



Numsa Media Monitor

Monday 25 July 2016

A daily compilation of local, national and international articles dealing with labour related issues

Numsa

NUMSA supports SABC sacked journalists

Patrick Craven, Politicsweb, 21 July 2016

Union says they weren't dismissed for disciplinary offences but for defending right of South Africans

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) declares its revolutionary solidarity with the eight sacked SABC journalists and demands their immediate and unconditional reinstatement.

These workers - Busisiwe Ntuli, Lukhanyo Calata, Thandeka Gqubule, Foeta Krige, Suna Venter, Krivani Pillay, Jacques Steenkamp and Vuyo Mvoko (whose contract was not renewed) – were not dismissed for 'disciplinary' offences but for defending the right of the South Africans to receive accurate reports on what is happening in the country and opposing censorship and biased reporting in favour of government and business interests.

For millions of poor South Africans, in rural areas in particular, the SABC is the main or even sole source of news and information. It is their democratic right to know that that news and information truly reflects what is happening in the country, and not just what the government and ruling party think are 'good stories to tell'.

Hiding images of violent protests and banning the showing of newspaper headlines is a crude attempt to fool the viewers and listeners into believing that all is well in the country under the benign rule of the ANC. It is taking us dangerously close to the creation of a state propaganda service which is used to keep the majority in line.

The union also deplors the atmosphere of intimidation and threats which is reported to prevail within the public broadcaster. Media workers have the same rights as all employees to be treated with respect and free from such attacks; and the SABC must not be allowed to exploit their fears of losing their job to bully them into submitting to Hlaudi Motsoeneng's dictatorship.

Numsa welcomes the SABC's, albeit reluctant, acceptance of the ruling by ICASA to end its censorship policies but renews its call for the immediate implementation of the sanctions called for by the Public Protector in 'When Governance and Ethics Fail', which found that SABC COO Motsoeneng had misrepresented his qualifications, abused power and improperly made appointments and salary increments.

<http://www.politicsweb.co.za/politics/numsa-supports-sabc-sacked-journalists>

South African workers

Illegal strike: Lafarge fires 150 employees

Roy Cokayne, Business Report, 22 July 2016

Johannesburg - Cement and building materials producer Lafarge South Africa has dismissed about 150 of the company's employees after they embarked on an illegal strike and ignored two written ultimatums to return to work.

Veli Gwamanda, the country director for human resources at Lafarge SA, said yesterday that the dismissals followed several illegal work stoppages in the past few weeks.

Gwamanda said contingency plans were in place and operations had not been affected, but Lafarge SA continued to monitor the situation.

She said employees from some of the company's sites, including the main cement plant in Lichtenburg, were issued with letters of dismissal on July 8 after they had ignored two written ultimatums to return to work.

Gwamanda said the workers had illegally downed tools and demanded the reinstatement of the National Union of Mineworkers' (NUM) national full-time shop steward, who had been suspended for contravening company policy.

She said Lafarge SA's management regretted having to issue the notices of dismissal, but it was left with no other choice.

"We had exhausted all avenues, including giving the employees ample opportunity to return to work, as well as engaging the NUM head office.

"The workers repeatedly engaged in illegal works stoppages despite continued efforts to reach amicable solutions on outstanding issues," she said.

Gwamanda added that Lafarge SA's management continued to be prepared to discuss any concerns with employees, but could unfortunately not condone illegal behaviour nor actions that undermined the company's policies and procedures.

“We also had to act to protect our non-striking workers who were being threatened, harassed, intimidated and in some cases physically assaulted,” she said.

Cosatu claimed Lafarge SA attempted to forcefully relocate the full-time shop stewards from Lichtenburg to its head office so the company could “exploit members of NUM” and questioned why the relocation happened after the full-time shop stewards requested the company to implement an agreement on a housing subsidy and closing the wage gap.

Job Sliso, the Cosatu North West provincial secretary, said when approached for comment yesterday that this was the first time he had heard of the dismissals.

Sliso said Cosatu had also differed with Lafarge SA in that the workers were on an illegal strike because the union had been engaging with the company about the implementation of a resolution on a housing subsidy and closing the wage gap.

Demands

He said disciplinary hearings for striking workers took place last week but they had not yet been informed of the outcome.

Cosatu’s demands include that Lafarge SA must allow all workers to return unconditionally to work within seven days; meet with Cosatu and NUM to resolve all issues that workers had raised, including the housing subsidy and closing wage gap; and cancel the suspension of the full-time shop steward.

Sliso said Cosatu would be marching on the premises of Lafarge SA today in support of NUM and its members and to pressurise the company on all the issues raised by the union.

He said Cosatu supported all the demands of Tribal Authority of Bodibe and would be part of their march on Wednesday where they would stop the company from operating in the area if it did not accede to both workers and the community’s demands.

<http://www.iol.co.za/business/companies/illegal-strike-lafarge-fires-150-employees-2048206>

Platinum Prices Might Explode If Unions And Miners Can’t Agree

Dave Forest, Oilprice.com, 21 July 21 2016

Platinum Prices Might Explode If Unions And Miners Can’t Agree

It’s crunch time for global platinum. With events kicking off this week that could radically change the outlook for supply — and prices — over the coming weeks and months.

