, as we implement our 2013 Special National Congress (SNC) resolutions.

We closed the year 2015 on a good note in the country, full of hope and excitement derived from the militant fight from students under the #FeesMustFall campaign. They are also at the cold front of rendering support for the militant students for the gallant fight against the minority racist government.

We must also note with concern the recent police brutality, which led to the brutal killing of 34 miners and almost three years since the historic Num sa December 2013 SNC and the beginning of the Num sa Moment.

Collective Bargaining

The year 2016 is a year of collective bargaining in the auto, tyre and motor sectors, as well as for some plant agreements. The structures of the organisation will have to initiate the ‘Ear to the Ground’ campaign, to ask members what the main priorities and demands for the 2016 round of negotiations are. Through the campaign, we shall cross the length and breadth of our country and go to the small, medium and large enterprises in our sectors to collect demands from our members. Once the demands are collected we shall convene the National Collective Bargaining Conference to consolidate our demands and prepare for the negotiations.

We call upon all members to prepare themselves for the class warfare ahead, that includes saving money in advance so that we can fight to the bitter end. We have no doubt that the employers have long started planning not to give us a living wage, but to defeat us. We cannot let this happen. We must also note with concern the state of the economy and how the current economic crisis is used to ensure that workers don’t demand more whilst company executives continue to receive millions of rand in packages and bonuses.

Free Market Foundation Case against Collective Bargaining

The Free Market Foundation, a right wing organisation of the DA has taken the Department of Labour to court to challenge the powers that the Minister holds to extend the collective agreement to non-parties. This is an attack on labour laws and an attack on workers’ rights to benefit from industry negotiated agreements. We must take the fight to this capitalist organisation.

Retirement Reforms — “Hands off Our Provident Funds”

We began the year spilling fire because in December 2015 President Zuma signed into law what is called the ‘Tax Amendment Act in order to take over the management and control of our provident fund money and convert them into social grants. We have filed a Section 77 dispute notice with Nedlac in order to get a certificate for a legal strike in defence of our hard earned retirement money.

We have noted the postponement of the implementation date of the Act to 2018 by the government but the National Executive Committee of our organisation resolved that we must not let our guard down or stop fighting until the law is repealed. Our strongly held belief is that the postponement of the implementation of the Act is informed by the upcoming local government elections this year. Therefore, our demand for the law to be repealed remains relevant and we shall continue with our programme of action which will be announced soon.

Job Losses

“We must say to you bourgeois individualists that your talk about absolute freedom is sheer hypocrisy. There can be no real and effective freedom in a society based on the power of money, in a society in which the masses of working people live in poverty and the handful of rich live like parasites.” — LENIN

The situation in the mining, steel and engineering sectors has not improved and continues to deteriorate. The reported crisis in the steel industry has destroyed thousands of jobs, with mass retrenchments and company closures in companies like Highveld Steel in Mpumalanga and Scaw Metals. This can only add to the already sky rocketing numbers of the unemployed. Even though the situation may seem gloomy, we must continue the struggle.

Workers Summit and the New Year

Since our dismissal from Cosatu, we have resolved to be a catalyst for the crystallisation of a new independent federation in the country. We are happy to report that we are on course to launch a new federation. We have held many successful meetings with a number of unions who are interested in the formation of an alternative federation, which has now become a necessity since the political death of Cosatu.

Our plan is to launch a new federation on the 1st of May 2016 to coincide with Workers Day.

We are mindful that for this to happen there must be hard work done in all provinces of our country to assemble workers in the form of provincial summits.

The Year of Congresses

2016 is also a year of congresses in line with our constitution, which calls for a National Congress to be held every four years. Later in the year we shall circulate the discussion documents to enable our structures a space to shape the union’s policy. This is one of the pillars of the organisation that we refer to as worker control — it is an important pillar, which we should work hard to preserve.

Let’s build our Union through unity in action. Amandla!

Andrew Chirwa

PRESIDENT

PS — you can write to me
c/o Num sa, PO Box 260483, Excom 2023, fax to 011 834 4320 or e-mail to AndrewC@numsa.org.za

Letter from the president NUMSA News No 1 • April 2016 7

BA N  EXPO RTS: Numsa marching against job losses in the steel industry. PIC: Numsa

Workers Day.
African Steel companies which China selling their steel at a lower price, we have to compete with. We have recruited the Wadewelle Consol, 300+ members have since joined, and we are making inroads in recruiting the same company in the Nigel plant. Sanofi pharmaceuticals was already organized in this company situated in Waldo, Pretoria. We concluded a one year wage agreement last year and we are again negotiating this year. We have a majority membership in the bargaining unit.

Prices candles; We recruited this company and in mid-2015, the company is a chemical company that was sold by Sasol and then the new owners engaged the services of a labour broker, Numsa have clearly outlined a three weeks strike in November 2015 that was highly successful, the agreement entailed amongst other issues the following;

- Employment is directly by the employee, abandonment of labour broker, (workforce).
- Provident fund
- Full 13th Cheque
- Transfer of organisational rights.

All of these were achieved and an Agreement in this regard was signed. Shopstewards were elected and are effective. The company has other plants in both Rosslyn and Croydon near Pretoria. We will be targeting these plants also for recruitment.

**National**

Author: Zwitlwohano Raidani WHERE? Ekurhuleni WHAT’S HAPPENING? Looking back without regrets

Since his arrival in Gauteng in 1971 from Limpopo, Daniel Montjane has been a proud NUMSA member who had just retired now in 2016. He is well-known as “Toyi-Toyi” for his huge participation in singing Mabalazo slogans since the Mawu era in 1985. Montjane witnessed the birth of NUMSA in 1987 while employed by Dorman Long Dobyl and residing at the Mokwena Hostel in Katlehong. He was so enthusiastic in serving the new union by involving himself in various community structures in the then Katlehong. Montjane is a proud NUMSA member of Rand Refinery. His company is Rand Refinery and is based at Railwy Street in Germiston.

WHAT’S HAPPENING? Give them good service

While the union is focusing on reaching the target of 40 000 members by 2016, it should also take statistics of the resigning members because other than various reasons that lead to resignations, poor or bad service is the major cause. Poor service ranges from bad attitude, ignorance, laziness, non-commitment, lack of customer service training and few officials handling a huge membership. Nickhelo Mncwango, an employee in South Ocean and the Local Secretary in Ladlokoa, said the service offered to the members is not talk hollow. It’s very poor and affecting members negatively. The ongoing issue is the continual loss of cases and the manner in which the coordinator handles member issues. This has reached a point where the local leadership has been involved to come with a sound solution to improve service to members.

Nomsivu Zikalala, the Local Deputy Secretary of Manyathi and an employee at M Pact steel picket, confirmed that the NUMSA local at M pact steel has one clear message for the NUMSA offices in Pretoria. They had one clear message for the NUMSA offices in Pretoria. They concluded a one year term when he re-joined the union. Montjane was also active in sports where he won several trophies.

Where he was re-trenched by Dorman in 1987, he worked for Henred Fruenh Hafler. He was elected as the NUMSA shopsteward for the 2-year term when he re-joined the union.

Montjane also became active in local debates and became an ANC member. In 1990, as one of the recruiters who launched the organisation with the first 2000 members.

They are undermining her because she’s a woman. Ironically, the same male comrades who don’t listen to her are the ones who preach good service and gender equality that they cannot implement.

