



NUMSA NEWS



THE NEWSPAPER OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF METALWORKERS SOUTH AFRICA 1ST ADDITION

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WAGE NEGOTIATIONS SEASON



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Irvin Jim

Secretary General

NUMSA moment of collective Bargaining and the continuous struggle to improve workers' wages in all sectors.



The union convened a National Bargaining Conference (NBC) in May, where it reflected on the state of the economy and the performance of the engineering sector and all related sectors in the value chain as we are negotiating this year. We are resolute that the mandate to this collective round of negotiations for NUMSA is to take up the struggle for workers to get paid a living wage. It also means that we must engage the government to take the necessary measures and interventions in all these sectors to protect the current manufacturing capacity, save jobs whilst simultaneously defending collective bargaining.

We used the NBC as a strategic platform to empower our shop stewards through disseminating information about the state of the economy. We unpacked the socio-economic conditions of the working class, including the organized and the unemployed, in all nine provinces. We noted that Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo are all in a poor economic state, as reflected by their lower contribution to the country's GDP. In these provinces, our people are living and surviving below the poverty line.

The NBC dedicated itself to NUMSA organizational renewal, whose primary focus is quality service to members and the recruitment of all workers to join the fighting militant NUMSA in engineering, mining, aviation, transport and road freight, Transnet, PRASA and all our SOEs. We resolved to fight against privatization of our country's energy provision, and we are clear that we must defend Eskom, Denel, SA Express and SAA Technical.

"We are positioning the union to be on top of the fourth industrial revolution"

We are positioning the union to be on top of the fourth industrial revolution to champion establishing a training centre that must deliver quality training to consistently produce much needed hardcore skills such as artisans, welders and electricians. We went back to our slogan, "From a sweeper to an engineer". This training must focus on robotics, algorithm, and coding of

computer programs, and all other skills which are in demand and critical for the manufacturing and industrialization of the country. The NBC further resolved to put together a team of young people who must be on the cutting edge of leading this critical task of preparing the way for the fourth industrial revolution.

The NBC did not mince its words about championing a clear campaign with absolutely no compromise in driving localization and beneficiation of all components of cars. We were very clear that the Auto sector must honour its commitments to localization in the Master Plan vision 2035. The union is busy engaging with the green paper process announced by the Department of Trade Industry and Competition (DTIC), which has the potential of a rapid global movement of manufacturing cars with Internal Combustion Engines (ICE) to Electric Vehicles (EV). We are very clear that components for electric vehicles must be localized, and there must be a reduc-

tion of customs duties. We must defend the targets and commitments which were made on the Master Plan to create jobs.

Numsa has called for a pre-bargaining meeting with the Engineering Sector employers to deal with whatever challenges the industry and specific companies face. We have also presented a detailed turn-around plan for Eskom, showing them that they cannot continue to increase the prices of primary energy suppliers by 17% per annum while refusing to renegotiate down expensive bid windows 123 and 5 of the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers. We have raised sharply the absolute failure of Eskom management to deliver quality maintenance of Eskom power. As a result, they subject the country to costly consistent load shedding, crippling the country's economy and destroying jobs. We have also called on Eskom management to ban the high price of diesel which is running into billions and is tantamount to wasteful expenditure. At the same time, they have rejected the just demands made by workers for a meaningful increase, and they have stated their intention to impose a 1.5% increase on workers.

The message from the union to all NUMSA members under the slogan "Intsimbi Ayigobhi," is that we are making a clarion call that we are aware of all difficulties experienced by workers across all sectors, including engineering. Specific companies that we are negotiating at plant level with, such as Macsteel, SCAW, ArcelorMittal, and all house agreements companies and companies in the mining sector, will also focus on our recruitment campaign. We must go all out to recruit workers to join NUMSA, and we must organize the union not only to be a majority union but in all plants where NUMSA is, we must make sure that workers join the union in their numbers. That way, we can ensure that we are genuinely a shield and a spear, fighting against all forms of oppression. Our goal is to bring an end to the super-exploitation of Black and African labour

so that every worker can realize a living wage and a better quality of life.

We have reflected on the state of our national crisis, which continues to deepen. We are more than convinced that the historical NUMSA 2013 resolution, which led to us breaking ranks with the ANC government and the alliance, to build NUMSA as an independent voice of the working class was the right decision. Since then, we have launched and crystalized SAFTU, the SRWP and the United Front, and we are very clear that our task is to mobilize, organize and strengthen these formations to take up the demands of the working class and fight for workers and working-class interests and aspirations.

"The key is defending and maintaining political and ideological confidence in the working class"

The key to such a struggle is defending and maintaining political and ideological confidence in the working class to wield working-class unity and working-class political power into the revolutionary vanguard party, the SRWP. The SRWP is a party of the revolution, and we are making a clarion call that workers and shop stewards, whilst building NUMSA, should voluntarily join and actively create branches of the SRWP.

The task of the SRWP and NUMSA is not only to grow the membership of the trade union but also to unite organized workers represented by NUMSA and other unions to fight for common demands. The party also has the significant revolutionary work of uniting the unemployed and the employed in a common struggle for Socialism.

The revolutionary struggle in our country is to bring an end to the current rot of corruption that has destroyed workers' jobs and to stop the current de-industrialization. We have to fight for public ownership of the economy's commanding heights and



EDITORIAL

NUMSA *Cares*

NUMSA KZN together with Doves and NFS donated masks, Sarnitizer and sanitary towels at Makhanya primary school situated at Zwelibomvu



**Lead by KZN Regional Secretary, Mbuso Ngubane
KZN REGION and DOVES/NFS donate masks to a primary school**



...Continuation

reject the privatization of energy provision by defending Eskom. This includes defending SAA, SAX, Denel, PetroSA and many other SOE's. They must all remain in the hands of the state as the property of the people.

Forty per cent of China's economy is in the hands of the state. The Chinese government has used both their SOEs and state ownership of minerals to champion manufacturing and industrialization to implement a job led

industrial strategy, which created the most needed jobs for its significant population.

We must fight for this path of development for our country to transform the stubborn minerals, energy and finance complex economy, which has not been changed to ensure that through such a struggle, we address the fundamentals of ownership and control of the economy.

“ Without language, one cannot talk to people and understand them; one cannot share their hopes and aspirations, grasp their history, appreciate their poetry, or savor their songs ”

**NELSON
MANDELA**





PRESIDENT'S LETTER



Andrew Chirwa President

Comrades, the virus is still with us... Let us continue to take great care of ourselves and for one another.

Warm revolutionary greeting to all Metal workers and the entire working class at large. I trust and hope that you are well under the current historic and unprecedented times due to the global pandemic Covid19 and its disastrous economic impact. The Covid19 health, social and economic crises have proven to be one of the most severe pandemics in the history of humanity as they brought the whole global capitalist economy to a complete halt, killing close to 4 million people across the globe.

We closed the year 2020 in a high spirits filled with hope for a better year in 2021, just two weeks after our Central Committee the country was put back on level 3 lockdown. Many lives were lost at an alarming rate. The union was not spared from the brutality of this silent killer. We also lost many lives in our families and communities amongst our membership, shop stewards, and organization staff, including NUMSA's former President Makudupela. Three of our members perished at Arcelor Mittal in an explosion that could have been avoided.

Comrades, the virus is still with us, and it kills; the

number of people infected globally and locally continues to grow; the numbers of death continues to grow. Let us continue to take great care of ourselves and for one another. The third wave of this virus is already upon us. Let us not let our guard down least we risk losing more lives. We need each other for the class struggle ahead. Comrades, we must never see the rollout of vaccine as a single solution out of this crises. Let us continue to practice the most basic health protocols to protect ourselves and our loved ones. The developed countries refuse to distribute the vaccine equitably, which means that it would take years before many of us could get access to vaccination. The situation is compounded by the government's failure to roll out an effective and efficient vaccine strategy in our country.

The government is effectively using the national disaster management act to dictate the terms and conditions of your lives and oppress any form of dissent and a fightback, why the churches could be open but

political gatherings remain restricted.

The Corporations are also using the crises to restructure companies and attack our hard-won gains of the past. That is why we cannot sleep and wait for the crises to end.

The world we know will be completely different post the pandemic; many of the jobs we have today will disappear. The need for the working class to look for new ways of struggle is more relevant; otherwise, there will be nothing left as we see the bosses opportunistically using Covid19 to roll back the workers' past gains.

Comrades, it has been 27 years since the passing of comrade Chris Hani. Nevertheless, we are still living in a country dominated by capitalist barbarity and neoliberalism; this combined with our untransformed colonial economy and Covid19, which has sharply worsened the conditions of the working class and the poor. This is evidenced by violent service delivery protests of our people, whose growing dissenting voices against the capitalist system, and

demand for food; shelter; decent jobs; faster, quality service delivery and free education for the workers and the poor can be clearly heard. This is primarily why NUMSA does not celebrate Freedom Day because the so-called 1994 democratic victory was an empty victory for the working class and the poor, whilst the capitalist class laugh straight to the bank.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Comrades little have changed since the "New Dawn" government took over from the year 2019. It is under the ANC leadership that the SOE's are being destroyed, the workers are punished with no salary or late payment. Corruption continues unabated, The R500 billion meant to save lives was looted under the "New Dawn" of Thuma Mina. Under the leadership of Thuma Mina, over 2 million jobs were lost, just in 2020 alone. Furthermore, the government wants to cut the R350 grant for the poor. It is under the same ANC government that police brutality continues unabated. It is under this government that social spending for the large majority declines, can we really be surprised to see the students take to the streets? The Treasury is leading the attack as per the February budget speech. This same administration decided not to give public servants their increase last year. Moreover, they are now pushing a three-year wage freeze.

This has been and still is the reality and experience for the working class. We are clear that there is no leadership in our beloved country. We are on our own, and the working class is under the now intensified attacks from the ruling elite and its government.

Collective Bargaining
The year 2021 is also the year of collective bargaining in our most significant sector, the Metal and Engineering sector, including the house agreements. There is no doubt that these will be the most challenging rounds of wage negotiations. Therefore, we must prepare ourselves for the battle ahead. The bosses are armed with Covid19 and the shrinking economy, retrenchments and company closures; therefore, we should arm ourselves with new revolu-

tionary methods in the context of the global pandemic.

In the recent past, we have held a successful National Bargaining Conference to prepare ourselves for the battle ahead. The NBC was obvious, the time has come for the government to appreciate that the negotiated settlement and its Neo-liberal path has failed the country. The time has come to address the fundamentals of ownership and control of the economy and drive a new path of development led by the state; for that reason, we also packaged demands for the government to walk the talk.