That critical happening is wage negotiations between South Africa’s mineworkers and the world’s biggest platinum producing companies. Which got underway Tuesday — with some abrupt demands from the country’s largest union.

The Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu) sat down with miners Lonmin Plc and Impala Platinum. And formally tabled a demand for wage

increases to 12,500 rand (\$875) per month for the lowest-paid employees in the union.

That amount represents a significant shot across the bow from the union — amounting to a 47 percent pay raise for some entry-level miners. Overall, the demand is a 39 percent rise from the average 9,000 rand per month that the lowest-paid levels of the workforce currently receive.

And it's not just the lower end where the Amcu is seeking increased compensation. With the union also saying it wants a 15 percent pay increase for highly-skilled workers within its ranks.

Mining companies have said they will resist these increases. With such a rise in labor costs seen as untenable amid the current price downturn in the global platinum sector.

All of which sets the stage for some tense negotiations over the coming days. With the potential to create labor action if the union's demands aren't fully met.

This is exactly the same situation that led to a five-month strike that near-idled South Africa's platinum production in 2014 — when the most recent round of wage talks was carried out. And if a similar outcome does materialize this time, it could light a fire under platinum prices given that South Africa produces 70 percent of worldwide supply.

Watch for breaking news on mining companies' response to the pay demands — with Lonmin and the Amcu scheduled to sit down today for further talks.

Here's to a tense standoff.

<http://oilprice.com/Metals/Platinum/Platinum-Prices-Might-Explode-If-Unions-And-Miners-Cant-Agree.html>

Action over salaries to heat up at Necsa

Pericles Anetos, Business Day, 25 July 2016

TRADE unions at the Nuclear Energy Corporation of SA (Necsa), representing all employees from labourers to scientists, say they will strike on Tuesday over wage demands.

Necsa, which hopes to play a big role in SA's new nuclear procurement, is under financial stress with a range of unresolved management problems.

The state-owned company manufactures medical isotopes for export and manages the disposal of nuclear waste, which would be disrupted by a prolonged strike.

The National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu) and the Pelindaba Workers Union said on Sunday that wage negotiations with Necsa had proved fruitless.

They are asking for a 12% raise for those who earn R300,000 and below and rises of 7%-10% for other earnings categories.

Necsa first offered no increase for three years and now proposes a 5.6% hike for workers earning below R600,000 and 4.6% for those earning above R600,000.

Zolani Masoleng, Nehawu's branch chairman at Necsa, said a strike was the only means workers had to raise salaries.

"The main reason we are not budging in terms of salary increase is because this is the only instrument that we have to increase our salaries, as (Necsa) does not have any performance management system to reward good performance," Masoleng said.

The union claims that Necsa CEO Phumzile Tshelane, who is on a month-to-month contract, received a R600,000 increase in 2015. It also complains of poor governance. There are two court actions under way against Tshelane: one to have him placed on probation as a director; the other to have him declared delinquent.

Necsa said negotiations with unions would continue until there was a resolution. Necsa remained optimistic that an amicable agreement would be reached.

Necsa chairman Kelvin Kemm said its workers had had above-inflation wage increases each year for the past four years.

Kemm said the nuclear reactor Safari-1 would not be shut down. Export of medical isotopes might be affected, depending on the length of the strike, because medical isotopes had a short shelf life.

"It is possible to get through, but it would not be good for SA's image," he said.

The company said it had contingency plans to ensure the absolute safety of its plant and people if a strike were to take place. It would ensure that there were no interruptions of "essential services at its critical functions" and that none of its subsidiaries operating at the Pelindaba site not involved in the negotiations would be affected.

The company said any strike would have minimal disturbance of business operations.

The two unions represent 1,000 of Necsa's 1,200 scientists, engineers, technicians and artisans.

<http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/labour/2016/07/25/action-over-salaries-to-heat-up-at-necsa>

Midvaal mayor blames Samwu for protests

ANA/The Citizen, 22 July 2016

The mayor of Midvaal Municipality has blamed the municipal workers' union Samwu and "political opponents" for service delivery protests that shut down parts of the only Democratic Alliance-run municipality in Gauteng.

Angry residents from Sicelo informal settlement in Midvaal, south of Johannesburg, took to the streets on Thursday and staged a violent protest, barricading the R59 highway in Meyerton and demanding houses, water and electricity.

They also insisted on being addressed by the Mayor Bongani Baloyi.

The violent stand-off between police and demonstrators left one person injured and several vehicles damaged. On Friday morning, residents resumed their protest.

Baloyi, in a detailed official response regarding the strike and protests, said the protests had resulted in an “unusual disorder and violence in our normally stable municipality”.

“On June 28, I issued a statement warning that it had come to my attention that there was a plot by our political opponents to destabilise the municipality. I was not yet informed as to the proposed details,” Baloyi said.

Baloyi said Midvaal’s employees had put forward a request that the entire municipality be re-graded to a higher category of municipality, a request which management fully supported.

He said workers began a ‘go-slow’ strike because the grading system request did not find favour with Cooperative Governance Minister Des van Rooyen and the chief executive of the SA Local Government Association (Salga), Xolile George.