"Let there be no friendship between us"; said the NUMSA President. Despite having received members with Panic Engineering speaking NUMSA in a bad light been inside a taxi when members said there’s no difference between a member and a non-member since they receive same treatment with none union assistance. For the past three years they wanted an increase, but there are no visits from NUMSA despite having requested for one; and they are dealing with short-time on their own without any NUMSA advice. She is also concerned about coordinators who are seen at the shopping malls during working hours doing personal stuff while members are stranded seeking assistance at the office. When she raises concerns similar to those at the LOB’s meeting which is male-dominated, they always undermine her opinion and never listen to her, and the bad service continues because they don’t bother correct the situation. She thinks they are autocratic and feels structures have joined the Katlehong Civic Association in 1989 and became an ANC member. In 1990, as one of the recruiters who launched the organisation with the first 2000 members.

"Let there be no friendship between us"; said the NUMSA President. Despite having received members with Panic Engineering speaking NUMSA in a bad light been inside a taxi when members said there’s no difference between a member and a non-member since they receive same treatment with none union assistance. For the past three years they wanted an increase, but there are no visits from NUMSA despite having requested for one; and they are dealing with short-time on their own without any NUMSA advice. She is also concerned about coordinators who are seen at the shopping malls during working hours doing personal stuff while members are stranded seeking assistance at the office. When she raises concerns similar to those at the LOB’s meeting which is male-dominated, they always undermine her opinion and never listen to her, and the bad service continues because they don’t bother correct the situation. She thinks they are autocratic and feels
Is Evraz Highveld steel going down?

ZWITWAHO RAIDANI

While unemployment is rife and one of the triple crisis; section 189 is championing the shrinking of the steel industry. It’s an outcry that several job losses coincide with the unstable global economy that may lead to market crunch.

Section 189 notices have been given out since 21 July 2015 at Evraz Highveld Steel situated in the Witbank, Mpumulanga. Out of 3000 workers, 2 078 survived retrenchments, but that was just the beginning because the company is still paving way to vacate another 7 39 workers who are classified as the unskilled waste, meanwhile the 214 were already given the Voluntary Offer Packages. Racism also played part because white workers got promoted shortly before the retrenchments to survive as skilled workers.

Evraz Highveld Steel doesn’t have sufficient funding to meet its financial obligations resulting from the operational and financial difficulties caused by the global steel and vanadium markets including the reduction of domestic steel demand. The Business rescuers, who are assisting to save the company gave an instruction for the remaining workers to start with lay-offs, the management to work short-time, as well as introducing cheap labour at the company, which doesn’t sit well with workers who think cheap labour is broad-day robbery. Workers also think management knows but do not want to disclose that potential buyers of the company are Chinese.

Mapochs mining which sells ore to Vanchem Vanadium Products and holds 75% shares, together with Flat Product are also affected by lay-offs. Workers are working three weeks in a month with no consultation and Flat Product’s coils are no more operational. Salaries will be cut by 30% should cheap labour starts operating in the company’s operation. This is one of the factors Numsa is in dispute of.

In the Ekurhuleni Regional Congress that was held last year, Numsa President, Andrew Chiriwa was concerned about Scaw Metals that will be retrenching over 1000 workers anytime soon, Cape Gate which will be retrenching 250, Arcelor metal which is close to the Vanderbijl plant with possible losses of 400 jobs, the 600 workers of Macsteel, not forgetting the Tyre Industry that has reduced workers by 4000. He continued to say that about 200 000 workers employed by the steel industry may go under, despite that economy is built through manufacturing especially in this period when the rand is getting weaker by the day; and that few years back manufacturing reflected 23% in the Gross Domestic Product, but today it’s only 11%.

“T’m weak as I’m speaking to you”

SANDRA HLUNGWANI

Ntokozo Ndlovu, a 26 year old crane driver at Macsteel grew up poor and his parents couldn’t afford to pay for school fees. When he got employed at Macsteel, he saw this as an opportunity to study and make a better life. “I have always been interested in Occupational Health and Safety course called (SAMTRAC) at NOSA Institution. The company approved my bursary request. The entire qualification includes two courses i.e. Introduction to SAMTRAC and SAMTRAC for implementation,” he said.

Ndlovu completed his first course and the company paid in full. His problems started when he was supposed to enrol for the second course to complete his qualification. He was then told that the company won’t just pay, they need to develop a career path for him and the course must benefit the company as well.

“My supervisor said I must negotiate with the Health and safety manager before they could pay for my studies. They later said to me they don’t have vacancies in that department and they are facing retrenchments. In short, they cannot afford to send me to complete the second course.”

Ndlovu’s dreams of obtaining a qualification were shattered right in front of his eyes. He decided that he is not going to accept this situation. Ndlovu applied for a Voluntary Separated package (VSP) which will pay him a mere R15000. I can then pay off my debt and maybe claim UIF until I get another job.

Ndlovu needed to complete his course in order live a better life. It is two a weeks course that will cost him R10 000. He is prepared and ready to leave his employ for this course.

“It is all the same, I get paid R6000, I have so many garnishree orders. I end up with R4000 for my monthly expenses. I have nine dependents (his kids and younger sisters). I’m highly indebted. As I’m speaking to you now, I have not eaten today; I don’t know what I’m going to eat today and the next days. You can tell me my state, the way you find me here and after you gave me food”

Numsa National skills and development officer Mrs Malebo Lebosa said Numsa runs a programme with Meseta for retrenched workers. Forms are available at your nearest Numsa office. The programme assist with skills development and placements including Apprenticeships.

Even skills are not enough to get a job

SANDRA HLUNGWANI

Katego Dithibana is a 32 year old former machine operator at QEC. Placements in Alexandra, Johannesburg. It’s a company which makes set-top boxes for TVs. She has not had an easy life: “I lost my brother and mother when I was in Grade 12 and my father was not working at the time. My mother was the one who was working, as a domestic worker.” She has had to fend for herself ever since. “I applied to Wits and they accepted me. But because of the loss, my final results were not good enough. So I went to college instead”.

Her problems at work started in 2011 when she was placed on short-time after maternity leave. In this company, if you go on short-time after maternity leave, the company makes you pay back for the time you have been away.

So the employer started deducting money from her until she took them to the labour court. She won the case and was paid back the money.

Then the company started reengaging on many of its commitments, including paying her school fees. Katego had to pay her own fees and wasn’t even granted study leave.

Her problems didn’t end there. At the beginning of this year, she was retrenched and replaced with a fellow worker she had been training all along. She trained the person who was then given her job.

Katego’s life has been a roller coaster ride since her retrenchment. She is qualified with N6 Electronics and more than five years’ experience. With these qualifications, she thought finding a job would be much easier.

Two other people depend on her: her cousin and her 4 year old daughter, Olentse. She is a breadwinner and she is out of work. She recalled being excited about getting a job at QEC. She was looking forward to the amount of experience she would get and the prospect of getting a bursary from her employer. But the reality was that there was no growth and no bursary. Apart from earning a salary, her life came to a standstill.

“At work, I joined the union very late. It was already too late for my issues to be resolved. The union did a lot of good things for us while I was still employed. The company wasn’t even paying contributions to the UIF. The union made it pay, including the outstanding amount.”

But now Katego is still unemployed, just hoping for a job someday.

Sandra Hlungwani is Numsa National Publications officer

MUST I STEAL?: “But I’m hungry and I can’t let my pride get in the way.”

PICTURE: NUMSA
From a security guard to an attorney

The reality of Daluxolo Batyi

The working class has being at the receiving end of being victimised, colonized and brutalised. But they stood their ground and showed resilience. Bowing down to a system that is the breeding ground for political hyenas is what the working class has never succumbed to. They have soon realised that in order to totally break down this system, they had to empower themselves and the only way to do this is through acquiring knowledge.