The National bargaining conference was dismayed by the backwards anti-worker, union-bashing stands taken by right-wing employer formations led by Neasa, Saefa, Ceo Feosa and Pisa. These backwards employers have refused to sign the main agreement to ensure that the agreement can be gazetted by the Minister of the Department of labour so that all workers in the industry can benefit. The same group of employers have waged a relentless war to collapse the bargaining council to willy nilly impose exploitative conditions of work in the industry without any Union.

Comrades, these are the working-class enemies that we must be ready to confront in this bargaining round. We cannot allow them to impose apartheid working conditions through the back door. I, therefore, call upon all workers in the industry to unite irrespective of Union affiliation to confront these ruthless enemies of the workers. The time is now.

In these challenging times we are confronted with we must remember the words of our revolutionary ancestors, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels when they said: "The Communists disdain to conceal their views and aims. They openly declare that their ends can be attained only by the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions. Let the ruling classes tremble at a Communist Revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."

Working Men of All Countries, Unite!

Aluta Continua 🇱🇱🇱

Andrew Chirwa



MEET THE MEMBERS

NUMSA education and skills development, Workers college graduation ceremony in KZN

Written by: Mxolisi Hlengwa (KZN)

Congratulations to NUMSA shopstewards that graduated early last year with their four (4) years part time bachelor's degrees in social science at the University of KwaZulu Natal, and one (1) year diplomas at the Workers college.

Workers college coordinated a graduation ceremony for the student at the Coastland

hotel in Durban in the middle of November 2020, including those that graduated virtually at the university of KwaZulu Natal in April 2020.

The college have an arrangement with the university of KwaZulu Natal that give effect to the accreditation link where students must complete one of the four designed diplomas which are a 16-credit university module, to access a degree program at the university.

Diplomas serve as the access qualification with a content that raise the

levels of skills, capacities, understanding and the consciousness of trade union activists at a political, social, and economic level, so that they would be able to engage with the challenges that confront them, especially in the workplace, in their sectoral institutions and in the broader society.

As much as there has been a tapping into various theories, from Paulo Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed to Marxian pedagogical traditions such as critical pedagogy and Giroux's

border less theory ,the Workers' College's educational practices have mainly been developed in the middle of the action, shaped by practice, experience and experiment, and informed by the ever-changing socio-economic and political landscape as well as the fluid and dynamic organisational environment within the labour movement and community organisations.

Thomas Sankara once stated that without patriotic education, a soldier is only a potential criminal. Knowing that

the revolutionaries are individuals that can be murdered, but the idea cannot be killed.



No	Name and surname	Short bibliography	Institution	Qualification
1.	Samkelo Ndlovu	Shopsteward from Eskom and Gabriel Chiliza local chairperson.	UKZN	B. soc science degree
2.	Busisiwe Lushaba	Shopstewards from Midas retail shop in portshepstone	UKZN	B. soc science degree
3	Sbusiso Cele	Shopsteward from from Nampack in pinetown and pinetown local secretary	UKZN	B. soc science degree
4.	Muziwabahle Moto	Fulltime Shopsteward from Divfood Durban.	UKZN	B.soc science degree
5.	Mxolisi Hlengwa	Shopsteward from Motus in Durban,Vusi Shezi local Motor Substructure secretary and NUMSA new writer.	UKZN	B.soc science degree
6.	Zanele Mbili	Shopsteward	UKZN	B. soc science degree
7.	Siyabonga Ncalane	Trellidoor shopsteward committee chairperson and Vusi shezi local dispute committee chairperson.	WCKZN	Diploma
8.	Sandile Mkhize	Shopsteward	WCKZN	Diploma
9.	Thulani Gasa	Shopsteward	WCKZN	Diploma
10	Mandlenkosi Mahlobo	Shopsteward	WCKZN	Diploma
11	Sthembiso Buthelezi	Shopsteward	WCKZN	Diploma
12.	James Mandla	Shopsteward	WCKZN	Diploma
13.	Nelisiwe Kunene	Shopsteward	WCKZN	Diploma
14,	Sihle Mbhele		WCKZN	Diploma



THE THA-BUA

My name is Mandilakhe Vanqa born & breed from Eastern Cape in a small town called Lady Frede but grew up at Mthatha but currently based at Mpumalanga Emalahleni(Witbank).

I would to some of my experience and some of challenges as a Shopsteward during my term of office.

I am exploited by the company by the name of Mabhele & Associates a contractor operating at Kusile Power Station Project since from April 2018. I am employed as a Cable Puller since from my previous employer of which Mabhele took over according to Section 197 Of Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. I was previously elected as Shopsteward in the same year and re-elected in 2020 with the fresh mandate according to National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) constitution.

Below are few challenges I have been confronted of during my period of office as a Shopsteward are as follows:

1. The difficult of persuading workers to join the trade union during recruitment drive because workers believe that joining the trade union will ultimately lead to them being dismissed by the employer for associating themselves with the union, of which it is a fallacy because CHAPTER 2 of Labour Relations Act clearly stipulate that workers have freedom of association and trade unions does not necessarily impede the employer from doing its own business.

2. One of the major challenges confronting us as workers in this Project is Job security. The Direct Field Labour (DFL) are all offered the Limited Duration Contracts (LDC). The bloodbath of job loss from time to time is sorely hitting hard on us and the simple reason for termination by the Management is the 'completion of scope of work'. This process brings a lot of psychological frustration because as a frontline defender of our members you are the first person to receive this bad news of the intention to demobilize employees.

South Africa is one of the countries globally that has the highest unemployment rate especially the young people. It is sorely disturbing to witness your colleagues losing their jobs without being provided with an alternative or solution of how are they going to ensure that they sustainability put bread on the table for their beloved families, no option provided on how are they going to ensure that they pay school fees for their own children. This worst butchering emphatically means that they must just go and join the queue of unemployment and eventually increase the unemployment statistics and also go and join the queue of RDP house seekers. This is a serious clarion call for the permanent decent job and the living wage of a minimum of R12 500.

3. Gender struggle remain one of the major challenges in the workplace. Women are often the soft target of gender insensitivity. Women are the only oppressed class in the society who work long hours and get paid less. At Mabhele and Associates, it's approximately 18% employed women. This is a clear indication that very few women participate in the mainstream of the economy. This can be the result of an illusion that women are not capable to perform the task or duties usually performed by males especially in the construction industry. Sexual harassment is one of the day to day social illness because women are in minority from the festival of men, they usually make silly disrespectful comments when a women is passing. Serious lack of women in leadership is one of the short coming that need to addressed. Out of 10 Foreman is only one Forelady. However, I have learnt that women themselves spend alot of time gossiping about one another.

They ultimately organise themselves to drag one of their own into mud or destroy

another woman instead of supporting each other. The notion that when a woman is promoted to the senior position its because she exchanged her body with her boss must be condemned. It's not enough that we keep promising about women empowerment and gender equality but women need to be capacitated sooner than yesterday as Thomas Sankara has once said" the is no true liberation without the liberation of the women"

4. Covid-19 and the National Lockdown has exposed the limits capitalism, the extreme effects of inequalities and has directly affected the working class and the poor. Let me seize this opportunity to relay deepest condolences to all the families who lost their loved ones as result of this global pandemic. Indeed, Covid19 9 brought our lives into an error of day-to-day loss of life in big numbers.

Temporary Employee Relief Scheme (TERS) introduced by the government in the eve of hard national lockdown especially for companies unable to pay salaries for their own employees was just a slice of the bread. It was way below the minimum wage, let alone the highest level of corruption during the discharge of this Rands and cents to the poor deserving worker.

The democratic black government of 26 years in power absolutely do not care about the workers. Our main challenge was that TERS was deposited to our bank account DURING the end of April 2020 but from May to August 2020 they absolutely failed to be consistent and the tap of the scheme was closed.

Workers at this project for the first time had an ache of losing every benefit due to them. Eventually, this led to a serious negative impact to workers annual bonuses through the reduction of leave pay and reduced

accumulated project hours. The Management is claiming that we were absent from work during lockdown. The fundamental mental question that need to be respond to is that ' workers were absent from work without permission during lockdown or not for them to suffer this worst butcher. Even today our demands are not met by our immediate employer and the client Eskom. We are not going to retreat because we have a firm belief that we did not locked ourselves down instead we were absent with permission from the 26 March 2020 till 06 August 2020.

5. Skills development remain the cornerstone of economic development. The purpose of skills development is to expand the knowledge and competencies of the work force in order to improve productivity. The main aim is to improve the quality of life of workers, their prospects of work and labour mobility. The challenge with our Site Specific Skills Plan (SSSP) is the quality of trainings interventions because of the type of employment contract.

Limited Duration Contract have an element to impede our strategic plan for the Skills development trainings that would ultimately produce qualified artisans through Recognition Prior-Learning (RPL) program. This is because of the shortness life span of workers in the Project. The main challenge is that most vulnerable workers are employed as general workers. We always target them to development but unfortunately they are the ones that are retrenched in numbers time and again. After we have realized this challenge we have at least managed to reach agreement with the management that employees which are on SSSP and likely to be affected in the next termination must be trained even if they have already been retrenched because

they were budgeted for in that financial year. We view this as a bacon of hope because after receiving certificate of competence they will be able to compete in labour market not only as general workers anymore.

In conclusion I want say that I do not regret to be a member of this gigantic movement National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa. I really appreciate the opportunity that members of NUMSA at Mabhele and Associates to have afforded me and trusting me enough to elect me to be the receiver of their mandates, to be the one they believe must advance and strengthen as well as champion their struggle and trying everything in mind to best represent their interests. In closing I want to say those who have not join NUMSA must think again.

Aluta continua 🖊️🖊️🖊️

**The pen
is the
most
powerful
weapon
in the
world**





Israel Bombings a humanitarian crisis NUMSA cannot ignore

Nkosinathi Jikeka – Sedibeng
NUMSA Regional Education Officer

Horrific Human rights atrocities against civilian Palestinians by the Israeli government

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) is appalled by the recent indiscriminate bombing of women and children in Gaza by the Israeli government. The union views this as an illegal collective punishment of the innocent and defenceless people which the Israeli army uses to justify its purported war against the Islamist groups Hamas

In the recent online bulletin, the Qatar based Al Jazeera news agency stated that Gaza Health authorities reported at least 212 people, including 61 children have been killed and up to 1,500 Palestinians wounded since the latest bombing raids started a week ago.