Baloyi said the municipality tried to resolve the workers strike by a way of signing a memorandum of understanding, but the municipality subsequently received a referral of dispute to the Salga’s bargaining council.

“Samwu [then] arranged a march for its members and also began daily picketing outside the municipal offices over and exceeding lunch times,” Baloyi said, adding Samwu accused the municipality of making discriminatory promotions for certain levels of employees.

Baloyi said Samwu members caused damage to municipal infrastructure during this strike, including electricity supply to Golf Park, Extension 6, Sicelo, Meyerton Park, water meters and other council property in Meyerton, as well as water interruptions in Drumblade.

“They have damaged private property and threatened the lives and property of staff members and councillors,” Baloyi said.

“It became clear that the opportune timing of Samwu in raising an issue from 2012 in 2016, and then including other, ever-changing complaints, was a fulfillment of my warning statement.

Baloyi said according to a reliable source, a Samwu-ANC plot was under way to destabilise Midvaal by way of sabotaging service delivery and damaging public and private property in the run-up to the local government elections on August 3.

“They have interfered with service delivery in an attempt to destabilise the municipality so that residents become angry and to therefore encourage people to protest, holding us to ransom as the elections loom,” Baloyi said.

“I called on the ANC to abandon the undemocratic plot, and to campaign with ideas and plans, rather than intimidation and violence.”

Samwu and the ANC were not immediately available for comment.

Baloyi said the municipality was currently building a civil case against Samwu on the basis that it followed all legal processes to prevent them from striking, and 10 employees who were arrested at the illegal march had been suspended pending an investigation.

<http://www.citizen.co.za/1216019/midvaal-mayor-blames-samwu-for-protests/>

Salga to intervene in Samwu dispute

Masa Kekana, EWN, 22 July 2016

Salga's Lucky Leseane says tensions in the municipality caused the Meyerton protests.

JOHANNESBURG – The South African Local Government Association (Salga) says it will intervene in the dispute between South African Municipal Workers' Union (Samwu) workers which has led to a service delivery protest in Meyerton.

Residents of the Sicelo informal settlement took to the streets this week barricading roads and blocking the R59 highway.

He said workers began a 'go-slow' strike because the grading system request did not find favour with Cooperative Governance Minister Des van Rooyen and the chief executive of the SA Local Government Association (Salga), Xolile George.

The protesters have complained about a lack of services such as sanitation, water, housing and electricity.

Salga's Lucky Leseane says tensions in the municipality caused the protests.

"This labour relations matter is spilling out into the community and that is not what we need and there are agreed channels of resolving labour matters."

<http://ewn.co.za/2016/07/23/Salga-to-intervene-in-Samwu-dispute>

Hospital protest at the ICC called off

Samkelo Mtshali, Daily News, 21 July 2016

Durban - National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (Nehawu) leaders at Prince Mshiyeni Memorial Hospital have been warned by the union's provincial leadership to call off a protest at the Durban ICC.

The protest was planned for either today or tomorrow, to draw Health MEC Dr Sibongiseni Dhlomo's attention to the plight of outsourced workers.

Protesters also wanted to highlight concerns over the safety of doctors and nurses, threatened by the continuing outsourcing strike.

Nehawu chairman at the uMlazi hospital, Bheki Shezi, on Wednesday said they were told by the union's provincial leadership to call off the protest.

Democratic Nursing Organisation of South Africa KZN spokesman, Mandla Shabangu, told the Daily News on Wednesday he could neither deny nor confirm the ICC protest had been called off.

He said shop stewards at Mshiyeni would still find ways of staging protests.

“The shop stewards assessed the situation and used their discretion on the way forward. Provincial leaders were not part of that decision because the shop stewards on the ground understand the situation better.”

However, Shezi, said their provincial head office had advised them to call off the ICC protest. He said they were threatened by the health department with charges of conducting an illegal gathering.

Thabane Mdingi, a member of the South African Public Service Union, said he did not want to comment on the decision to call off the ICC protest.

A Department of Health spokesman said they were busy at the Aids conference and referred queries to a colleague who did not answer his phone.

Nehawu’s provincial office could not be reached at the time of publication.

<http://www.iol.co.za/dailynews/news/hospital-protest-at-the-icc-called-off-2047916>

South Africa

Not voting ANC is like choosing devil: Zuma

Sithandiwe Velaphi, Independent Media, 23 July 2016

Pretoria - Not voting for the ANC is like committing a crime, or choosing the devil over God, ANC president Jacob Zuma declared on the campaign trail in the Eastern Cape.

Accompanied by Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula and the party’s provincial leaders, Zuma made the statement while addressing a packed Gompo Hall in Duncan Village, East London, on Friday.

He went on to warn voters that if they didn’t vote ANC, leaders of other political parties would get into municipal “councils or Parliament, and will not do anything to help people”.

He urged Buffalo City residents not to throw their votes “into (the) dustbin”.

“The ANC liberated you. Please vote for it on August 3. Do not waste your vote to opposition parties. Voting ANC is like opening gates to heaven. If you do not vote ANC, it’s like choosing to be with devil,” he said to loud applause from ANC volunteers and supporters.

He also pulled no punches when it came to the opposition DA, comparing the party to a “snake”.