Over the years Numsa has seen success stories from its members. And now we are being inspired again by our very own, through sheer commitment, passion and dedication towards himself, his family and the organisation, he has achieved what some will deem “the impossible.”

Daluxolo Batyi, a Num sa shopsteward at Eskom Western Cape and Local office bearer from Num sa Atlantis Local recently obtained a degree in Law, and Num sa News had to tell his story.

Who is Daluxolo Batyi?
I am the first born of six kids of Gladys and Phumzile Batyi, a recent LLB degree graduate, a proud Num sa shopsteward and Local Office Bearer.

Where did you grow up and school?
I grew up in a township called Mdantsane Native Unit 2 in the Eastern Cape. I left the township at the age of nine and was raised by my grandmother in a village called Kampilini/Mozane. I went back to the township, and continued my high school years there.

When I was about seventeen I went to live in Port Elizabeth in North West Province attending Vaal Reefs Technical high school. I had to repeat grade eleven, because I was not fluent in speaking and writing English, as the rural and township schools taught us in our own language (Xhosa). I matriculated at Vaal Reefs in 2000, during that period in grade twelve my father passed away.

Becoming a lawyer, always your dream?
Yes, in matric already I knew I wanted to become a lawyer, inspired by the hardship and poverty in my community, and appalled by the illegal activities in our country.

Education

Students advocating free education. I believe I am not the only one who had aspirations and dreams to achieve certain qualifications, there are many who lack resources to reach their dreams. I support their campaign, based on my understanding of the class struggle which I have been exposed to by Num sa.

What advice would you give to these students?
The students should not be deterred by negative views even if those views are from a majority.

The struggle never ends.

What is your view on government and its role in higher education especially with regards to funding?
Capacitating a needy person is not only capacitating the individual but a whole family, community and society that looking up to that particular individual for support financially, guidance and direction (information).

Government should invest in education especially higher education to ensure its citizens can make a meaningful change in our impoverish communities.

Studying part-time is a challenge; do you believe there are sufficient support structures in place at higher education institutions for part time students?
There’s little help for part-time students at the moment that also need to be looked into.

My mother always wanted to put me in a “best school”

Vanessa Le Roux

Being smart will not help rather work hard and stay focused. These are the wise words of Charmaine Wagner, a third year Chemical Engineering student, from Mandalay, Western Cape, who is raised by her single mother, Agnes Wagner. Agnes Wagner is a Numsa member from Rumanosigns. Through the hard work of Agnes, Charmaine was able to attend a prestigious high school, college and university in Newlands. She fondly says “my mother always wanted to put me in a best school, even though she was financially challenged. The first year she managed to pay all school fees with difficulty”. The Charmaine received a full scholarship from the Cetto foundation because of her remarkable results in the first year at Sans Souci. The foundation paid her school fees until matric. She says “thanks to Cetto, I also had an opportunity to be the ambassador of Child-life; a non-profit organisation that works collectively to protect children from all forms of violence and to create a culture of children’s rights in South Africa. It was a privilege for me to go and visit these places to deliver educational toys, books and paint their rooms”.

When she matriculated she had no clue what she wanted to do. She said “I hated the subject of career choice and always avoided the question”, in grade 10 she chose Accounting, Mathematics and life science. Charmaine chose those subjects as she liked excel in those subjects. Through the Num sa bursary scheme she was able to go to the Cape Peninsula University of Technology to study for the Chemical Engineering diploma, since 2014.

“Being a male dominated traditional industry, I see it as a challenge, and I want to prove to other young women that it is possible,” she said. Charmaine intends furthering her studies obtain her B. Tech and then do masters in chemical engineering. She has been awarded an opportunity to experience the chemical industry by a company called FF&F in refined in Florida, South Africa as part of the requirements to complete her studies. Unfortunately she currently doesn’t have her results and this makes it difficult for her to begin her internship. Although she received a bursary for this university study, she has a short fall on her course fees for 2015 and must pay it before she can register for 2016.

When she signed her contract with Num sa bursary fund they told her she is responsible for any shortfall.

“Apparently I do not qualify for the free registration agreement between government and institutions for underprivileged students. The university is to only write-off debt that was made through NSFAS,” she says.

Vanessa Le Roux is a Numsa Health and Safety Coordinator, Western Cape
Private Members Bill seeks amendments to BCEA for more ‘paternity leave’

According to a notice released by the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG, 01 Dec 2015) Cheryllyn Dudley MP from the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP) intends tabling a Private Members Bill in the National Assembly. The Labour Laws Amendment Bill (PMB 5 - 2015) seeks to amend the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), 1997 in line with the party’s policy on ‘family values’ and to:

- provide for parental, adoption and commissioning parental leave to employees;
- provide that a collective agreement may not reduce an employee’s entitlement to parental, adoption or commissioning parental leave;
- to amend the Unemployment Insurance Act, 2001, so as to provide for the right to claim parental and commissioning parental benefits from the Unemployment Insurance Fund;
- to provide for the application for, and the payment of, parental and commissioning parental benefits from the Unemployment Insurance Fund;
- to provide that the number of contributors to whom parental and commissioning parental benefits were paid and the amount of such payments be included in the written report from the Director-General to the Minister; and to provide for matters connected therewith.

Earlier this year the Mail & Guardian (30 April 2015) reported that a law on ‘shared parental leave came into effect in the United Kingdom giving parents of a newborn child or an adopted child up to 51 weeks of leave and 37 weeks of pay that can be shared between parents. This parental leave is in addition to the compulsory initial two weeks’ leave afforded to the mother.

By comparison South African Labour Law provides for three days paid family responsibility leave during each leave cycle and ‘is granted only when an employee’s child is born or is sick, or in the event of the death of an employee’s spouse, life partner, parent, adoptive parent, grandparent, child, adopted child or grandchild, or an employee’s sibling’ (Mail & Guardian, 10 April 2015).

Apart from the legislative process that deals with Private Members Bill (as set out in the Memorandum of the proposed Bill), matters pertaining to labour must be referred to the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) for consideration. In principle there is nothing in the proposed amendments that seeks to create new rights and so long as the Bill provides for a shift in patriarchal roles and endorses gender equity consistent with the provisions of our constitution, it should be supported.

Retirement and UIF Reform on the cards for 2016

It is already a well-known fact that South Africa has unacceptably high rates of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Unofficial estimates of unemployment currently stand at over 34%. While those who do have work are subject to increasingly precarious work conditions with insecure contracts as well as low and irregular incomes. Against this background it would be reasonable to expect that the government public policy would prioritise social and economic relief, including through social security mechanisms. Instead the current amendments affecting retirement funds and the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) reflect a misguided faith in neoliberal policies that effectively redistribute resources from and within the over R90 billion rand, with only a tiny working class.

The UIF has accumulated surpluses of over R90 billion rand, with only a tiny fraction of this being distributed annually to the beneficiaries who are unemployed or on maternity leave. Early in 2015 the Finance Minister proposed to reduce employers’ and workers’ contributions. This would have resulted in R1.5 billion less being contributed to UIF for the year, with no benefits accruing to the unemployed and under-employed. Fortunately these proposals have now been abandoned.

In the last quarter of 2015, the Labour Minister tabled a Bill in Parliament that amends the UIF.

This means that the earliest the Bill is likely to be finalised is in mid-2016. This will be two more than two years after negotiations on the Bill were completed at NEDLAC. At the time organised Labour was reluctantly forced to abandon its demand to remove the exclusion of UIF benefits for workers who have resigned.