“for the past 70 years the Israeli government has been a brutal apartheid state, that has unleashed terror against the Palestinians

Innocent Ndiki, the National Coordinator of NUMSA Youth Forum has been following the latest Zionist regimes’ violence in Gaza, and he says, “for the past 70 years the Israeli government has been a brutal apartheid state, that has unleashed terror against the Palestinians”

The Youth Forum Coordinator further says, “The union discussed the situation in Palestine, its position is for cutting complete ties with Israel including diplomatic and military ties. We must not only react when there is an incident like the bombing of Gaza to pursue this campaign, we must be consistent in this and engage all networks and allies across the world to put pressure on Israel”

As an internationalist and anti-imperialist organisation, NUMSA joins millions across the world in support of freedom and self-determinations for the Palestinians and condemns this latest heinous act by the Israeli government whose main intention is essentially ethnic cleansing, and colonial dispossession of Palestinian land.

The current May 2021 act of violent Israeli colonial aggression on Palestinians coincidentally goes back to the first displacement of Palestinians (NAKBA) in May 1948 as a result of Jewish militias unleashing violent terror resulting in the 50% of Palestinians fleeing their homes and land.

Over the years since then this has taken

different forms including the expansion of Jewish settlement into Palestinian territories through demolition of homes resulting in millions being pushed out as refugees and scattered all over the world especially in neighboring countries like Jordan, Syria and Lebanon

According to NUMSA Western Cape regional treasure, Nazeema Samuels, “the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa must start making noise in parliament against the embarrassing and deafening silence of the government in relation to Palestine and call on sanctions and disinvestments to be implemented”

She says “the union must set up local, regional and national international (solidarity) committees’ and organise ongoing marches and pickets targeting the US and Israeli embassies driven by the unions’ Youth Forum and International Desk working together with other solidarity movements like BDS National Coalition”

Seasoned NUMSA educator, Shahida Meniers adds that “government and companies that do business with Israel must be targeted, especially companies that are organised by NUMSA, the union must make sure that its



Photo by Patrick Perkins on Unsplash

members are made aware about what is happening in Palestine in order for them to participate in solidarity activities organised under BDS. The approach of the union to target the South African government for its failure to take a stance against apartheid Israeli is correct one”

NUMSA vows to use every energy and means at their disposal to strengthen the campaign for sanctions and world-wide isolation

of the brutal Netanyahu regime, and further mobilise all our allies and progressive formations including international trade union movements, inter-governmental forums like United Nations and relevant agencies to declare Israel as an aggressive colonizer and an apartheid state which is committing heinous crimes against the Palestinian people whose only crime is resistance against the illegal occupation of their land





INTERNATIONAL

Q. What's your name and where do you hail from?

A. My name is Shahied Stoffels. I was born in Steenberg but currently staying in Hanover Park

Q. How long have you been a member of Numsa and how long are you working at the company?

I'm a member of NUMSA for the past 23 years and also work 23 years at Fau-recia where I'm a Full-time Shop Steward

Q. Are you active within any structures of the union? If yes. What structures?

I'm the Local Chairperson for Cape Town Local and is responsible for various structures on a local level. I'm a Bargaining Rep and also represent Numsa in the Bargaining Council

Q. What's your view on the current state of affairs in Palestine?

It's disgusting the way its handled by the superpowers of the world. For one the UN is quiet, but more disturbing is the media with their bias reporting of the situation. The media is down-playing what's happening on the ground in Palestine and for me as an activist I call it as I see it. Genocide,

because there is no conflict there as those killed are most innocent defenceless women and children. If any child or women were killed (non-Palestinians) and there is video footage of it than the international courts would have been up in arms and it would have world news. So this democracy that is claimed, is in my view nothing else but hypocrisy

Q. What sort of solidarity and support do you think the SA government should lend to Palestine?

A. I think our government, especially with our history should take a more open stance and pronounce itself and call for boycott and ban all trades with Israel, as the world did with us during Apartheid

With union officials and their views with regards to the current happenings in Palestine

Q. What's your name and how long do you work for Numsa?

A. My name is Shahida Meniers. I'm a NUMSA official since 2003 and I'm the Regional Education Officer

Q. What is the union's policy with regards to international solidarity?

A. We must rebuild, revive and strengthen organizational structures and through building solidarity committees from factory, regional and national level through clearly identified campaigns to advance international solidarity.

Forge worker to worker contact and information exchange through study tours and multinational shop steward's councils

Develop a common view of our international situation with other fraternal unions with a view to develop common programs, campaigns and action.

To link with other unions world-wide on specific collective bargaining strategies and privatizations amongst other

Q. Does the union have any international ties with Palestine?

A.

Q. How does the union deal with NUMSA organized companies that has strong ties with Israel?

A. NUMSA called on its members to scrutinize any linkages of their companies with Israel, especially those supplying Israel with war machines and those involved in the building of the Apartheid wall.

Members were tasked to engage with their companies to terminate the linkages as our members cannot support apartheid and repression by Israel.

The two companies that was identified in having strong ties with Israel is Cape Gate Fence and Wire Works and G4 Security

Q. What campaigns will the union be running with regards to Palestine?

A. The union over the years campaigned to boycotting Israeli products.

Identified our companies doing business with Israel and have put pressure on SA government to close down the Israeli Embassy in SA



Workers education for worker's power

Trade unions are the biggest and most potent social movements in the hands of the working class since the emergence of capitalism in the 18th Century. The unions have been at the centre of struggles for change since the early days of capitalist industrialisation, followed by the most significant working class experiment in taking over of state power through the Great October Russian revolution in 1917 (and) in our case, the struggles that defeated apartheid as a statute in South Africa.

As a form of organisation, trade unions came into existence primarily so that workers can unite and take collective action in response to the most heinous exploitative practices of the system; horrible working and living conditions for workers and their communities, also signified by the widespread usage of child labour in the newly established factories, terribly long working hours, low wages and hazardous working conditions amongst others

In the South African conditions, the system has a long history of being horribly racist and as a result developed and grew to build by far the largest economy in the continent through the super exploitation of black and African labour, and it is out of these conditions that we have as a matter of historical record some of the most heroic trade union and workers struggles ever witnessed in the era of capitalist development, subsequently the emergence of the most well organized and highly political conscious workers organisations in different stages of our time

Workers unity and solidarity

Even though NUMSA is by far the leader in terms of worker education amongst the trade unions in the country we are not necessarily the union that gave birth to the culture and practice of worker education.

In a paper titled, Worker Education in South Africa: Lessons and Contradictions Salim Vally writes that "While systematic and widespread worker education in South Africa emerged in the wake of the 1973 strikes in Durban, the country's tradition of worker education can be traced back to the formation of the first union for black workers in 1919"

Worker education in South Africa immensely contributed to the birth to the type of union activist and leadership that understood and efficiently practiced a very advanced system of democratic worker control of trade unions. Education in trade unions must be credited for helping to develop class consciousness that entrenched working class unity and solidarity, because it empowered workers to dismiss the ideas and practices that were meant to make workers merely focus on the factory floor issues irrespective of what was happening in the broader society outside of their workplace, and in some instances, this helped the trade union movement to unite behind common interests of workers and the working class, sometimes even beyond narrow divides like political affiliations

In the late 1980's I had the privilege as a very young student activist to be directly exposed to working class unity in action; as part of my initiation into working class politics and I still remember vividly, a Port Elizabeth COSATU local shop stewards' council meeting chaired by comrades Thembinkosi Mkhali (CWIU) and Oscar Mngwanza (NUMSA), whilst Phil Goduka (FAWU) was the local secretary at the time. The purpose of the council meeting was specifically convened to finalize plans of the agreed COSATU and NACTU protest march against Labour Relations Act in October 1989

The federation's council meetings at the time were usually open to different shades of activists, this particular one was also attended by the local UDF leadership, led by comrade Bongani Gxilishe and his collective. They had an interest in the shop steward's council because they wanted to turn the whole anti LRA protest into a political rally under their leadership, and push for their organisations' political program and thus, as it appeared to COSATU leadership, relegate the workers issues into a proverbial backseat. A serious stand-off then ensued in the council as the federations' local leadership and shop stewards refused to allow this to happen because, according to them, the UDF's expressed intention had a potential of endangering workers' unity by alienating NACTU, and subsequently compromise the two federations' intentions to galvanise widespread support for the planned protest against the LRA.

This kind of a stand demonstrated exceptional qualities of a class conscious trade union that puts the interests of workers and the working class above political affiliation, not that political affiliations or alliances for the trade union were not important; especially during that period of heightened political resistance against apartheid in the country including the fact that COSATU itself was an affiliate of the UDF.

The comrades in NACTU were not part of the organisations affiliated to the United Democratic Front and for COSATU it was important to confront the state as a united front of trade unions. In short, the UDF was ultimately allowed to demonstrate with the workers as long as they agreed to submit to a program of a united leadership of NACTU and COSATU on the day of the march.