“The DA is a product of the National Party, an organisation that oppressed us. During the apartheid era, the National Party was like a snake and because the DA is its product, the DA is also a snake,” he said.

Zuma said the DA and other parties, like the EFF, Cope and the UDM , were full of “lies”.

“Why vote for liars?” he asked.

Before the address, Zuma conducted a door-to-door campaign in Duncan Village.

Among the people he visited was wheelchair-bound Nonkosazana Qalekiso, 53, who has lived in a dilapidated shack for 21 years.

“I want a motorised wheelchair and a decent shelter with good sanitation. When it is time to answer the call of nature, I use the bucket because I have got no good sanitation facilities. My body is in pain after I was hit by a car just outside my shack earlier this month,” a teary Qalekiso told Zuma. In return, Zuma assured Qalekiso that a motorised wheelchair would be arranged for her by Buffalo City metro officials before next month’s election.

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/not-voting-anc-is-like-choosing-devil-zuma-2048749>

LGE 2016: ANC claws back with race baiting, veterans and the dab

Ranjeni Munusamy, Daily Maverick, 25 July 2016

Had the local government elections happened in April instead of August, the ANC would have been fighting fires over the Constitutional Court judgement on Nkandla and the backlash over allegations of “state capture” by the Gupta family. The ANC has successfully closed down the discourse on both these issues and in the last few weeks launched a “hearts and minds” campaign to appeal to the sentimentality of their traditional voters. Although the party is still expected to dip in support compared to previous elections, it might not take the hammering initially expected. And for those who think the election results will hurt President Jacob Zuma, think again.

Let’s face it: the ANC has never been tested on its actual performance in any elections so far. The ANC’s mass constituency does not mine through data of jobs and service delivery to make decisions about where to put their crosses on the ballot paper. They vote on the basis of the ANC they know – its history, its brand and generational loyalty. The biggest challenge for opposition parties is to break that trend.

On Thursday last week, the South African Reserve Bank Governor Lesetja Kganyago announced that the growth rate was forecast at 0% – revised downward from 0.6% previously. This will have dire consequences for the country’s developmental plans and ability to create jobs.

Did this make any impact on the local government elections campaign?

No.

Should it have?

Yes. It is testament to the bad management of the economy and risky political conditions.

Did the ANC bother to respond to the worrying news?

Of course not.

The ANC's election machinery does not factor such issues into its campaign. Strategically so. Engaging on such a matter would create a conversation around the economic climate. This would then reintroduce the subject of President Jacob Zuma's irresponsible decision to fire former finance minister Nhlanhla Nene and the damage this did to the economy and perceptions about the stability of the country. And once the president becomes the focus, the subject of Nkandla looms large as well as his relationship with the dodgy Gupta family.

In the wake of the Constitutional Court judgment that found that president had violated the Constitution, a number of ANC veterans, prominent South Africans, religious bodies and civil society organisations, as well as some ANC structures, voiced their concerns about Zuma's leadership. The ANC initially gave an ear to these concerns but bought time to deal with the matter. Once the initial anger died down, the ANC issued an instruction that its structures should no longer discuss it. Then the ANC national executive committee (NEC) decided that Zuma's "apology" should be accepted and the matter was closed.

It was an ingenious strategy to ensure that Nkandla is not issue in the local government elections.

Similarly, the outcry over the Gupta family's improper involvement in state affairs led to an investigation by the ANC into "state capture". That too was shut down by the NEC and the allegations left hanging. It no longer features in the political discourse and is not an election issue.

The ANC was disorientated by the outbreak of violence in Tshwane but managed to contain the matter publicly, even though it continues to fight fires within its structures. In KwaZulu-Natal, although factional battles continue to rage and political assassinations have marred the campaign, the ANC is not engaging on these matters. The party has made a concerted effort to keep its election messaging on track, even fobbing off the SABC controversy.

In the past few weeks, the ANC has changed the narrative in the country. Led by Zuma, the ANC has turned its guns on opposition parties, mocking the Democratic Alliance (DA), Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), the United Democratic Movement (UDM) and the Congress of the People (Cope). At a campaign event at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, Zuma opened up the front against the opposition parties.

"You can be as angry as anything, you can be as loud as anything. The reality is that the people of this country know the African National Congress. It fought and liberated them," Zuma said. He accused the DA and EFF of being empty vessels making the biggest noise. The president has kept up the attack as he campaigned in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape last week, demonising the DA on the basis of race.

"Do not be deceived. I want to make this clear because we have a short memory. They are the spawn of the National Party," Zuma said at a rally in Nelson Mandela Bay. "They have the same hatred. They don't believe black people can lead."

"When a snake, a poisonous one, gives birth, it gives birth to another snake. How can you vote for people who don't know you and who you don't know?" Zuma was quoted by News24.

Through the race baiting and crude attacks, Zuma is shifting attention away from nuts and bolts issues. It ensures that fears about the return of white domination becomes top of mind in communities rather than poor performance of elected officials and service delivery failures.

Meanwhile the ANC elections team rolled out the South African celeb set to help position the party as trendy and stylish. ANC branded fashion items are in circulation, and the dab has become a new dance craze.