Government had claimed that the impact on the fund would have to be tested, and that this would delay other amendments urgently required to provide relief for workers and the unemployed. Government also indicated that they intended passing the Bill before the 2014 general elections. Further assurances were provided that a study would be initiated within an 18 month period to consider including benefits for workers who resign, and these could be addressed in a later round of amendments to the UIF.

No reasons have been furnished for the delays introducing the Bill and lack of movement in addressing concerns around resignations. Despite our outstanding concerns, the Bill does propose certain welcome changes. These include extending the duration of unemployment benefits for up to a year (with payments at a reduced rate after the initial six month period) as well as benefits for previously excluded groups such as public servants and workers in learnership contracts. Furthermore the compulsory two year waiting period imposed after exhausting your benefits will not be extended to four years.

Retirement Funds

Despite widespread opposition the Standing Committee on Finance has amended tax laws on retirement funds that force provident fund members to purchase retirement annuities with two-thirds of their funds, if these exceed R247 000. Further retirement fund reforms that may be introduced in 2016, include requiring workers’ rights to preserve rather than making withdrawals from their provident fund should they resign or be dismissed before retirement age. At present these amendments will not apply to existing funds but rather contributions made after the passing of the tax law amendments.

Underscoring both retirement reforms are concerns by Treasury that workers do not save enough towards retirement. This reflects at once both a disconnect with the social and economic realities forcing workers to deplete their retirement funds and a denial of government’s own responsibility to ensure a social and income security net below which no person should fall below.

At a fundamental level there is no disagreement with the principle that workers should be saving towards their retirement, but this often compromised to finance short-term immediate survival when faced with unemployment.

Further many workers are forced to continue looking for work beyond retirement age as the income from the annuity is too low to be sustainable. Often they depend on their lump sum provident pay-outs to start small businesses.

It is therefore ironic that the Treasury has for many years delayed introducing proposals for the introduction of a comprehensive social security, which would remove the need for vulnerable workers to make such difficult choices.

As we approach 2016 both the retirement and UIF reforms are gripping issues that shouldn’t be treated lightly. Trade unions have an obligation to alert their members of the impending reforms and the impact that this is likely to have on their wellbeing. More importantly the need for a comprehensive social security network to insulate both the employed and the unemployed is an absolute necessity given that our economic growth is hardly expected to grow beyond 1.7% in 2016.

By comparison South African Labour Law provides for three days paid family responsibility leave during each leave cycle and ‘is granted only when an employee’s child is born or is sick, or in the event of the death of an employee’s spouse, life partner, parent, adoptive parent, grandparent, child, adopted child or grandchild, or an employee’s sibling’ (Mail & Guardian, 10 April 2015).

Apart from the legislative process that deals with Private Members Bill (as set out in the Memorandum of the proposed Bill), matters pertaining to labour must be referred to the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) for consideration. In principle there is nothing in the proposed amendments that seeks to create new rights and so long as the Bill provides for a shift in patriarchal roles and endorses gender equity consistent with the provisions of our constitution, it should be supported.

Retirement and UIF Reform on the cards for 2016

It is already a well-known fact that South Africa has unacceptably high rates of poverty, inequality and unemployment. Unofficial estimates of unemployment currently stand at over 34%. While those who do have work are subject to increasingly precarious work conditions with insecure contracts as well as low and irregular incomes. Against this background it would be reasonable to expect that the government public policy would prioritise social and economic relief, including through social security mechanisms. Instead the current amendments affecting retirement funds and the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) reflect a misguided faith in neoliberal policies that effectively redistribute resources from and within the working class.

The UIF has accumulated surpluses of over R90 billion rand, with only a tiny fraction of this being distributed annually to the beneficiaries who are unemployed or on maternity leave. Early in 2015 the Finance Minister proposed to reduce employers’ and workers’ contributions. This would have resulted in R1.5 billion less being contributed to UIF for the year, with no benefits accruing to the unemployed and under-employed. Fortunately these proposals have now been abandoned.

In the last quarter of 2015, the Labour Minister tabled a Bill in Parliament that amends the UIF.

This means that the earliest the Bill is likely to be finalised is in mid-2016. This will be two more than two years after negotiations on the Bill were completed at NEDLAC. At the time organised Labour was reluctantly forced to abandon its demand to remove the exclusion of UIF benefits for workers who have resigned.

Government had claimed that the impact on the fund would have to be tested, and that this would delay other amendments urgently required to provide relief for workers and the unemployed. Government also indicated that they intended passing the Bill before the 2014 general elections. Further assurances were provided that a study would be initiated within an 18 month period to consider including benefits for workers who resign, and these could be addressed in a later round of amendments to the UIF.

No reasons have been furnished for the delays introducing the Bill and lack of movement in addressing concerns around resignations. Despite our outstanding concerns, the Bill does propose certain welcome changes. These include extending the duration of unemployment benefits for up to a year (with payments at a reduced rate after the initial six month period) as well as benefits for previously excluded groups such as public servants and workers in learnership contracts. Furthermore the compulsory two year waiting period imposed after exhausting your benefits will not be extended to four years.

Retirement Funds

Despite widespread opposition the Standing Committee on Finance has amended tax laws on retirement funds that force provident fund members to purchase retirement annuities with two-thirds of their funds, if these exceed R247 000. Further retirement fund reforms that may be introduced in 2016, include requiring workers’ rights to preserve rather than making withdrawals from their provident fund should they resign or be dismissed before retirement age. At present these amendments will not apply to existing funds but rather contributions made after the passing of the tax law amendments.

Underscoring both retirement reforms are concerns by Treasury that workers do not save enough towards retirement. This reflects at once both a disconnect with the social and economic realities forcing workers to deplete their retirement funds and a denial of government’s own responsibility to ensure a social and income security net below which no person should fall below.

At a fundamental level there is no disagreement with the principle that workers should be saving towards their retirement, but this often compromised to finance short-term immediate survival when faced with unemployment.

Further many workers are forced to continue looking for work beyond retirement age as the income from the annuity is too low to be sustainable. Often they depend on their lump sum provident pay-outs to start small businesses.

It is therefore ironic that the Treasury has for many years delayed introducing proposals for the introduction of a comprehensive social security, which would remove the need for vulnerable workers to make such difficult choices.

As we approach 2016 both the retirement and UIF reforms are gripping issues that shouldn’t be treated lightly. Trade unions have an obligation to alert their members of the impending reforms and the impact that this is likely to have on their wellbeing. More importantly the need for a comprehensive social security network to insulate both the employed and the unemployed is an absolute necessity given that our economic growth is hardly expected to grow beyond 1.7% in 2016.
Another way to say you’re fired!

Woody Aroun

As of January this year I was put on retirement. Some are of the view that this is just another way to say you’re fired! Whether you have been put out of work through retirement, retrenchment or redundancy it all comes down to the same thing: unemployed! But don’t get me wrong: you can’t go on working forever and there will be a time when you have to hang up your boots and call it a day.

I spent the better part of my life with NUMSA and I must confess that this has been the most rewarding and empowering experience throughout the span of my working life. With all the ideological tantrums and political turbulence I wouldn’t have had it any other way and if there is the slightest possible chance to relive my working life all over again then NUMSA will be my first choice of call in the afterlife (plus or minus a few changes of course!). But dreaming isn’t going to pay the bills and like millions of other South African workers my turn to join the centipede like queue outside the Department of Labour (DoL) eventually came one morning in January 2016. With ID in hand and a UI-19 Form completed by my employer I took an early morning taxi and joined the never ending line of workers outside the Durban Labour Centre in Masonic Grove. There was a time once when I thought I knew everything about the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF), the blue card and the different types of benefits available to those who had the misfortune of being unemployed. But that was many years ago and lot has changed since then. There isn’t a blue card anymore, no resignation benefits and there is a new formula for calculating the amount and duration of benefit that may be due to you. All in all the process is the same – a real life experience to rub shoulders with the proletariat outside the corridors of the union, the factory, etc. There is no discrimination or class distinction here. You join the queue like everyone else and it matters little whether you were called Nobula or My Leader or whatever.