The anti LRA march of 1989 was one of the biggest trade union led protests ever seen in the history of worker organising in the region and those who come from Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage and were active during that period can attest to that

To make sense of this, so that it is understood in its proper context especially by those who may want to see (discredited) workerism in that 1989 P.E. COSATU local shop stewards' council

decision of putting workers' unity first let's take some points from the late general secretary of NUMSA, comrade Mbuyiselo Ngwenda who was also Central Committee member of the SACP as he once emphasized a point that, for him "the line of demarcation is very clear. Where I have to represent workers mandate, even if it differs with the mandate of the party, I would pronounce on it and I would engage in defence of that mandate" he further declared, so that there is no confusion, that "I'm a communist in a trade union movement. I sponsor my ideas... I originate my ideas from a particular socialist and class perspective"

Education through local shop stewards' councils

Because of historical reasons the South African black labour force is composed of a significant number of workers who did not complete high school education, and this is not by accident, it is part of an old design whose intention is to further exploit labour and keep the systemic racial and class inequalities unchanged, and therefore trade union education has been very effective in building a counter strategy to create higher levels of consciousness even under these conditions, to reproduce organic grassroots working class leadership with a kind of a societal imagining that is driven by a complete break with values that chain society into the deceptiveness of capitalist development that (in reality) continues to exploits, oppress and excludes the vast majority of the population

In organisations like NUMSA and its predecessors, education has always been intended to both build the kind of socialist and class consciousness demonstrated by the 1989 P.E. COSATU local, and on the other hand, to empower the union to defend members from the daily naked exploitation at the point of production by combing into the shop stewards training a consistent program based on understanding the law, and how to use it to defend workers on a daily basis. Some specific examples on this are also mentioned by Kelly Forrest, in the book titled Metal that will not bend, a history of NUMSA (1980 – 1995) and these include amongst others, training for organisers and shop stewards on trade

unionism and the law, as well as organising and bargaining practices

At a political level, ideas of socialism have also been very much in the vocabulary of trade unionists, especially NUMSA, even during the days of apartheid when organisations like the South African Communist Party were banned by law in the country, and the key centres and drivers, the schools of workers' education (and ideas of socialism) in essence have been the local shop stewards' councils where real and practical workers democratic control of the organisation became the tool that built conscious leadership from below. These locals created the spark that illuminated the growth of an individual shop steward into becoming a worker representative, an educator, a leader and a socialist whose mission is to combine the factory floor experiences and struggles with the broader societal issues

The locals have always wrestled with the notions of building a movement for socialism inspired by the practices of radical democratic worker control shop stewards' councils in the process of development trade union democracy across the country

In practice, the unions used the local shop stewards' councils to build auxiliary structures like education, health and safety, campaigns, and gender sub committees (amongst others) connected to factory sub committees of similar nature to enlarge participation for council members under the leadership and guidance of the local office bearers, or local executive committees, and these grew and developed into a centre for workers' power and radical alternative education. The practice of worker education in the trade union movement avoided a formal "teacher knows it all" and "standing in front of the class approach" where an official or leader transmits ideas from his or her head, into the heads of shop stewards. That system couldn't work for a trade union because the purpose of education has always been and continues to be the building of an action oriented organisations, to improve organising and struggle.

That is the reason why trade union education has always been essentially democratic and is built from direct experiences of workers themselves, the students organisation, COSAS captures it very well with it's a slogan "Each One, Teach One"

There is a particular historical tradition in NUMSA's education that has enhanced this,









SHOPFLOOR NEWS

Numsa call on DRC to rule on Cape Town Faurecia plant

The national union of metal workers says they have approached the DRC (dispute resolution council) to rule on the dispute between Numsa and Faurecia Cape Town plant, which manufactures catalytic converters.

C is the is at a point where they have to assess the future of the business having been provoked by the Covid19 pandemic. Upon the that assessment they have realized that the cost of operations, cost to company to be specific is very high.

That presenting a challenge that the company becomes unable to get future business into the Cape Town plant. Hence they propose to.

1. Freeze increase to workers for 2021
2. Cut shift allowance by 10%
3. Transport allowance adjustment of 50/50
4. Move weekly payments to monthly payments

Numsa on the other hand is opposed to these changes in the conditions of employment, claiming

that the employer is using Covid19 impact to advance its agenda against the cape town plant specifically, considering that other plants i.e. Pretoria, Uitenhage and Port Elizabeth plants are not subjected to this treatment they termed a brutal attack on workers benefits.

The union is accusing the employer of manipulating the situation, because they were not party to identifying what can be done to confront the challenge encountered by the company instead their benefits were identified and targeted without proper consultation.

Numsa further claims this will a negative impact on its members considering the impact of inflation as well food and petrol prices.

We spoke to Jabu Nosilela and Muzi Maseti who is expressed his disappointment as part of the affected workers.

“we are very disappointed at the approach of the employer, to just target our benefits in this manner, as such we see it as means to

maximize profit”. Jabu also said the employer should have applied for MIBCO exemption if they were genuine about these claims.

“we are interested to engage on a solution finding exercise with the employer but not in this way as this will impact negatively on our livelihoods considering price of food bread and petrol increase every now and then,” said Jabu

Maseti expressed how this the company proposal will impact his life style and living standard.

Muzi Maseti said “I does not sit well that while we getting no increase the employers still wants to cut shift allowance, this will drop our standard of living.”



NUMSA calls for new model to RAF Scheme

The National Union of Metalworks of South Africa (NUMSA) calls for a special commission to be appointed to investigate alternatives to the current operations model of the Road Accident Fund (RAF).

According to NUMSA, the RAF have a history of financial mismanagement and an inability to deliver on its public mandate which is compensation road accidents victims. In the past the office of the National Treasury provided relief to the RAF by providing the RAF with an addition 9 cent per liter fuel in 2017. In 2020 the levy was 209 cent per liter fuel. This means on average the RAF is costing a house hold using 100 liters of petrol per month an amount of R

209.00 In terms of new figures release by Colins Letsoalo the CEO of the RAF liability is only getting worst and he actuarial estimate is that the RAF’s total liability in the region of 240 billion rand. This clearly illustrates that the RAF’s operational model is not working. The same operational model has been placed under scrutiny since 2002. Judge Satchell in her judgment, recommending the Road Accident Benefit Scheme to replace the current operational model.

During interviews with a staff member at RAF he said, “It is evident that the role of the RAF is an important one, as the social sequences for victims of motor vehicle

accident in most cases are devastating” he further states that “The CEO management style as implementation without consultation.”

A plaintiff attorney states that “The delays in terms of the currently operations model is problematic and describes the model as too litigious.”

It is NUMSA’s position that the RAF is not alone in challenges that has befallen it and should not be viewed in isolation as other state organizations share the same challenges.

Continuation from Page 9

and it took a form of robust exchanges of ideas in political discussions at the local levels, and it was referred to as “Siyalala la” (we are sleeping here) where shop stewards and activists of the union stayed the night over at the union office discussing political issues the entire time. These platforms were a creative way of workers combining their desire for knowledge and adapting to conditions of poor public transport for township dwellers, making the best out of a terrible working class conditions.

Rebuilding these local councils as the centre of power and re-education

The primary organ of workers’ power and democracy in the trade union is the local, directly accountable and deriving mandates from the workers in the factory floor. This organ is fuelled, as its blood, by the long running traditions and practices of education in the labour movement

The workers from the factory to the local, today are confronted by an escalated job loss blood bath, deepening social inequalities, wage freeze, under employment, rising levels of poverty, climate catastrophe, neo liberal

austerity measures employed by the so called democratic government, deepening daily miseries experienced by working class women in particular and widespread corruption especially at the local municipal level

To respond to these current realities, the local has a mammoth task of mobilizing workers into battle ready forces ready to take on the mighty scheming and deceiving bosses and their political parties, and to develop the capacity and skills to fight there needs to be some serious effort towards raising consciousness levels that will lead to building and strengthening of local grassroots working class organisations and including their various auxiliary committees





SHOPFLOOR NEWS

NUMSA's ongoing solidarity with locked-out plastics workers

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) says it will continue to stand in solidarity with plastics workers who are still on lockout, until they go back to work.

According to NUMSA, its members who work in the plastics industry went on strike on 15 October 2018 after wage negotiations deadlocked. The plastics workers were demanding a living wage and an improvement of their working conditions in the sector.

Background to the plastics strike/lockout

The Union noted that the 2018 plastics workers strike came about because of exploitative and oppressive practices perpetuated by Plastics Converters of South Africa (PCASA), and National Employers Association of South Africa (NEASA). NUMSA has argued that the employer groupings gave a poor offer at the negotiations table through unilaterally down varying benefits, conditions and wages of workers through imposing the following:

- Reduction of Grade H minimum wage from R40 to R20;

- Scrapping of the Leave Enhancement Pay (bonus);

- Increasing of working hours from 40 to 45 per week without paying overtime;

- Introduction of Area category – Outlying areas to be paid 10% less than urban areas (JHB, DBN and CPT).

NUMSA further noted that employers in the plastics industry decided to lockout workers indefinitely following the deadlock in negotiations. In between 2018 and now many workers managed to return to work as in many companies, plant agreements were reached allowing workers to go back to work. Companies like Polyoak, Calibre Plastics, Roto Plastics and Sky Plastics among others, have continued to keep about 63 workers outside work.

The effects of lockout on workers

Mgcineni Tshambuluka, who is NUMSA's Regional Organiser in Jack Charles Bezuidenhout Region (JC Bez) based in Johannesburg, noted the difficult lived reality of the plastics workers who have had no means of earning an income since the end of 2018. "Workers have lost their funeral policies...some decided to go back home to the rural areas because they cannot afford to rent anymore let alone to feed themselves."

About 63 workers who are still on an indefinite lockout have been battling to make ends meet since 2018. Peter Maluleke who worked at Calibre Plastics in Johannesburg has inflicted pain on his life. "It affected me badly because for the whole two and a half years I have not been able to support my family, and financially I had a breakdown since I could not afford the cost of living."

Support from NUMSA

NUMSA pledged a symbolic solidarity for locked-out workers in the plastics sector during its 2021 National Bargaining Conference (NBC), held on the 7 – 9 May in Boksburg.

Full names of the affected workers, were printed out in NUMSA colours and displayed on big posters, for all 250 delegates of the NBC to sign. Additional to this, the National Union also collected solidarity funds from each delegate of the NBC in order to distribute the amount as vouchers to the affected workers.

Zolile Kabatshu who worked at Polyoak in Johannesburg acknowledged the assistance that the Union has been giving them since the lockout. "NUMSA is always here with us, and we are very thankful as workers on lockout as the Union has stood with us through and through".

Despite their harsh lived reality, locked out

workers remain confident that through NUMSA they will one day return to work. Mgcineni Tshambuluka, reflected on the challenges workers are still facing, but remains hopeful. "Poverty is written on their faces but we strongly believe that someday they will return to work".

The metalworkers union through its officials in the affected Regions has been seeking legal interventions to find an amicable solution to the ongoing crisis. Mgcineni Tshambuluka noted that they have been through many processes in trying to fight for the workers to return to work. "From day one the organization has been in and out of courts, pushing for that the lockout be declared unlawful because NUMSA had called off the strike".

Currently there is ongoing advisory arbitration process facilitated by the CCMA but some of the workers who are still on lockout are unable to attend these virtual sessions because they have no money to travel to NUMSA Regional Offices in Marshalltown where there are virtual facilities.

Notwithstanding the challenges, workers still hope that the outcome of the process will yield desired results. Peter Maluleke said, "My hope is that this ends up fairly and that the companies pay us the whole salaries (including bonuses) for the time we were not working and not getting paid and also pay our debts that we failed to pay due to the employers actions and also give us back our jobs."





SHOPFLOOR NEWS

Guardiar workers end strike after agreement reached

By Colin Jacobs
Numsa news writer

The four-month strike by members of the National Union of Metalworkers (NUMSA) at the Daljosafat industrial area in Paarl has ended. Photo: Mthandazo Khowa

PAARL - A four-month strike by more than 70 workers of Guardiar formerly known as Betafence has ended after they reached an agreement this week.