And now the ANC has pulled out its biggest weapon in the “hearts and minds” campaign – its veterans. Former president Kgalema Motlanthe, struggle stalwarts Ahmed Kathrada and Mavuso Msimang, and former minister Tokyo Sexwale joined the campaign trail in Gauteng. Kathrada and Msimang had previously spoken out strongly against Zuma’s leadership, going as far as telling him to step down after the Constitutional Court judgment on Nkandla. The fact that they are now campaigning for the ANC affirms the brand as being resilient despite the damage, and plays into the subliminal messaging that the party will self correct once Zuma is gone.

The last trump card is former president Thabo Mbeki. The ANC is trying by all means to draw him into the campaign, even though he did not participate in the 2009, 2011 and 2014 election campaigns. A photo-op with Johannesburg mayor Parks Tau and even an autographed copy of the latest book on Mbeki were being punted as endorsements of the ANC’s Joburg mayoral candidate.

A claim by a relative of Mbeki’s, who joined the DA, that the family no longer supported the ANC forced a statement from the former president’s office confirming that he was still a member “in good standing”. But there is yet to be an endorsement of the ANC under its current leadership.

Has the ANC done enough to regain lost ground? No.

Clearly there has been significant damage the image and reputation of the party, and factional battles continue to eat its core. But it knows who to target now and how to do so.

A wild card in this election is the large number of undecided voters, particularly those who were traditional ANC supporters. Many of these people are disenchanted with the party but are unsure about which opposition party to support.

This final push by the ANC is designed to appeal to sentimentality of the base constituency – a reminder of the glory of the ANC of old and its ability to reinvent itself under trying conditions. Fanning the racial flames is intended to stop people voting for the DA as the “safe” option while the EFF is being cast as angry outsiders who will cause anarchy.

Younger voters, who might previously been taken in by the EFF’s socialist, Chavista-like allure and turned off by the bumbling ANC Youth League, are being wooed back to join the stylish trendsetters in the ANC.

There is a belief in some quarters that the ANC will deal with its errant president after the elections. This is not going to happen. The planting of that information was part of the strategy to buy time to quell anger over his leadership. The issues for which

the president would have been taken to task, Nkandla and the Guptas, have been closed by the ANC NEC. Nobody can reverse that decision now.

If the ANC performs poorly in the elections, Zuma will be cushioned from the blame. His issues were not part of the election discourse and therefore his supporters will make sure that the blame is laid elsewhere.

As far as the ANC is concerned, they are on the comeback. As all parties put pedal to the metal in the final phase of their campaigns, the ANC will go all out to bring its voters home. They know that secretly, many disheartened and angry people do want the ANC to return to its former glory. All they have to do now is convince as many people as possible that this is possible. By the time these people realise that “home” is actually a castle in the sky, it will be too late.

<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2016-07-25-lge-2016-anc-claws-back-with-race-baiting-veterans-and-the-dab/#.V5XIXU3IrlU>

SABC

SABC denies on-air ‘blackout’ protest

Henriette Geldenhuys, Weekend Argus, 24 July 2016

Cape Town - A silent protest by SABC TV news staff, who all dressed in black when they were on camera on Friday, “was not a protest”, according to SABC spokesman Kaizer Kganyago.

SABC journalists wore black to show their solidarity with colleagues who were dismissed this week for challenging editorial policies, including a ban on airing footage of violent protests.

Kganyago on Saturday suggested the pictures published on social media sites could have been falsified and could have been taken on different days.

He said wearing black was not a form of protest. “If people wake up and wear black, it’s not a protest,” he said.

It is understood the silent protest had been planned without leaving a paper trail to prevent incurring the wrath of management. If journalists had declared they were going to wear black to protest they would have been “dealt with”, said Kganyago.

“If somebody goes out and says that, we will deal with them. What people don’t understand is that there’s a contract between employer and employee.”

SABC chief operating officer Hlaudi Motsoeneng banned coverage of violent protests, but the SABC has reversed this decision.

The fired journalists are fighting their dismissal in the Labour Court. .

They are: Lukhanyo Calata, Thandeka Gqubule, Busisiwe Ntuli, Foeta Krige, Suna Venter, Krivani Pillay and Jacques Steenkamp. Vuyu Mvoko’s contract was not renewed.

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/sabc-denies-on-air-blackout-protest-2048800>

Axed SABC staff await their fate

Shain Germaner, The Star, 25 July 2016

Johannesburg - Four SABC journalists were expected to hear on Monday whether the Labour Court will set aside their dismissals as the national broadcaster continues to deny dissent among its ranks.

Foeta Krige, Suna Venter, Krivani Pillay and Jacques Steenkamp approached the court on Friday to obtain an interdict setting aside their dismissals.

The four are part of a team of eight who have challenged the broadcaster's controversial editorial policies, particularly a ban on airing footage of violent protests. The ban has been compared to self-censorship.

The Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa) last week ordered the broadcaster to rescind the protest ban.

After initial disagreement with Icasa's order, the broadcaster and its chief operating officer, Hlaudi Motsoeneng, have reversed its decision not to air protest footage.

Solidarity, which is representing the eight SABC journalists, said Judge Rob la Grange was due to indicate on Monday morning if he will provide judgment on Monday or Tuesday.