Once you get into the queue there is only one description that befits everyone: unemployed! Workers gather at the labour centre as early as 05h00 in the morning. Some even earlier. At this time in the morning there isn’t much to talk about. Mutterings about the time it takes to wait in the queue, DoL opening hours and so on can be heard by workers anxious to lodge their claims. But this is only part of the story. The chance of regaining employment, the ugly side of labour brokers and precarious employment and the overall political and economic landscape offer little comfort to unemployed workers, least of all to those signing off the UIF register for the last time as their benefits run out. Without a proper social security system in place the future looks bleak. But for now the long queues will continue even as parliament prepares to debate additional amendments to the UIF.

Understanding the new Tax Law

Pinky Ramokoka

South African workers are up in arms after the government approved Taxation Law Amendment Act of 2015, which was passed by parliament by the end of last year.

The aim of this Act

Through this Act, the government is encouraging the workers to save enough money for retirement and retire comfortably. The government also seeks to ensure that employees receive good value for money their retirement savings, that they are treated fairly and that their savings are diligently managed.

How is it going to work?

The National Treasury explains that the new rules will not apply to historic savings. If a provident fund member is 55 or older, the new requirement will not apply. Any accumulated retirement savings as well as new contributions and growth after implementation of the Act, can still be taken as a cash lump-sum at retirement. Before this reform, when a worker resigned from work, he or she would withdraw all their funds and use the money. By the time they reach retirement age, they will not have retirement money to sustain them and they become a burden to government. The government also states that a person that takes an early retirement or gets disabled or deceased will be paid out their retirement as according to the rules of the fund.

How is it going to benefit the workers?

According to the government, this Act is going to encourage workers to save more for their retirement and reduce dependency on government. However, this Act will negatively affect workers who are retrenched or dismissed from work because they will not be able to access all their monies and if they are not successful in getting employment, they will need to find another source income for themselves until they each $5.
Vanessa Le Roux, interviews Western Cape regional motor organiser Roger Piedt, about the recently won case for workers at MCV De Haans. The company manufactures luxury busses and it was established in 2007. It employs 150 staff members jointly in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Cape Town is the manufacturing factory which employs 115 people.

What was the case about?
The case was about the continuous rollover contracts signed on a month to month basis, employees wanted permanent contracts with the employer. Finally, workers decided to lodge a dispute with the Bargaining Council.

What strategy did you use to defend these workers?
We referred a dispute on the 10 November 2015 to the DRC with a list of 82 employees. The case was heard on the 19th January 2016 the matter was conciliated. The dispute was referred on the basis of:

- Unfair conduct of the employer to promote the employees from temporary status to a permanent or an indefinite employment positions.
- We also claimed in the referral that the nature of the work is not of limited but indefinite duration.
- We also said in our referral in terms S189 (b) 3 of new amendments in LRA that the employer has no justifiable reason for fixing the term of the employment contract.

At the conciliation the employer presented a document of a meeting (employment equity meeting) they had on the 20 November 2015. In that meeting, they decided that from 1 February 2016 all employees who have been longer than three months with the company will be placed on a permanent employment contract. The same will apply to foreign nationals who have contracts in terms of their work permits.

At conciliation the company confirmed that all 82 employees will be permanent (in a settlement Agreement), the union then added to the settlement Agreement that their service commencement date will be stipulated in their employment contract, been the date of commencement of work and not 1 February 2016.

How did the recent amended LRA assist you?
I think this was a victory for employees who are still working to better their status in the company, especially when such workers should face retrenchments.

We effectively used the provisions of the Act to advance rights for employees at the company. The same strategy was used internally at another motor company, Henred Fruehauf Trailers where they also made use of temporary contracts. The union fought and the majority of those temporary employees were made permanent.

What advice would you give to local organisers who face similar challenges?
The advice is that we now have an excellent opportunity to advance the interest of our members while they are still employed. We should not come to the rescue or defence of temporary contract employees when their contracts are terminated. Use the provisions of the Act to advance workers' rights.

The CCMA resource guide, section 25 - the labour law amendments, refers to the regulation of non-standard employment. It deals with part time work, fixed-term contract work and employment through labour brokers. Organisers can use this document to advance their arguments when facing a case of temporary, contract or labour broker employees.

Do we face a lot of contract workers in the Motor industry?
Not really, however, a lot of labour brokers employees are found in Chapter three, the limited duration contract employees would mainly be found in the Vehicle body building sector.

Companies in Western Cape that moved from LDC and Labour brokers since the inception of the new amendments are: Beekman Super Canopies and Henred Fruehauf. Those that only moved from using Labour brokers are Donaldson’s and Fauricia.

The provisions of the collective Agreement regarding fixed-term contract work must be amended as per the new law. The MEIBC Agreements has been there before the amendments which states that one cannot work for longer than four months continuously. Although the MEIBC Agreement must be brought in line with the Legislation, MBCC Agreement has no provisions to enforce duration on a fixed-term contract. We must continuously refer dispute until such time the Motor Main Agreement has been amended.

Vanessa Le Roux is NUMSA Coastal Occupational Health and Safety Co-ordinator, Western Cape.
Msimelelo Jantjies

Eastern Cape Numsa Youth Forum (EC NYF) took it upon themselves, as an integral campaigning and recruiting structure of Numsa, to ensure that Numsa’s vision of having 400 000 members by 2016 becomes a reality.

On the 15 of August 2015, EC NYF launched a recruitment campaign in King Williams Town. A very strong and vibrant team, consisting of NYF Local office bearers and their coordinators across the region, was assembled for this important programme. Regional office bearers of NYF identified KWT Company because of the potential membership that is dormant.

When interviewing some of the young leaders of Numsa who were involved in this programme, this is what they had to say, “We hit two birds with one stone by having this programme, in that we did not only recruit new members, we also made Numsa accessible and visible to current members.”

Phumlani Ndithe, chairperson of NYF East London local had this to say about the programme, “I feel great that we are fulfilling our resolutions of the 2012 NYF conference that of recruiting young workers into Numsa, as part of our selfless contribution towards realising our set target of having 400k members by 2016. The reception we receive from both members and potential members exhibited that they had nothing but love for Numsa.”

Judging by the enthusiasm and commitment of these young metal workers and the fact that Numsa has extended its scope, one can easily deduce that Numsa has a potential to grow even beyond 500k members by 2017, even though other unions are shrinking in terms of both content and numbers.

Msimelelo Jantjies is a Numsa VW SA shopsteward, Eastern Cape

The need for a vibrant and zealous youth

Lethukuthula Nikosi

The youth had their annual national meeting from the 18th – 20th of September 2015, all regions were present with their respective representatives. Chaired by the Youth National chairperson, Vusumzi Tyhwala, the youth took time to iron some issues out, and create resolutions to help move the struggle forward, under the theme, “confronting Neoliberal Trajectory through Building of a Robust, Vibrant, Radical and Advanced Youth Detachment for the working Class Power”.

One of the statements that stood out for the youth in attendance, which was repeated by all speakers, was how it is now up to the Youth of this union to fight for the survival of the union and to help with the advancement for socialism in their lifetime, and also help grow the United Front. “The union need more young people on the frontline, working tirelessly to fight against all those forces that are attacking Numsa,” said Numsa General Secretary Irvin Jim. On his presentation on the Movement for Socialism, Azwell Banda also pointed out the importance of the youth involvement. He said that the youth needed to avail themselves and volunteer both in the movement for a socialist country and the United Front.