Workers had demanded 30 percent shares in the company and the employer was offering a profit sharing after every 5th consecutive year - a bonus of one month's salary ("fifteenth cheque"). And a productivity and efficiency bonus equal to one month's salary over a 12-month period.

"This agreement will apply to all permanent, scheduled and factory-based employees employed by the company effective from 01 July 2021 and will be reviewed annually," reads the agreement.

The striking workers are members of the National Union of Metalworkers

(NUMSA). Shop Steward, Mthandazo Khowa, said they called off the strike after its members accepted the offer and will start working shifts tomorrow.



Numsa Launches A Co-operative Centre For The Retrenched Workers And Unemployed In Nelson Mandela Bay Municipality

National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa said it will be launching the Cooperative Centre in conjunction with Premier's Office, Metros and District Municipality Offices to galvanize the Government and Business support on this initiative and facilitate the establishment of one Cooperative per Municipality in Eastern Cape in Nangoza Jebe (Centenary) Hall on the 27 August 2021.

According NUMSA Regional Education Officer in Eastern Cape {Joel Rasi}, this Trade Union had been facing Retrenchments from 2018 to 2021 and this situation took a sharp turn during COVID 19 related Lockdown period. Mr Rasi of NUMSA further highlighted that Statistics South Africa {Stats SA} has found that more than half of all people of working age in the Eastern Cape were unemployed during the fourth quarter of 2020.

NUMSA also pointed to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey released by Stats SA by October 2020 also

revealed that the Eastern Cape recorded the highest Unemployment Rate amongst the Country's Provinces at 36,9% in the 2020 second Quarter.

According to NUMSA, "across all Sectors they are organized on, almost 40 Companies that have retrenched and also Company Closures" Mr Bafana Zitha said. The Union further indicated that they had the difficulty to get the cooperation from the Employers with regards the declaration of their financial performance that prompted them to retrench.

The Union further confirmed that they are working with CCMA on the retrenchment Assistance Program which includes the reskilling of the affected Workers and to prepare them for being part of the Cooperatives.

Mr Rasi, who is the Regional Education Officer of the Union said the above situation in addition to the difficulty of Company closures and Retrenchments compelled NUMSA to open the Cooperative Centre that will facilitate the establishment of Coop-

eratives in all of our Locals/branches that is Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, East London, King Williamstown, Queenstown and Mtata. This Centre will further provide assistance on the registration and formulation of marketable Business Plans, including sourcing of Capital in the interest of the Retrenched Workers and Unemployed.

NUMSA indicated that the Retrenched Workers and the Unemployed who will be members of these Cooperatives will be trained in various skills according to the Supply and demand in that particular location and be incubated in Management and Book keeping skills.

Issued by NUMSA
Eastern Cape Region

For more details contact:

Joel Rasi – Regional
Education Officer

Phakamile Hlubi –
NUMSA National Spokes
Person

Working Makes No Sense, Lay Offs Are Indefinite!

Written by: Mxolisi Hlengwa (KZN Region)

On the 09th of March 2021, National union of metal workers (NUMSA) members at Technostar down tooled in demand for the full implementation of the Motor collective main agreement.

The company is the member of Retail Motor Organisation (RMI), employer organization which is party in Motor Bargaining Council (MIBCO).

Despite peace clause in the Motor Collective main agreement, which nullify bargaining at a plant level once the agreement is reached, it the second year without a legally binding agreement in the motor industry.

One female member was offered the opportunity to speak, all members cheered and applauded her, as she shouted, "We want our increase; we don't care about the company being closed down".

Workers have been experiencing layoffs from the beginning of last year. Workers were picketing outside the gate without any Picketing rules as they were also embarking on an unprotected strike.

"They must stop telling us about national, we are not working for national, we are working for them" another disgruntled member shouted from the crowd as Lawrence Mlangeni, Vusi Shezi local organizer was addressing the members.

Workers are very angry about a certain manager's conduct, which is alleged, he is the reason the company is down varying all worker benefits, and company not generating any revenues.

As NUMSA official was giving the workers the

opportunity to speak, while recoding their demands, another worker said, "Ever since he came here, the company is going down, he must leave", all members starter shouting that the manager must leave, calling him by his name.

"We are tired of talking with this manager, we want senior management from head office to come down and talk to us" as the member concludes.

Workers in Tehnos-tar are still on strike, Durban central members joined them on the following day, Durban central is a sister company to Technostar, they are on a same payroll.

As the strike continues, management responded by saying that, they will look into their demands, see what can be done to resolve the dispute, but it will take some time.

Shopsteward asserted that the manager concerned, the one that workers do not want, requested to meet with the shopsteward committee over the demands, but workers do not want anything to do with him, should they go there to meet with him, it will be not on their mandate.

Workers have issued an ultimatum, it either the manager in question go or the company to close down.

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National Union Of Metal-workers Of South Africa Prepares Itself For Bargaining In The Engineering Sector.

By: MJ Mosia

The coming 2021 negotiations in the engineering sector to improve wages and conditions of workers are going to be the most difficult for Numsa members; this is the view of Frans, the Northern Cape Regional Engineering Bargaining Rep attending alongside 239 Numsa delegates from all nine regions of Numsa in the National Bargaining Conference held 7-9 May 2021. Numsa is preparing itself to enter into negotiations with

SEIFSA, to conclude agreement on wages and conditions of employment.

Frans said that the current agreement has expired at the end of June 2020. He further said that the union could not attend to negotiations during the period of hard lockdown level 5, because of restrictions on movement and gatherings at that time.

“It is due to these conditions of COVID-19 that we had to enter into a standstill agreement in 2020, which means that there was no increment in 2020, there is no way we will compromise again this time around at our expense” said Frans.

Frans said that members are justified to demand double digits increase because there was no increase in 2020 in the industry. It is his view that companies continued to make profits and others who found themselves under financial distress were assisted by the department of Employment and labour through TERS funding model.

The other delegate who attended the NBC with Frans was Tshepo Mokhele who is the Northern Cape Regional Organiser who added and said that it was in the best interest of their union members that they receive the best increase, Mokhele has said further that the

union is well aware of the challenges faced by the union from different companies regarding short times, retrenchments, closures and liquidation.

“the employer had a big break when lockdown was declared and we could not negotiate in 2020, this time we are prepared to die with our boots on because this people have been making money whilst our members were suffering,” said Tshepo.

The two Numsa members concurred with one another that the lessons learned from plastic industry strike and lockout will make the union stronger and wiser for it to maintain and