Solidarity chief executive Dirk Hermann said the union was confident it had managed to convince the court that the dismissal of the four was unlawful and in breach of legislation.

"We are convinced that our members will soon be back at work to serve the public by providing information to them," Hermann said.

An apparent silent protest by SABC TV news staff on Friday was denied by the broadcaster's spokesman, Kaizer Kganyago. Numerous journalists appeared on television on Friday wearing all black, allegedly in solidarity with their colleagues who were dismissed or face dismissal.

Kganyago said this weekend that wearing black was not a form of protest. "If people wake up and wear black, it's not a protest."

The silent protest was apparently planned to avoid leaving a trail and potentially leading to more dismissals.

<http://www.iol.co.za/news/crime-courts/axed-sabc-staff-await-their-fate-2049017>

'Make Hlaudi pay'

Charl Du Plessis, City Press, 24 July 2016

SABC chief operating operator Hlaudi Motsoeneng may be held personally responsible for thousands of rands of legal costs that have been incurred as a result of the SABC's decision to fire employees who objected to its policy not to air footage of violent protests.

On Friday, Steven Budlender, counsel for the seven SABC employees, asked the labour court to overturn the axing of the journalists, saying the SABC's conduct was not only "patently unlawful and unconstitutional, it is cynical and amounts to bullying".

He was referring to the fact that the SABC has not backed down from its decision to fire the journalists, despite its concession in South Gauteng High Court on Wednesday – in a matter brought by the Helen Suzman Foundation – that the policy was unlawful and invalid.

"It is bizarre that the SABC accepts the protest policy was invalid from the moment it was enacted, but now seeks to penalise the journalists who had the courage to say so at the time," Budlender argued.

But Budlender has not only asked the court to overturn the firing, suspension and disciplinary hearings of the journalists involved, he has also asked the court to order the SABC to file affidavits to indicate which officials were responsible for the decision.

Although it remains to be seen whether the court will make the costs order and whether it will be revealed precisely who was involved, Budlender drew parallels between the SABC matter and a previous Supreme Court of Appeal ruling in which it said it was "time for courts to seriously consider holding officials who behave in a high handed manner personally liable [as] this may have a sobering effect on truant public officers". However, no such order had been asked for in that case.

Budlender argued that the conduct of Motsoeneng in this case was exactly the same as that of the official involved in that case, but they were asking for such an order.

"Mr Motsoeneng threatened my clients from the moment the protest policy was announced and from the moment they had the temerity to do their jobs by putting people on the air who were critical of it," Budlender argued.

"He [Motsoeneng] harassed them, he threatened them and that harassment and threatening conduct continues to this day, where in the face of concession that the policy is unlawful, the people who were right about it all along are still dismissed."

Themba Skosana, counsel for the SABC, however, argued that the "labour court does not have jurisdiction to adjudicate an unresolved dispute if the Labour Relations Act or any employment law requires the dispute to be resolved through arbitration".

Skosana argued that the case was about an ordinary dismissal that triggered the legislative mechanisms of the act, which – according to previous cases – require that a party must first approach the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration before the labour court may be approached.

Judge Robert Lagrange said he would hand down judgment in the matter tomorrow or on Tuesday.

<http://city-press.news24.com/News/make-hlaudi-pay-20160724>

International

Karnataka Road Transport Union To Go On Strike From Midnight

Press Trust of India, 24 July 2016

Bengaluru: More than one lakh employees of state-owned Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation will launch an indefinite strike from this midnight to press for their demand of hike in salary.

As many as 23,000 buses of KSRTC will stay off the roads, including in Bengaluru, and a total of 1.23 lakh employees will join the strike, KSRTC Staff and Workers' Federation general secretary HV Anantha Subbarao said today.

"The employees of public transport system - Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation - will go on an indefinite strike from midnight. They are demanding a salary hike," he told reporters in Bengaluru.

The decision comes in the wake of a stalemate in the talks between the government and the federation.

The employees are demanding a 35 per cent hike in salary, while the government was ready for 10 per cent increase.

"The 30 per cent hike in salaries will burden the state exchequer by Rs. 4,550 crore. We are ready for 10 per cent hike," Transport Minister Ramalinga Reddy said.

He argued that the salaries drawn by KSRTC employees were higher compared to their counterparts in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Maharashtra.

Asked whether the government would invoke the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) against the striking employees, Mr Reddy said the government did not want to use this provision, but was ready to negotiate with the federation to solve the issue.

"We are ready to negotiate with the federation to find solution for the issue. We do not want to invoke ESMA," he said.

Replying to another question, Mr Reddy said the government would make alternative arrangements by giving temporary contract carriage to private operators during the strike.

The government has declared two-day holiday for schools because of the strike.

Subbarao said if the government invoked ESMA, the employees would be ready to court arrest. "Our families will come out and support the strike," he said.

Commuters in September 2012 had faced severe difficulties across the state when KSRTC employees struck work for three days.

<http://www.ndtv.com/karnataka-news/karnataka-road-transport-union-to-go-on-strike-from-midnight-1435577>

Comment & Opinion

Weight of research demolishes the arguments against a minimum wage

Stephanie Luce, Business Day, 25 July 2016

THE evidence is growing that minimum wage laws are a wise policy choice in a time of growing inequality, unstable markets, and sustained unemployment.