General Secretary, Zwelinzima Vavi also pressed on the same issue, that it is time for the youth to take up the reins, this fight need more young people.

On the last day of the NEC, the youth had a discussion on Gender equality and HIV/AIDS issues in the workplace and the contributions and the collaboration of SWAP and IF Mental. The youth ended with a soft game of soccer, just to distress and bond with each other, it was fun to watch Azwell Banda in action.

Lethukuthula Nikosi is a Publications intern
The 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign was first introduced in SA by women’s organisations in 1993, with government taking up the project in 1997. In 2016, abuse is still a private matter with no care for the victims.

Orange Farm, just like any South African township, is bursting with social ills such as abusive relationships, drugs, alcohol and many other tribulations you can think of.

My observation is that these evils affect women and children more. Here is my story.

*Rose Khoza was delighted to finally move in with her boyfriend who still lives with his mom. He uses a backroom and that’s where the young Rose started a family. They were blessed with two girls aged six and four. Rose’s love for her ‘family’ is undoubtedly not affected but the fact that the husband is unemployed and she has to be the one bringing the bacon home, including supporting her two girls and the husband.

The husband is not happy that Rose has a job and he doesn’t. They always fight about this. He wants Rose to stay at home with him. He doesn’t have a plan to support his family, yet he wants the very person working hard for the family to quit her job. Rose works at a fish and chips outlet. Her husband threatened Rose that he will tell her boss that she steals potatoes from the shop.

Everyone on our street knows this couple fights a lot, the man beat up the wife for working. The man will chase the wife throughout the yard with the young Rose screaming for help. The mother-in-law instead of stopping the fight, she will be encouraging her son to beat Rose, “beat her up until she packs her clothes and leave my yard”, she said.

It is at this point where neighbours came together to advice Rose to take her kids and belongings and go back to her father’s place as her father is still alive. Even after enduring the years of physical and emotional abuse, for some weird reasons, Rose will not leave the husband. We even involved the police but to no avail. Rose just won’t leave!

I hope that one day the young Rose will eventually find peace and muster the strength to leave the place.

*not her real name

*Liesbet Mohutsiwa is a Numsa administrator, JC bez Region

South African actress on Table Mountain in Cape Town, as part of One Billion rising, to call for an end to violence against women and girls. PICTURE 1 BILLION RISING

**Avail yourselves as shopstewards and help build this organisation**

NUMSA National Gender Committee met on the 21st to the 23rd August 2015 in Johannesburg.

One of the objectives was that the meeting must bring an understanding of where the union is currently with the work of the Gender Structure and map out a path for the work going forward; guided by the theme of the union’s 2014 Organising, Collective Bargaining and Campaigns (OCCB) Bosberaad which is: Building Strong, Vibrant and Politically Conscious Workplaces and structures.

The meeting took place symbolically in the month of Women, and reflected on the struggles of the women who led the 1956 march to the Union Buildings against the apartheid.

The committee stated that it remained committed despite several challenges to building revolutionary Numsa Women and Men who are gender activist on the shopfloor and in the communities.

The committee believe that the society free of oppression and economic exploitation can only be achieved under the leadership of an organised and united working class. This unity must be under the guiding slogan of the international working class.

The struggle against the domination and oppression of women is within the context of patriarchy in a capitalist society where the main role of women is to reproduce this exploitative system as cheap labour.

All the programs of the Numsa gender structure will be to defend, unite and grow Numsa.

The key task remains the building of working class orientated gender structures that will lead on deal with the scourge of violence against women and children.

The mortality rates of black working class men and women remain a key issue for this structure and they intend to prioritise the wellness screening of Numsa women and men where they work. With their detailed program developed in this meeting, as the key guide for all gender structures of the union.

The meeting also noted that the real bases of the crises in Cosatu and its complex and contradictory class relationships which it finds itself having to deal with, on a daily basis, in the multiclass ANC led alliance, to which it belongs. Cosatu therefore is incapable of dealing with the struggles faced by black working class men and women in this country.

“We are going to educate, mobilise, organise and unite our members and importantly we will always, struggle to learn, and learn to struggle!”

As the elections of new shopstewards are underway, we ask all Numsa shopwomen and girls: “Don’t fail, and we will always struggle to learn and learn to struggle!”

NUMSA News No 1 • April 2016
Infrastructure conducted blitz in different sectors. Lethukuthula Nkosi speaks to Numsa newly recruited members from these sectors and here is what they say about joining Numsa:

**Juice - From SAA Technical**
“I heard about Numsa from our technical team, and I have seen Irvin Jim speak on TV and I liked him. I love Numsa’s strategy of fighting for the employees; ever since they have begun organising here at SAA and have been in negotiations with our management; we are seeing a bit of change from how management treats us and how they are willing to listen and act of late. I want to thank Numsa for your efforts to ensure that we have fair representation. We cannot wait until Numsa is fully functional here at SAA”.

**Bennet Mangata – Courier IT**
“I always saw Numsa in their marches; I liked how militant they are. The services are far better than that of my former union SATAWU. The officials are friendly, empathetic and willing to assist. Numsa must continue to be the champion of the working class, and always put the needs of the workers above all”.

**Sam Mashego- Putco Buses**
“I knew about Numsa because I used to be part of SATAWU which is part of Cosatu. I love the consistency of Numsa, it is a progressive union that has principles and is not afraid to stand by those no matter what. We also love how Numsa fights for the workers unlike these Mickey Mouse unions in Cosatu that don’t have our interests. We at Putco would like to congratulate Numsa for their fierce defence for the working class and how they carry the mandate of their members we say to you, keep at it until you have all the working class under your banner”.

**Maropeng Leshabela – Menzies Aviation**
“I knew Numsa for many years; I was a member before I joined SATAWU. Numsa is a big and progressive organisation, that looks after the interests of the workers, which is why when I was chairperson in my region at SATAWU, I recommended that we join Numsa instead when the members were looking for a new home, after things went wrong at SATAWU, the workers at Menzies have never been this happy. Service is the key to attaining and growing your membership. We hope Numsa will continue in that spirit”.

**Millicent Mhlabi – CH Laundry**
“I heard about Numsa from comrade Frederick when we were consulting them on a possible move from SATAWU. Now that we have joined Numsa, our employers are afraid of Numsa; they are now quick to act on our demands and are now more willing to negotiate. Numsa must stay strong and focused in sorting out their members’ issues”.

**Wilhelmina – Enforce Security**
“I knew Numsa through SATAWU as they were both affiliated to Cosatu. It’s a radical spirit. And how it negotiates and communicates with its members and that it is a worker controlled union. Not forgetting how the union stands for the truth, it’s admirable. To the leadership, it must continue what it has been doing to make this organisation what it is. I am happy I moved to this union it has proven to the workers that it is worthy of the working class’ loyalty”.

The future belongs to those who are willing to keep up with the changing world

Xolani Tshayana

During the months of August and September 2015, I attended two important, separate but intertwined events both focusing on education and training, called WorldSkills Competition and VWSA Community Trust.

VWSA Community Trust is a Num sa brain child, under the leadership of the late John Gomobo, who during the time of his death was still a patron of the trust. The trust has historically had a very strong focus on education and youth development. Whilst it retains its focus on this sector, it remains one of the key players in this development. The trust follows the belief that “the acquisition of skills would bring higher pay and give the retrenched a better chance of finding work. Skilled are a strategic asset in job creation. VWSA has an agenda. Its aim is to create opportunities for young people to develop skills and make a better living. The trust is not an end by itself but interrelated with many other initiatives.”