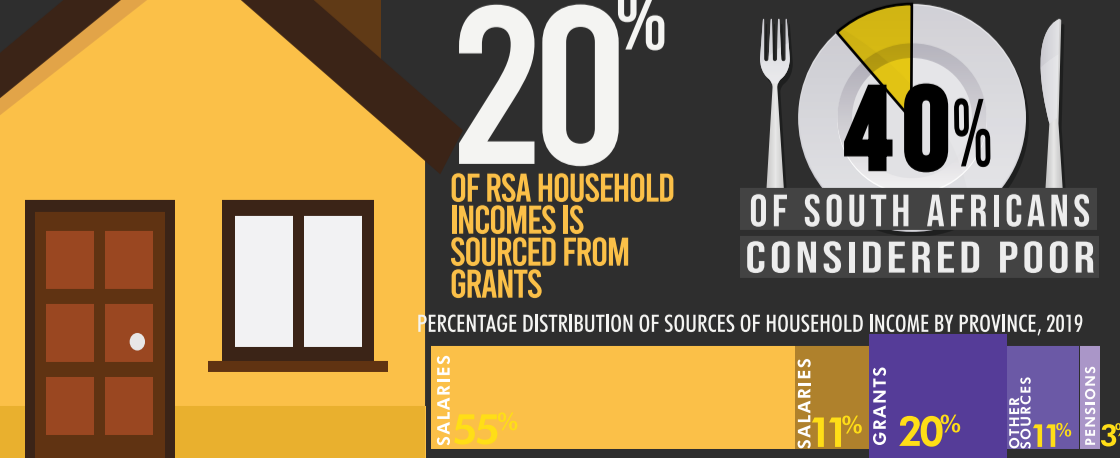
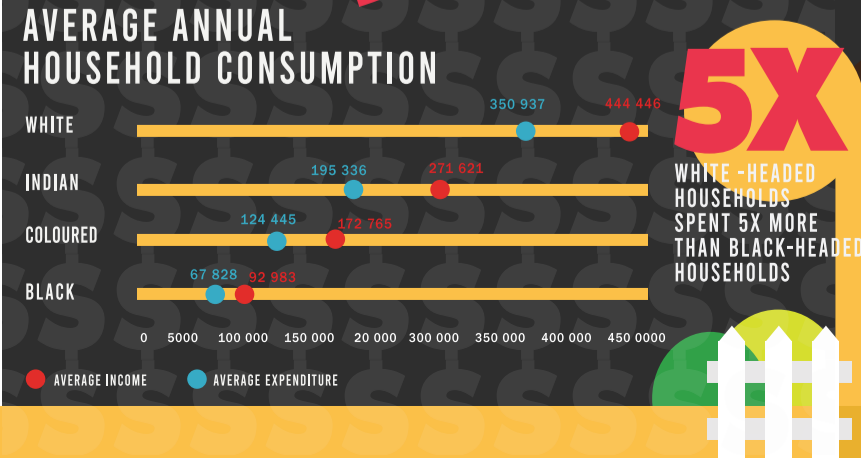
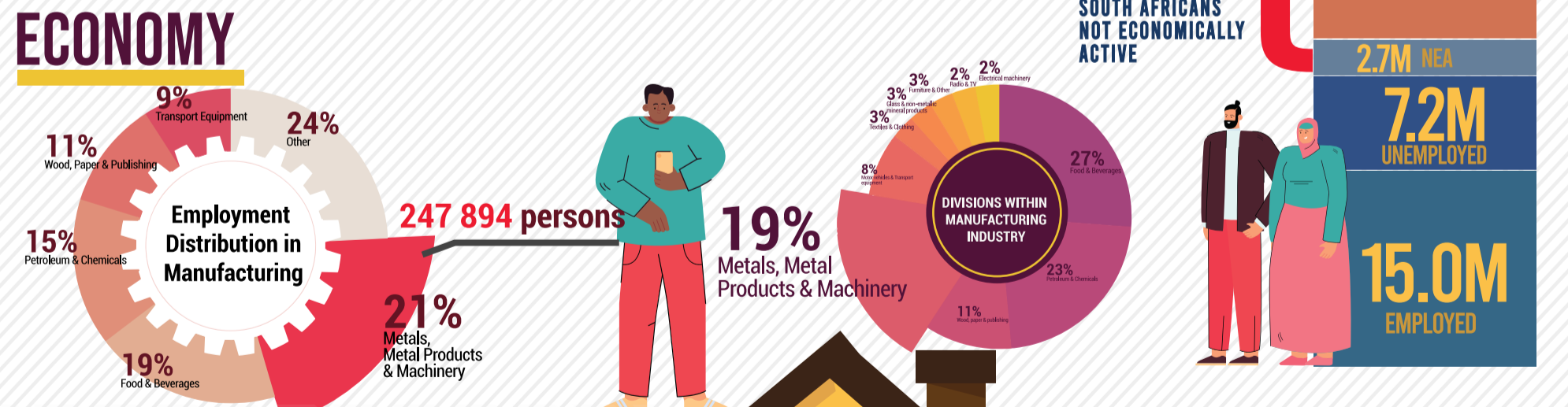
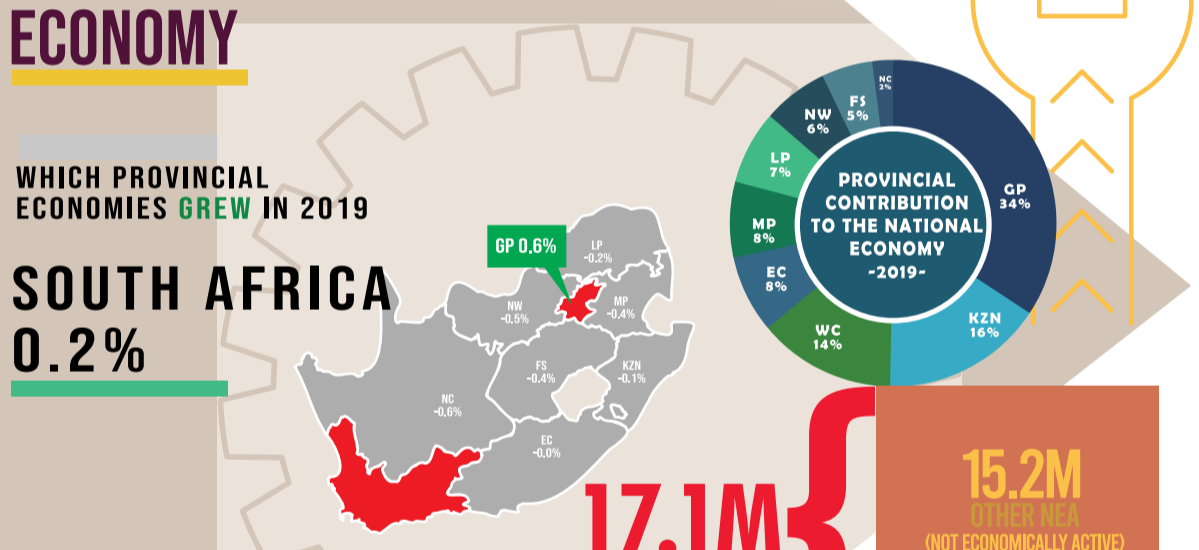
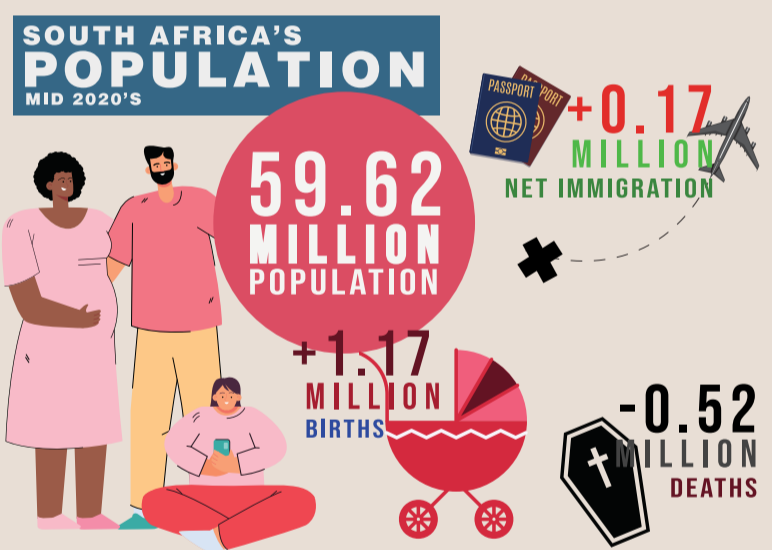
respect the culture of collective bargaining they have stated that the union has to close ranks to protect those weaker establishment.

There is no doubt that Numsa and SEIFSA are headed for a major battle once negotiations commences at MEIBC. The views advance by these two members is an indication that these parties are going find the going that difficult at negotiating table.

NUMSA National Bargaining Conference



stats sa
Department: Statistics South Africa
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA





The National Union Of Metal Workers Of South Africa (Numsa) Explores The Technical Skills Revolution For The Unemployed.

BY Vusumuzi Hlatshwayo

The (write in full) union is calling on government; private establishments and other non-governmental organisations, to support financially the programmes to establish technical training centres in each region of this country in order to give skills and capacity to the millions of unemployed South African youth this year.

On Friday the 14th May 2021 in Kempton Park, there was a signing of Memorandum of Understanding between NUMSA and Ekurhuleni Artisans and Skills Training Centre (EASTC). The union have seen thousands of its members losing jobs because retrenchments; dismissals and unemployment because of COVID-19 and many other economic factors in the country. Those members need new skills and/or re-skilling in order to be absorbed by the job market or to start their own small businesses.

The study according to Stats SA in March 2021

shows that the majority of the unemployed in South Africans are the youth. The unemployment rate jumped to 28.48% in the year 2020 influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic. The unemployment rate was 28.18% in the year 2019 and was 26.92% the year 2018 and 27.07% in the year 2017.

The union resolved to establish its college and establish partnerships with established training centres across the country in order to give skills capacity South Africans. NUMSA lost more than 2000 members during the Plastic strike of November 2018. The union further lost more than 20 000 members between March 2020 and March 2021 according to the information received from the membership department.

The manufacturing sector is dwindling since the economic meltdown of 2007 resulting in millions of jobs loses in the entire South Africa economy and the world. It becomes difficult for these workers to be re-absorbed by the job market with their previous jobs skills. There is the reasons the union NUMSA and the training centres entered into this partners.

Skills offered by the centre are about 22 of which the

majority are accredited with the SETA. They include amongst others basic motor mechanic; boiler-making; welding; construction; fibre networking and so on.

UM-Africa Community News spoke to the NUMSA Regional Education Office of Sedibeng, Nkosinathi Jikeka about job loses of the union members and skills development of those members. He believes that it affected the union badly because employers used it to further cut jobs.

Jikeka further said "in combating job losses, the union over relies on the legal processes. I think that the union must use mass working class mobilisation to fight retrenchments. The union must mobilise society; churches; students; taxi industry and the small business communities to support workers struggles during these retrenchments".

It is an established fact that skills development can go a long way in assist with job creation and economic empowerment in communities.

Compiled: Vusumuzi Hlatshwayo

Um-Africa Community News

Numsa Western Cape In The Process Of Electing Local Office Bearers

By: Shahida Meniers

National Union of Metalworkers of SA (NUMSA) in the Western Cape announced that they are in the process of electing Local Office Bearers to serve office for the next 4 years in the five defined areas (known as locals). According to the NUMSA constitution, only shopstewards that were duly elected by members of the union in their respective factories may participate in the elections of Local Office Bearers.

According to Nazeema Samuels, the Regional Treasurer of NUMSA in the Western Cape, three of the locals, Atlantis, Boland and SWD completed the Local Office Bearers elections in April 2021. She said that sadly, only Atlantis Local managed to elect at least one female as part of the Local Office Bearers collective.

During the previous Local Office Bearers elections, three out of the five locals elected at least one female shopsteward as part of the Local Office Bearers, noting that all three females were deputizing a male shopsteward.

The union's policy on women empowerment was re-affirmed at its 8th National Congress in 2008. The Congress resolved to campaign for the election of women as shopstewards and actively work towards the election of women into leadership positions and to ensure that gender sensitive people are elected as office bearers.

Samuels also said that the Regional Office Bearers have been monitoring progress on the implementation of the resolution on women empowerment. The male choir is singing almost unopposed by occupying all strategic leadership positions. She elaborated further that over the years the union has spend resources to popularize the resolution through gender workshops and seminars. These initiatives include both men and women as participants. Part of the workshop program of action is to mainstream gender into the daily running of the union business. Samuels also pointed out that when they as Regional Office Bearers go through the minutes of constitutional structures especially at local level, they hardly see the issue being part of the agenda. The

question that comes to mind, she said, is whether the union is serious about the empowerment of women or is this just another slogan to make female union members happy.

We also spoke to the 3 local secretaries where NUMSA completed the process of Local Office Bearers elections. Ivan Solomons, Local Secretary of Atlantis Local reported that "We saw the lack of women representation in union structures and decided it must change". He concluded by saying that as local they feel proud to implement the resolutions of the National Union. Comrade Ann Pienaar (female) was duly elected as the Deputy Chairperson of Atlantis local.

Two trade unionist of SWD and Boland locals, Xolani Mbanga and Khopolo Molebatsi said that women are elected in their workplaces as shopstewards but because they have the extra burden of cooking, cleaning and raising children, they are not keen to take up leadership positions. This would take them away from home more often. They also feel that the union must invest in capacity building programs specifi-

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cally for female shopstewards in order for them to be more confident to take up leadership positions and to tackle the issue of even distribution of home chores with their partners.

Samuels concluded by

saying "We are eagerly await the outcomes of the two remaining local office bearers' elections (Bellville and Cape Town locals) by end of May 2021 to see whether shopstewards in the union's resolution will be implemented".



SAFTU Discussion Paper On The Current Implosion In Our Country

1. Introduction

South Africa is witnessing an unprecedented wave of mass looting and destruction of property. The youth are at the forefront of this phenomenon.

2. The spark

1) The incarceration of former President, Jacob Zuma provided a spark.