Just two decades ago, conventional wisdom among economists was that setting or raising a minimum wage would lead to job losses and possible inflation — until the conventional theory was put to the test.

In the US, cities and states passed higher wage mandates, and researchers compared those regions with others with lower wages. Study after study confirmed: the dire predictions of unemployment did not hold. Instead, higher minimum wages not only benefited workers, but also employers, which reported lower turnover, reduced absenteeism and higher productivity.

Rather than resulting in unemployment, some studies find that US states that raised their minimum wage had greater job growth. Low-wage workers tend to spend all their raises paying off debt or purchasing local goods and services, which is good for macroeconomic stability. Inequality, which is bad for economic growth, can be reduced by higher wages.

Opponents of minimum wages claim that such laws are particularly hard on small businesses. Yet in the US many small employers already pay wages above the minimum. For a small company, staff turnover is particularly costly and disruptive. Employers have an incentive to keep employees on for the long term, and tend to raise wages as those employees gain seniority.

Large firms, particularly multinational companies, can afford high turnover — and sometimes welcome it. The low wages they pay give them an unfair advantage over small businesses.

Another myth is that minimum wages create division in the workplace between the formal sector and informal sector, or between standard and nonstandard employment relations. But the evidence for this claim is weak.

In reality, when governments deregulate labour markets, conditions become worse for many workers in the formal and informal sectors. Workers have less power and employers have more, which generally results in lower standards for all.

As SA debates the merits of implementing a national minimum wage, it joins conversations taking place in many countries. Policy makers are working to find ways to alleviate the growing gap between rich and poor, and to begin to hold employers accountable for their role in widening inequality.

The International Labour Organisation declared that the minimum wage was a global concern. The IMF has concluded that policies aimed at labour market liberalisation had been detrimental to global macroeconomic stability.

In recent years some countries, such as Germany, established national minimum wage laws for the first time — partly in acknowledgement that unions no longer have the power they once did to collectively bargain higher wages.

Unions realise that minimum wage policies can complement collective bargaining by providing a floor that "takes wages out of competition". Some countries initially

instituted national minimum wage policies in conjunction with freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining.

Chile expanded existing minimum wage laws to cover previously excluded occupations, such as farm workers and domestic workers. And other countries have begun to implement significant increases in the wage rate to account for decades of stagnation.

In the US, for example, the states of New York and California, and dozens of cities, have recently passed minimum wages of \$15 per hour in an effort to raise the minimum closer to a living wage. In China, 16 provincial and municipal governments increased their minimum wage by mid-2014, by an average of 14.2%. There have been significant minimum wage increases in the past few years in Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Indonesia, Slovenia, and the UK.

A minimum wage is not enough to solve poverty or inequality. It must be part of a package of social programmes and economic policies, and it must include thoughtful approaches to wage levels, pay structures, and enforcement. But the research increasingly shows that the minimum wage is a solid and effective tool that has direct and indirect benefits. Inequality and working poverty are at crisis levels. SA should move swiftly to adopt a national minimum wage.

- *Dr Luce is a professor at the City University of New York and an international expert on living wages*

<http://www.bdlive.co.za/opinion/2016/07/25/weight-of-research-demolishes-the-arguments-against-a-minimum-wage>

The end of capitalism is not nigh

Ivo Vegter, Daily Maverick, 18 Jul 2016

Are we entering a post-capitalist future? Intellectuals on the left would like to believe that the economic upheavals of the 21st century are able to transmute the failure of the grand socialist projects of the 20th century into a new, high-tech revolution of the people. They're right, but all they're really seeing is free markets at work.

"The end of capitalism has begun." So starts a lengthy column in the economics section of *The Guardian*, brought to my attention last week. It was written by music teacher turned journalist Paul Mason, who earlier this year left his position as economics editor at the BBC's Channel 4 to escape the constraints of impartiality. He describes the ideas in his most recent book, *Postcapitalism: A Guide to Our Future*, as "left of social democracy".

As with previous books, he approaches the political, social and economic upheavals since the turn of the 21st century from the perspective of the working class. He draws parallels between the original working class of the 19th century industrial revolution and those who protest globalisation, austerity and the so-called "neoliberal consensus" today.

Mason is a great writer, and clearly has a good grasp of the history and political context of the labour movement. The column in question is very well worth reading. He begins with the observation that instead of the market being destroyed by using

the lever of the state, as 20th-century leftist imagined and recent economic upheavals might have signalled, “[i]nstead over the past 25 years it has been the left’s project that has collapsed”.

The reason, he argues, is that individualism has replaced collectivism and solidarity, and the working class no longer thinks or behaves as it once did. The saving grace for disappointed leftists, he thinks, is technology, which has the power to “[reshape] the economy around new values and behaviours.”

He describes a techno-Utopia as post-capitalism, which to him seems as different from capitalism as the industrial revolution was from feudalism. It will take root within the old system, not as a revolution, but as an “emergence of a new kind of human being”.

The driving forces, in his telling, are three major changes technology has brought. The first is a reduced need for work, thanks to automation. The second is the rise of abundant information to replace the scarcity of goods and services, which undermines the price mechanism. The third is the rise of collaborative production that undermines or circumvents formal economy channels, such as cooperatives, parallel digital currencies and carpools.