Skills development is one of the most important elements to drive economic growth in South Africa. Without it, the workforce cannot move forward.

Despite the existence of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) aimed at a unitary system of education and training in our country, training remained fragmented with many workers unable to use skills acquired in the workplace to progress within informal and higher education landscape. Numsa realises that its semi-skilled and unskilled membership base was becoming disposable. The acquisition of skills would bring higher pay and give the retrenched a better chance of finding work. Skilled are a strategic asset in job creation.

Mersea is one of the Setas in the sectors where Numsa operates. Within Mersea, there are five C chambers including the Auto chamber.

The Auto chamber met on the 22nd – 23rd September at Mercedes Training centre in East London to get reports and update on what Labour and Employers are doing in the Chambers on the skills development agenda.

Num sa has ten shopstewards as skills and development officers in the auto companies. The chamber has quarterly meetings taking place in different companies throughout the year.

The auto chamber chairperson, Xolani Tshayana, said “this meeting is taking place during a difficult time which is also painful in Numsa. It is difficult because workers are given the democratic rights to renew the mandate of their leaders. Shopstewards elections are taking place.”

“The painful part is that the very same democratic processes in most cases are reversing the gains around the skills development front. In many cases, all training representatives are voted out office and training is not an easy process to understand. It takes time. It is very complex,” he said.

Whilst comrades are beginning to grapple with the issues of skills development, most comrades won’t come back and the process of training, capacitating and mentoring comrades around skills development will have to take place again.

The current licenses of Setas, will be extended by another two years meaning it will end by 31 March 2017, after that “We don’t know whether the MerSea, EnergySeta, Wholesale and retail Seta will still exist by April 2017, this means that as Num sa we have to engage with the Seta landscape developments,” Tshayana added.

Challenges with the Setas

This Seta landscape at the moment is presenting a challenge of uncertainty as the NBF agreement is coming to an end in by 30 June 2016. A new Agreement has to be negotiated by 30 June 2016.

This is the third term of Setas, the first landscape had got introduced NSSF 1, we are now in NSSF 3. The Higher education minister says the Whitepaper on post schooling which will replace the NSD II. How much do Numsa shopstewards know about this White Paper?

Human Resource Development Council commissioned a research on the Setas and the findings are that the representation of constituencies in the Setas must be done away with as they are driven by their own narrow interests. These constituencies are Ameco, Selsof, Motor, Plastics, Numsa, Solidarity, Misca etc.

“Most OEMs are now having huge investments. What does it mean in terms of skills development? Are they bringing in new skills for workers? Or are they reducing jobs etc. not so long ago Numsa membership at VWSA was over 4000 and now we are about above 2000 where the rest are? They’ve joined the queue of unemployment. What is the meaning of these investments announcements when it comes to jobs? What is the sustainability of these jobs? Are they bringing in permanent employment?”

Auto chamber core Agreement

The Auto chamber had agreed on four areas to be included in the workplace skills plans to be commensurate with the NBF agreement.

• Driver’s license for operators.
• Bursary for unemployed workers. Companies should fund the workers indaba.
• Bursary for employed workers. Companies must assist workers beyond factory floor with relevant skills.
• Computer skills. Every worker in the automotive sector should be able to operate a computer.

Shopstewards development. Shopstewards should be trained in order to be able to engage with complex socio economic issues.

There’s an Agreement and some of these areas are already taking place.

“People’s power for people’s education and economy”

Xolani Tshayana is a Num sa shopsteward at VWSA, Eastern Cape.
Protecting the poor from losing their houses

Constitutional matters and the duty to protect the poor

Conversation with comrade Baznaar Moloi of Gauteng Housing Crisis Committee which is linked to the United Front through Congress of South Africa Non Racial Community (COSANCOM).

John Manana: We are told that Gauteng Housing Crisis Committee has registered a significant amount of strides in solving housing-related disputes and evictions in particular. And this sterling work has earned respect for you as the chairperson of the committee and your team members.

Briefly tell us about establishment this committee.

BM: Gauteng Housing Crisis Committee was established in 2015 August.

What are the main pillars that define Gauteng Housing Crisis Committee?

To protect ownership of poor community members and employees who lose their houses because of retrenchments and dismissals in general. And because the government failure to provide necessary assistance as required by the constitutions when people are evicted.

What where the main reasons which gave rise to the formation of this committee?

BM: The driving reasons were to attend illegal evictions, corruption in housing departments and courts.

What are the main pillars that define Gauteng Housing Crisis Committee?

To protect ownership of poor community members and employees who lose their houses because of retrenchments and dismissals in general. And because the government failure to provide necessary assistance as required by the constitutions when people are evicted.

What do you mean specifically about working class?

The section of people who can't access the working class?

BM: Is what is your target group?

What do you mean specifically about working class?

The section of people who can't access the working class?

BM: As I have stated before our target group is the working class.

What do you mean specifically about the working class?

I mean the senior citizens and indigent people in general.

How can people get hold of you for your splendid service?

We are currently housed by the United Front Head Quarters at corner Eloff and Frederick Street in Central Johannesburg.

You spoke of the United Front, tell us what the United Front in your view is?

The United Front is terrain to unite our working, community members and unions.

Is there any case of corruption that you have managed to expose?

We have exposed fraudulent selling of land in Kaulheong and Lenasia.

What kind of advice would you offer to a person who is facing possible eviction or eviction?

We encourage the person concern to contact us in the United Front Offices in order to establish the legality of the alleged eviction or housing dispute.

What do you think is the best possible solution to the ongoing housing crisis?

Is to establish a broad civil society movement that is capable of working hand in hand with government to ensure smooth distribution of houses as well as to come up with a clear mechanism or method of tracing the legality of documents with banks, estate agents and individual property sellers.

Thank you for your time and all the best in your future endeavours.

Lobbying public and community support for the #FeesMustFall Campaign

JOHN MANANA

The United Front Johannesburg Region convened a meeting with academics, university workers, students, civil society, activists, parents, trade unions, and community members in Soweto Career Center on the 23rd of January 2016. The purpose of the meeting was to lobby support for the #FeesMustFall campaign and develop strategies and tactics to intensify the campaign. Another aim of the meeting was to devise ways in which the #FeesMustFall campaign can be sustained in a systemic fashion, until the demand of free education and insourcing are met to the fullest. The UF took the initiative on the basis of trying to coordinate a variety of struggles from all walks of life. The #FeesMustFall campaign inspired many students across the country and took the nation by surprise and received overwhelming support from different sectors of society.

The focal points of the gathering were based on free education and insourcing coupled with decent working conditions. As opposed to freezing fees increase and sustaining cheap labour. In his input City Bokoba, United Front Provincial chairperson said, “The government must do away with the commodification of education. Instead the government must implement equal and fair education. The United Front supports the struggle for free education as envisaged by the Freedom Charter! The struggle for education should not take place in isolation with other socio-economic struggles,” he said.

Oupa Motebang Ralake, a Num sa Regional Education Officer made the following input on behalf of Numsa, “Numsa support the struggle for free education and the full implementation of the Freedom Charter. Numsa is the biological parent of the United Front and will continue to support its initiatives at all times and at whatever level”. One of the University of Joburg (UJ) progressive academic stated that “Universities such as UJ have been transformed into vehicles for neo-liberalism and exclusion as opposed to inclusive education system. In short the goal of inclusive education has precipitated.”

Another progressive academic from Wits University said, “We need to establish the comm unity at this point in time and we must also maintain communication between community structures and the student movement.”