2) Demonstrations that started on the day the Constitutional Court issued its verdict of a 15 month sentence quickly moved from Nkandla to Durban and to the Mooi River N3 tollgate where 28 trucks were burned. Since then, mass destruction of property quickly moved from KwaZulu-Natal to Gauteng within days.

3. The ticking bomb – the powder keg

This is how we have described the crisis unfolding in our discussion paper analysing the coronavirus pandemic.

"Philosophers have so far interpreted the world in various ways. The point, however, is to change it" – Karl Marx, 11th Thesis on Feuerbach

As we always do, SAFTU and its allies in the working class, interpreted the socio-economic crises affecting the world since Covid-19 became a global pandemic in February 2020. We summed up the human tragedy unfolding in our country and the world before many of us knew anything about the coronavirus. This is the crisis we consider a 'pre-existing condition':

South Africa finds itself at a precipice. The economic malaise currently being experienced places the nation at a point of no return. The levels of poverty, unemployment in particular amongst our youth and women, inequalities, corruption, crime and etc. has reached such proportions that the country can be plunged into another civil war and strife if nothing is done. Our schools, hospitals, public transport in particular rail, justice system, and correctional services centres have become dysfunctional. As if this is not enough, our country is being battered by a wave of ecological crisis that creates absolute havoc through heavy storms that have left the poor more vulnerable with greater parts of the country engulfed in long spells of drought that further threaten livelihoods, food security and sovereignty. We risk losing another generation of youth to drugs and vicious cycle of crime. Women, including the aged live in fear in their homes and streets. Government is collapsing, overrun by cronyism, corruption, and neglect. Almost every state-owned enterprise is facing a death spiral or financial collapse. Eskom, SAA, Autopax, PRASA are all in their knees with more workers' jobs and services to the poor on the line. There is a strong intention by key officials to sell the family jewels to their friends at the expense of the poor for whom these state assets are vital. Every day that passes these crises get worse and the suffering of our people intensifies.

It is as if government officials live in Wonderland. Do they not see the immense suffering of our people caused by economic hardship? How many more mothers must come home to find their daughters brutally raped and murdered? How many more Uyinene Mrwetyanas? How many more children must be left to drown in pit latrines; how many Michael Komapes must there be? No sociology degree is needed

to know that the terrible nightmare of women abuse, gender-based violence and the war on women's bodies is rooted in mass unemployment and its disruption of traditional forms of masculinity. While not everything is because of the economy, SA's economic collapse is making everything worse.

It is critically important that we remind ourselves that coronavirus did not cause our socioeconomic crisis. We have lived with the crisis of poverty, unemployment, and inequalities for centuries under capitalism, colonialism and apartheid. For twenty-six years in the so-called new era, we have seen this crisis getting worse. The economy witnessed jobless growth between 2002 and 2008, then crashed in 2009 and after a brief growth spurt due mainly to commodities until 2015, was officially in recession when the first case of coronavirus was reported in South Africa on March 5 2020. This neoliberal capitalist state will not even pretend to address these massive societal fault lines. When in 2020, every major government stepped in to assist its citizens with a massive fiscal stimulus, the Ramaphosa government promised R500 billion but delivered less than R100 billion – and now at the point of our greatest crisis, continues to serve Treasury's masters in the credit ratings agencies instead of healing our terrible wounds.

The purpose of this brief paper is not to go back to the deep analysis of economic mismanagement made by so many. The purpose is to provide a synopsis of what the COVID-19 crisis will mean to the working class and to offer possible way forward for SAFTU, the trade union movement and the working class as a whole.

"It is a global capitalist crisis we are dealing with"

It is a global capitalist crisis we are dealing with

We are reaching the ceiling of sustainability for an anthropocentric industrial capitalist civilization, and we must make radical changes to survive.

The world is going through catastrophic climate change, the Sixth Species Extinction, ocean plastification and other ecocidal processes, and we face the continual threat of nuclear holocaust. Even before Covid-19, the pandemic threat caused by capitalist expansion into the furthest recesses of our planet has been marked by the outbreaks of Ebola, Zika, dengue fever, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), and influenza, and by the looming threat of rising antimicrobial resistance.

We are not going to see one single pandemic in future years. The vaccines that we use to defeat Covid-19's current variants may or may not work against new

variants, and will not prevent further deadly virus outbreaks. This is the age of emerging diseases, especially because capitalist globalisation has produced these new plagues by infringing on nature through monocultural agriculture, or deforestation. This is what Marx called the 'Metabolic Rift' that grows continually worse when capitalism forces humans to invade unknown ecologies.

For many years, scientists have warned of the danger of a global pandemic.

Unless the dangers of the anthropocentric industrial capitalist society are addressed, the world will move into new, inevitable disasters that can wipe out humanity.

As these disasters strike, the capitalist system which is so entrenched in the world today is structurally unable to respond to each of these crises.

SAFTU has therefore on countless occasion warned that the current levels of unemployment, poverty and inequalities are not sustainable and constitute a ticking time bomb.

4. There is a vacuum – and there is an authentic and credible voice

1) The ANC abandoned its programme of fundamental transformation of society, replacing the Freedom Charter and Reconstruction and Development Programme with neoliberalism and austerity.

2) The quadruple crises of poverty, unemployment, inequalities, and corruption are worsening with neoliberalism's austerity programme.

3) This is what is driving the profound alienation of the masses. As we have said, the coronavirus did not create, but deepened the crisis.

4) This alienation has been worsening since at least 1999. Today it is demonstrated by Independent Electoral Commission statistics: in 2019, 36 million citizens were eligible to vote, but more than half did not vote at all. Only 18 million exercised their right to vote with the ANC winning 10 million and the others sharing around 8 million of the remainder.

5) Worker alienation is reflected in a trade union movement that is fragmented and weakened to the point that it now represents a mere 24% of the working population.

6) The rest of the progressive movements promoting Peoples Power have also been weakened and too many have ceased to exist.

7) In summary, there is not a single formation that today enjoys credibility and that therefore can redirect the anger towards a progressive ending.

5. The ANC as the former leading liberation force

The ANC once enjoyed such political dominance but has been dramatically weakened. The ANC

which once boasted leaders seen as the cream of our society has lost this advantage. None of the current leaders have the same status as Chief Albert Luthuli, OR Tambo, Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu, Harry Gwala and Chris Hani.

After all it is the ANC under Mandela's government that betrayed the dreams of the masses. The ANC abandoned the economic demands of the Freedom Charter in favour of GEAR and the National Development Plan. Under its watch, poverty, unemployment, inequalities and corruption worsened. This is what lies behind alienation of the youth and black people.

Currently the ANC is involved in an intercede factional battles between mainly two pro capitalist factions. Even if one postures about Radical Economic Transformation and the other Radical Socio-Economic Transformation, their fight has little to do with politics or ideology, as both embraced GEAR and the NDP. The fight is about pushing each other from the feeding trough.

Ramaphosa came in 2018 and ended soon after, with an ever worsening crisis for the working class. The Ramaphosa government imposed lockdown without social justice. Eventually under pressure it introduced a meagre R350 for the unemployed which it has subsequently discontinued. This discontinuation is what, in part, is driving this desperate anger. (The Temporary Employer-Relief Scheme did not benefit the masses.) Treasury has no clue about the damage it is doing, as the Ramaphosa faction of the ANC appears permanently trapped in austerity and reactionary policies.

On the other hand, the Jacob Zuma faction, which started the austerity programme in the first place and increased the VAT while allowing massive increases in offshore financial flows, has been pushing what it calls Radical Economic Transformation. Some of the demands of this faction do coincide with SAFTU demands. But in our view, this is a classic nationalist strategy to talk left but walk right. What better proof is there than Zuma himself, who followed the neoliberal macroeconomic strategy.

It was from this perspective that the founding congress of SAFTU declared both factions as the enemies of the working class. We have had no reason to change our viewpoint.

6. The basic scenarios ahead

This looting, anarchy and anger can lead to one of two scenarios predicted by Karl Marx and Friederich Engels: the reconstruction of society; or the common ruin of the contending class forces. As Rosa Luxemburg put it, "Socialism – or Barbarism!"

7. What is the class character of the uprising and who are its motive forces?

The driving force of the current uprising that has taken the form

of looting and anarchy is the working class. They are the youth and women who are the face of unemployment, poverty, and inequalities and who are also the main victims of corruption. But these segments of society do not yet constitute a fully-fledged proletariat, as a class of itself that can fight for itself.

The motive forces are not a conscious class capable of acting in its own interests.

8. Can anarchy liberate the working class?

The levels of looting, destruction and anarchy are unprecedented, with estimates higher than R5 billion in immediate damage. Left to fester, these forces could not only collapse the capitalist economy, but because they are not organised, will eventually be counterproductive and therefore reactionary.

The difference between "making apartheid ungovernable" and today's events is that in 1976 and again with the wave of mass mobilisations starting in 1983, there was a deliberate political strategy, to delegitimise and weaken the government. There was arson but it was targeting the apartheid symbols and collaborators.

Today's events are not political, in that are not being organised by any revolutionary formation. The destruction and burning is indiscriminate and will cause divisions even between black people themselves.

It is not the storming of the Bastille that is unfolding, but instead the looting of shopping malls, trucks and infrastructure.

As a result, this is what we are likely to face going forward:

1) Withdrawal of investment by the capitalists, and the shifting of production to neighbouring countries and or elsewhere in the world. This will worsen unemployment.

2) Creation of vigilante groups to defend properties which will lead to clashes – this is already happening in KZN.

3) Battles between the propertyless and the property-tied classes – especially in the vicinity of poor areas – which will deepen divisions and alienation between the working class and middle strata. This is already happening.

4) A rise of tribal divisions, a point Ramaphosa himself contributed to in his July 9 speech.

5) Shifting the blame of unemployment to foreign nationals once there is nothing left to loot and poverty grinds even further.

6) It has long been argued that a soldier without ideology and politics is extremely dangerous. Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement. Anarchy may lead to regional-



ism, xenophobia and ethnic strife.

From this perspective SAFTU must be unequivocal in its condemnation of the current looting spree.

9. The potential that trade unions have in the struggle for socialism

SAFTU or any other trade union exist because the capitalist system exploits workers, but workers are employed before they become members of trade unions. This is the contradiction between our aspiration for socialism and a classless society, and today's reality in which we are in a pre-organised stage, due to the left's weaknesses.