Alongside technological progress, we have seen economic crises around the world, which he says led to both fiscal austerity and monetary excess. Public finances are in disarray the world over, and long-term stagnation is an ever-present fear. Economic and social upheaval have also had political consequences, the most visible of which has been the decision by the United Kingdom to leave the European Union.

It is tempting, therefore, to go along with Mason’s thesis, that this signals the end of capitalism as we know it. He puts his finger on a key problem in the modern economy: that information apparently “wants to be free”, as Stewart Brand once put it.

To some extent, he is correct. It has been hard to transition from an economy based primarily on physical manufacturing to one in which information becomes more dominant. Charging a price for something that can easily be copied is a challenge.

However, Mason shows his hand when he describes the system of capitalism as we know it as “neoliberalism”. This label has never been used as a descriptor; it has always implied disparagement. But although he pins his hope for the left on the co-operative production by individuals free of government or corporate control, this is exactly what the term neoliberalism means: maximising individual freedom by limiting government interference in the operation of free markets.

He confuses the corrupt symbiosis of corporations and government, in which crony-capitalists support politicians in return for protection from competitors, with private, free markets operated on a level playing field. What has been missing for the last century is the level playing field, and this is what technology now offers.

Just as the technology revolution is in no way socialist in nature, the real culprit for the world’s present state is not capitalism, per se, but a particular perversion of it introduced by statist economists such as John Maynard Keynes. He provided governments with a way to spend beyond their means, by controlling the supply of

money. Chronic, long-term inflation would slowly erode the value of the money in people's pockets, while also deflating the value of debt. As long as people had faith in governments, the illusion of prosperity could be maintained.

Every time economic activity seemed to falter, governments would simply make money and credit cheaper, and spend more on public works, thus artificially stimulating investment and spending. The problem is that not all investments are equally worthy. Stimulus money invariably ended up in asset classes that otherwise would not have received the investment. That's why the stock market loves economic stimulus, even though it makes hardly any difference to the ordinary man in the street.

Repeated episodes of monetary stimulus and malinvestment inevitably set the market up for a "correction", leading to the boom and bust cycle with which we are so familiar today. Free market advocates have long predicted this, as I wrote five years ago. It was explained more than a century ago by Ludwig von Mises in his book *The Theory of Money and Credit* (the full text of which is available for free, thanks to the damn greedy capitalists). Booms and busts aren't a product of free markets, but of government intervention. Economic liberalism is the antidote.

What Mason really describes is not the end of capitalism, but the fall of Keynesianism. The new activities he observes are all products of free people operating in a free market. The decentralisation, efficiency, co-operation and price-cutting that he notes are the effect of new competitors arising to challenge staid incumbents, as well as their new-found ability to use technology to bypass government controls over commerce and taxes. He is simply describing a market that is freer, not some new system of economic organisation that needs a new name.

The things he imagines will be priced at zero, thanks to the rise of automation, collaboration, copying and sharing, will not actually be free. They will be cheaper, and perhaps much cheaper, than in the past, but goods, services, ideas and time cannot be conjured out of thin air. Capital will not disappear. Its distribution will change, towards innovative individuals and voluntary groups that are best able to apply it to production. But free individuals organising together to produce the wants and needs of society is a normal process of capitalism.

Mason writes: "[To] make [the transition to post-capitalism] happen, the entire project of the left, from protest groups to the mainstream social democratic and liberal parties, will have to be reconfigured. In fact, once people understand the logic of the post-capitalist transition, such ideas will no longer be the property of the left – but of a much wider movement, for which we will need new labels."

We don't really need new labels, from an intellectual point of view. Free-market capitalism has always sought to reduce the state to a mere protector of life, liberty and property. It relies on the price mechanism, but it has never had a problem dealing with products that are cheap, or even free. It has always rejected unnecessary constraints upon economic activity, denounced political cronyism, and advocated free competition to undermine conservative economic, social and political structures.

I'll agree that if you used to believe in "super-computed Five Year Plans", as Mason describes the old ideals of the left, it might be hard to accept that socialist dream has

died. So imagine how hard it must be to admit that popular resistance against monetary policy excess, crony-capitalism and corruption, fuelled by economic dissatisfaction and technological opportunity, is nothing other than free market capitalism at work. That it wasn't capitalism that was the problem, but Keynesian statism.

It is perfectly possible to reconcile the concerns of the disgruntled left with the idealism of libertarians who support free markets and individual choice. If we need to relabel the rise of free economic activity outside established government and corporate structures as "post-capitalism", perhaps a re-branding is in order.

I'm not convinced by Mason's economic explanation, but I do admire his optimistic vision for the future and his readiness "to be Utopian". He appears to distrust the government and corporate elites that got us into this mess in the first place, and seems to appreciate the freedom to innovate, collaborate and share on terms set by the people who participate in the economy. So do I.

The ideal future still looks like one of free markets and individual liberty, but if it'll make leftists feel better to call it post-capitalism, instead of the post-Keynesianism it really is, I can go along with that.

<http://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2016-07-18-the-end-of-capitalism-is-not-nigh/#.V5XEQk3lrIU>