Complementing the latter view, University of Johannesburg representative said “In order for the student struggle to reach its true potential leaders of progressive bodies in various universities must betray their privileges and take struggle forward”.

In addition one of the outsourced workers said “Outsourcing is a very exploitative measure. However the establishment of October 6 Movement created a platform for workers struggles. Thus certain gains were registered in other universities, these gains include insourcing workers from labour brokers directly to universities and in turn paying them all required benefits such as provident fund, bonuses and medical to mention a few critical demands” she said. She continued to say “there is nothing impossible if we stand together as workers, community members and students.”
Role of trade union in a political struggle

GRACE MOSOKOTSANE

Trade unions were formed with a purpose to advance workers’ rights at the workplace to improve wage and worker’s conditions at the point of production. It was formed at the birth of capitalism, merely focusing in fighting the individual capitalist without touching and looking at the foundations of capitalism. As capitalism began to grow workers faced more challenges of new economic policies which led to trade unionism developing a strategy to bring the working class to the stage where it can wage a successful struggle for political power.

This article is influenced by previous experience Numsa had during negotiations in the Engineering sector, Motor sector, the Education sector, and the #ZumaMustFall Campaign.

The article was further influenced by the views of ordinary workers and community on whether it is necessary for trade unions to take part in the political struggle. Numsa shopsteward, Tshobho Kheswa said that “trade unions and politics are intertwined, in that it is a politician who passes laws that are governed by the country which includes all labour laws. Therefore it is imperative as a worker and a member of trade union to participate in matters affecting us at work and at the community where we reside, but in doing so trade unions must not lose focus of their primary function which is to defend the workers at the point of production”.

Our collective power was to influence decisions on behalf of workers and wider society but today it has changed as the votes of the working class and society is considered an important tool used to assist some labour leaders to become members of political elites who are so eager to taste the benefits of parliament, rather than to advance workers interests. This country needs a strong working class to survive, a working class that will not allow to be used as voters tool to improve the lives of the selfish leaders but to remain revolutionaries of our own struggle in making sure that in all forces workers are heard and seen as Karl Marx once said: “Workers of the world Unite, you got nothing to lose but your chains”.

Grace Mosokotsane is a Num sa shopsteward at John Williams Motors, Northern Cape Region

The poor and the rich do not play together

DAVID MORAKE

The evil social system main characteristic is private ownership of the means of production which causes the growing gap between the rich and the poor, the products belong to the owners and not the workers who produced them, they concentrate on profit accumulation and keep wages as low as possible.

It will be a fallacy to only analyse the system without providing alternatives, the working class needs to classify and interrelate its knowledge as a basis for planning transformative action based on a strong conviction that capitalist imperialism is doing harm to the society in general and workers in particular.

A scientific observation denied by capitalists representatives who recall in horror from the thought that no matter what action they take in defense of the system they will be driven off the stage of history.

It is important to start with the structural analysis as a tool for building awareness amongst the poor and exploited. This involves a dynamic process whereby class consciousness is articulated and acted upon within the context of our own active programs.

This will entail the following critical aspects:

Economic and social

What are the chief means of production? Who owns them? Who works? What is the mode of production? Who controls distribution of goods? How? What different classes emerge from the mode of production? What are the relationships between the different classes? What effect does this have on relationships of families, tribes and other groups?

Organisational

Who has the power to make decisions? From which class are they? Who makes the laws?

For whose benefit are they made and how are the laws enforced?

This process enables us to take our own history into our own hands and to move forward in crushing the capitalist system we live under. We also need to come to terms with our own class origins, recognise how these has affected our values and reactions and ultimately the need to clarify what is needed and how it needs to be done.

The main aim of the structural analysis is to rectify previous development methodologies which failed to achieve a true development process that is, workers to become truly independent, standing straight on their feet, actively participating in decision making and becoming activators of their own future and contributing positively to society as a whole.

To accomplish this, analysis needs to reveal the character of the system of this evil society, to uncover most outrageous distorters of the truth who seek to conceal the inherent conflict of opposites, of capitalists and working class.

We need to define who is the enemy, what is its nature, and exert our fight to destroy the small crocodile on the river bank instead of leaving it to grow and turn into a strong crocodile. The process of structural analysis must start with the people, their local situations, family, places they live in, the workplaces, and the trade unions. Without an adequate analysis, a socialist may inadvertently operate within the broader framework of an exploitative system and help to strengthen and augment capitalism.

Development with social justice can take place only and only when we are clear where injustice is taking place. And ensure our thinking into the future in a creative and constructive way. We often look for the root cause of problems in society and we can be critical, but in order to have a liberating and transforming consciousness, we need to have a vision of the future, the vision is concrete, the vision is socialism.

A just society, not an unreal one where all problems have already been solved, but one that is realistically coping with the problems, not putting the clock back, or ignoring irreversible trends such as urbanisation but building on what is good, humane and possible in the modern world.

David Morake is a former Robben Island prisoner and a former SAMWU Health and Safety officer
Talk about a Jazzy Gospel revolution

A few years ago, Ntokozo Ndlovu was a Numsa shop steward at Nissan, Rosslyn local. He was also a Secretary of the plant.

After he left Nissan in July 2014, Ntokozo has released an Instrumental Gospel album. The album has nine instrumental songs and one vocal song.

“it was born and bred at Breyten in Mpumalanga. Raised by a single parent and my Grandparents. I grew up at church and I’m still at church. My Music is Gospel but with Jazz in it. I have released two Music Videos for Track 3 and 8 from my Cd (available on YouTube and online), he said.

Ntokozo’s music can be used for many occasions like backgrounds, campaigns even dance. “My music appeals to different kinds of race. My music is also available on iTunes and already there’s support even overseas and in Africa.

“Check me out on Facebook: Ntokozo Ndlovu; Instagram and Twitter as @ntokozo88. I can be contacted: 0834157824/0834895962.

Make it small enough to work for you

BOOK REVIEW

Title: How to survive without a salary
Author: Charles Long
Reviewer: Yingwani Mashaba

In an economy that threatens mass job losses and retrenchments, Charles Long provides solutions and ensures the working class that this is an opportunite time to take over the means of production.

These solutions have been well-spelled out in the revised and updated version that offers alternatives to the challenge of the New Century and urged consumers to move with current trends.

A consumer conservener will learn how to:

• Avoid consumer traps [ambush marketing].
• Budget effectively.
• Analyse your true needs.
• Plan your personal attack on inflation.
• Make a casual income.
• Utilize second hand buying and auctions.
• Find alternatives to buying.
• Save on taxes and insurance.
• Begin The Conserver Lifestyle yourself.

For the working class or consumers to win this proverbial rat race, Long urges workers or consumers to launch a vicious attack on the monopoly Capital for their own self-economic emancipation and take the means of production.

He wrote: “if it is society’s failure, if it is a lack of political will to stop the pillage of many by few, then what can one do? What now if not revolution?”

He further explains: “perhaps the most direct answer to an economy that has abandoned its worker is for workers to abandon the economy, seceding one by one to make smaller, independent economies, family arrangements, neighbourhood co-ops, alternatives to the consumer machine. Become a company of one. Make your own rules, set your own goals.

“Be your own board of Directors. You decide what gets cut from the costs of this mini-corporation. Fire General Motors by not buying the car? Done. Lay-off Kraftco? Easy. Slash the family deficit? Downsize the tax bill? Cover child care costs in-house instead of out-sourcing? Increase dividends by paying yourself instead of the mail? Why not? They have been doing it to you for years. If the global economy has lost its way, let it go. Declare the larger economy a bog mistake and start anew. This time, make it small enough to work for you!”.