Because we live in a bourgeois society where the ruling class is the capitalist class and there is no revolutionary party that has mass support, our trade unions tend to favour a rules-based society. Their ambitions are often limited. But the rules we adopted, such as the primacy of property rights in the Constitution, were a product of the adverse balance of forces once apartheid was replaced in 1994: a liberal constitution which is centered on property rights so strong they can trump constitutional democracy. Based on this foundation of democracy, laid at a time the working-class movement allied with nationalists and even many capitalists to end official racism, some argue no one must be above the law. It is from this perspective that many advocate that we respect court decisions.

Another view is that the courts are a terrain of struggle and must be contested – as indeed unions do. But judicial decisions are not devoid of class bias and many of our comrades' efforts to win socio-economic rights – for healthcare (dialysis treatment in Durban) such as dialysis treatment, for a genuine housing policy (Irene Grootboom's case) or for water (in Soweto) – have therefore been terribly disappointing, because the Constitutional Court stood with neoliberalism, privatisation and property rights.

Others within SAFTU may argue that we need a rules-based system even under socialism, so as to guard against the excesses that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union once abuse of power became widespread. Other comrades may argue that in a capitalist society, the state implements rules mainly in favour of the capitalist class. Lenin analysed the state as an instrument of class rule. From this perspective, other comrades take a view that the state must be 'smashed' – completely transformed to serve the interests of the people, not the ruling party's cronies – including courts that cannot be relied upon for genuine justice.

Marx saw the capitalist system as unsustainable because it will destroy the two pillars it stands on: workers and environment. A classical Marxist approach therefore may see the current uprisings as part of that process: a general state of revolt, a catalytic moment that is required to rethink the economic system given its limits. While some see this as pure anarchy, if organisational form is achieved among a desperate proletariat, then there is potential here. The crisis of capitalism must be deepened at this critical juncture, so as to create the conditions in which

society understands the need to transcend a system not delivering to the vast majority.

Practically, this would mean allowing the masses of the people to consider the limits of the capitalist economy – not just destroying shopping malls and warehouses and taking consumer goods typically in reach of only the upper classes – so that from its ashes a new socialist economy can be born.

This is certainly not the agenda of the Zuma-defence team who catalysed the chaos, but now that the powder keg has begun to blow, it is a clarion call for socialists to think urgently about how this crisis can become an opportunity for all South Africans, by building back an economy that serves everyone, instead of the elitist capitalism that requires the top 10% of income-earners to shelter behind gates in their walled-off community, shivering that their furious compatriots will take out their frustrations not only on the retail and wholesale infrastructure, but on the wealthy. This is, after all, the world's most unequal country.

Of course, reformist unions will never agree that trucks must be torched, shopping malls must be looted, and firms must be destroyed in order to deepen the crisis of capitalism. Unions will argue that their members will lose jobs and that they will lose members. Put bluntly, trade unions argue that workers are better off exploited than not exploited at all.

There may be a consensus between radicals and reformists, nevertheless, that under the current circumstances where we have no potential for an immediate socialist groundswell, South African workers cannot storm the Bastille and take over the political and economic system to build socialism at any point in the immediate future. But what is vital now, is the debate over how to gain radical reforms from the chaos, and build genuine working-class power unfettered by Zuma-type degeneracy.

“This moment of deep critique of capitalism, requires us to understand how to re-organise in working-class communities”

This moment of deep critique of

South African capitalism, requires us to understand how to re-organise in working-class communities, how to draw on mutual aid potentials required to keep our society fed and provided for, and what urgent needs – especially as the third wave of Covid-19 crashes over our health system – can be met through the state.

In short, before the entire national powder keg of South African capitalism explodes, we have fresh impetus to make demands on the state and capital. The demands are already well known, and had they been heeded it is safe to say that the full-fledged breakdown of capitalist infrastructure and consumerism in much of KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng would not have occurred.

Socialism by its nature is an internationalist system and a counter block to global capitalist system. Socialism cannot be built in South Africa alone. However, socialists in South Africa and the rest of the world – most successfully in Cuba but also in other settings – are involved in a struggle to push back capitalist domination by stopping privatisation and demanding that states play a more decisive role in the economy. That's why there is a global push to take Intellectual Property rights on Covid-19 vaccines away from subsidised Big Pharma and ensure the entire world has safe, locally produced generic vaccines. When twenty years ago, capitalism showed it was unwilling to provide affordable AIDS medicines, our health movements and workers went to the World Trade Organisation to demand the same, and won, raising life expectancy from 52 to 65 today.

To this end, SAFTU regularly makes transitional demands, towards socialism, and whether this occurs in our Working Class Summit process with our own comrades, or in venues dominated by state and capital – like NEDLAC – SAFTU will consciously push the frontiers towards socialism.

Women and youth are central to this endeavour so the rights of women to control their bodies and live in a setting free from patriarchal intimidation, and the rights of future generations – for example to avoid catastrophic climate change – are central. So are the lives and livelihoods of our sisters and brothers from the rest of the African continent, whether they reside here struggling to survive as part of the continent's proletariat, or fight hard for justice at home, as they have done

in recent weeks next door in Eswatini.

In making these transitional demands, we will join activists demanding a Basic Income Grant, jobs for all, free tertiary education and an end to the digital divide that prevents working-class students from a good education, National Health Insurance, lifeline supplies of water and electricity as basic rights, and many other demands that include but transcend fair wages and working conditions.

All of these views must be freely expressed in the debate.

10. Anarchy is wrong and must be condemned by all

Whether or not we can mobilise strong anti-capitalist consciousness and generate mutual aid networks, the random and indiscriminate burning of trucks, shops, shopping malls and private firms including looting from all of these is not a revolutionary step. It is not intended to defeat the capitalist system and replace it with socialism or even social democracy.

However, there is a view expressed that because looting is a response to the appalling levels of hunger, poverty and unemployment – and therefore capitalism's failures – the people involved are not at fault but the looting spree is a desperate act of defiance. We do not see food riots in the attacks on shopping malls, even if the masses say they will sell their newly-acquired goods to gain a temporary increase in food. That is short-sighted, certainly once the state comes down hard on pawn shops trafficking in these stolen items in coming days and weeks. And the lack of food in so many working-class areas – due to the looting of nearby shops – will now require creative strategies of mutual aid, ones that our communities and especially women have worked out for generations.

In other words, anarchy is not in the interests of working-class people. The medium-term implications of a breakdown within capitalism's vulnerable retail and wholesale networks need to be thought through. The main Venezuelan success during the period of Hugo Chavez's rule, that won durable support in the barrios (townships), was state-supplied basic needs goods at reasonable prices in state shops. This is just one way the current anarchy can be transformed into something more hopeful for the future.

11. The state's security apparatus was hollowed out

There is a consensus that the state has been fundamentally weakened and many of its institutions corrupted and hollowed out during the 2010s. The South African Police Services (SAPS) has been weakened over many years reflected in the fact that not one of the National Commissioners have ever finished a term. Metro police forces have been incapable of restoring law and order in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng in recent days. The SA National Defence Force is generally considered unfit for service, and fewer than 3000 are available for deployment in this period of

chaos. The state's intelligence capacity has been weakened and factionalised as reflected by the Report of the High-Level Review Panel on the State Security Agents chaired by Dr Sydney Mufamadi.

It is this weakness that may have emboldened the criminal elements. There is a sense of impunity, reflected in the small numbers of looters arrested. Many of these will walk free as the state simply has lost the capacity to investigate crimes and to collect even the most basic evidence in crime scenes. That is why only 48% of those committing crime are arrested, with a conviction rate at pathetic 15%.

Those behind the looting spree know there is a little chance to be held accountable. This encourages more looting.

12. Philosophers have interpreted the world in various way, the point is to change it

While it is correct to analyse every development using our Marxist tools of analysis, SAFTU is not a debating society. We have promised the working class that we are going to be a campaigning, militant, workers controlling and fighting formation.

Had the Covid-19 pandemic not hit us hard, SAFTU would have been in the streets mobilising for a socialist answer to the capitalist crisis. This should have culminated in a three-day siyalala emadolobheni last October. But we are currently not allowed to mobilise and assemble given that we have entered a third wave of the virus, with the Delta variant spreading like wildfire. This is a massive disadvantage to those of us seeking working-class power.

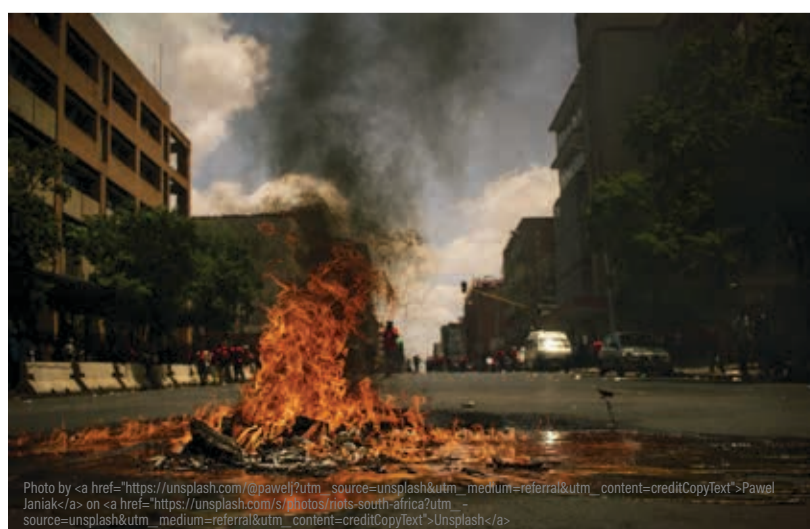
But in contrast, the masses of poor, unemployed and desperate South Africans in KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng have made only one determination. Their poverty is much more serious than the coronavirus pandemic. So they are defiantly assembling to loot, en masse.

How should SAFTU relate to this crisis? The immediate task is to consider this discussion paper as a contribution to debate, so that through our webinars we can analyse and strategise. We may use a final version of such a paper as a guide to action, to position SAFTU and the working class correctly, so as to help redirect the anger and alienation felt universally by the country's majority. As the SAFTU congress repeatedly insisted, we should never allow the resolution of the crisis to be considered only within the framework of a capitalist society, especially given how narrow our economy has become.

If we agree to analyse but also to act, then we should convene a Special NEC to consider calling for a general strike and make the following urgent, immediate demands that are contained in the in our Section 77 demands for which we have a certificate:

- Decent jobs for all in particular for youth and women
- Immediate introduction of the Basic Income Grant at R50 a day

If we don't act, the moment will pass. All of the dangers outlined above – with none of the potentials for a socialist transformation from this profound capitalist crisis – will become a reality.



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