

In Response to the SA Metalworkers union's "Movement for Socialism" proposal

HEWAT BEUKES, a leader of Workers International, previously a member of the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) Youth League and now in opposition to the Namibian SWAPO government, interviewed TANGENI NUUKUAWO, a leader of the 1971-72 general strike and also formerly a member of the SWAPO Youth League. This is an extract from the book ["Movement for Socialism"](#)

In the first chapter of "Trade Union Struggles for Freedom in South Africa" (page 43 in this book) there is a reference to the 1971-72 general strike in Namibia (then South West Africa) being a prelude to the strike wave in Durban in 1973. The Namibian strike also profoundly affected the freedom movement when 4,000 youth joined the South West African People's Organisation (SWAPO) in exile.

The South West African Native Labour Association (SWANLA) was formed in 1943 by the South Africa colonial government for the purpose of herding workers from the north of Namibia to work in the mines in the south.

Under the so-called contract system, workers were gathered together in Ondangua and then driven down to Grootfontein where their assigned bosses would collect them. The compulsory contract was for 18 months. Over time the entire commercial, small industrial, mining and agricultural sectors would be fed by contract labour.

Tangeni experienced this himself and remembers his father who

was a labourer in Walvis Bay. He was employed on compulsory 18-month contracts, during which time he could not come home and his wife was not allowed to visit him. Tangeni obtained a permit to visit his father in the compound, but for only one hour at lunchtime.

The beds were concrete slabs protruding from the wall, one on top of the other. Rooms were small for two to four occupants, but during the return of seasonal workers these were overcrowded. The food was the same day after day for 18 months; lunch consisted of porridge with either meat or fish relish, and breakfast consisted of brown bread with jam.

It was slave conditions, performing back-breaking labour without sitting down for more than eight hours a day. Workers developed back problems and illnesses arising from the unsanitary conditions. If you became sick you lost your job.

Many Angolans were contracted. They were much cheaper than the Namibians. Mostly illiterate, they suffered even worse abuse and exploitation. Many lost their lives due to being killed on farms with no relatives to enquire and question their whereabouts. They were slaughtered.

The inhuman conditions built up frustration and resentment to breaking point amongst the vast number of workers housed in large compounds especially in the urban areas, and in 1971 the anger boiled over into a general strike which started on 13 December 1971 and ended on 20 January 1972.

The organisation was underground with the leaders explaining to the workers concentrated in the compounds that their situation could only be changed through political struggle. They needed to overthrow the system. They demanded amongst others:

- the right to free movement;
- better wages and better conditions of work;
- the pass book to be replaced by an I.D.;
- the right to negotiate for pay and to choose their own employers.

However, finally the only change brought about by the strike

was the shortening to six months of the compulsory period before returning home to see their families.

Nevertheless the strike had a heavy impact on the economy. Production went down in mines and fishing, also farms were unattended. Most important, it gave way to political organisation and awareness. The colonial regime transported many workers back to the north, but they returned as organised workers, and as a token of defiance and freedom they cut a large section of the border fence between Namibia and Angola. Before the strike, political organisation was loose. The SWAPO Youth League consisted of unstructured individuals. The Strike gave structure and organisation both to the workers and the Youth League. In 1973 there were school boycotts in the north and organisation of national resistance against the Bantustan policy enforced by the Odendaal Plan of 1964 which put homeland "second tier" authorities in place for the various national groups.

These boycotts and resistance were met by harsh repression by the colonial regime and the homeland authorities. In the north youth and workers were tied to trees and flogged with palm branches. This led to an exodus of four thousand youth in 1974 to join the SWAPO in exile in Zambia; when the Anti-Apartheid Committee interviewed the youth in Lusaka they mostly wanted to hear about the strike

No wonder! The Namibian General Strike defied the largest colonial military force in Africa – one soldier for every 12 Namibians – and shocked not only the colonial administration for its determination and death defiance but the South African regime itself.

It was a big thing internationally. South African contract workers in mines and industry suffered the same conditions as those who took strike action in Namibia, and so the mood spread. A strike of 300 PUTCO workers in the Transvaal against low wages was followed by the wave of strikes which exploded in Durban in 1973. Our general strike had an impact in South Africa, and the development of workers' struggles in South Africa had an impact on us.

In Namibia the general strike led to a restive period of labour resistance and political organisation culminating in the 1978 Rössing Strike which involved thousands of miners at the Rössing uranium mine and other mines and which saw the formulation of a broad set of demands including trade union demands. This level of development was influenced by the trade union struggles in South Africa.

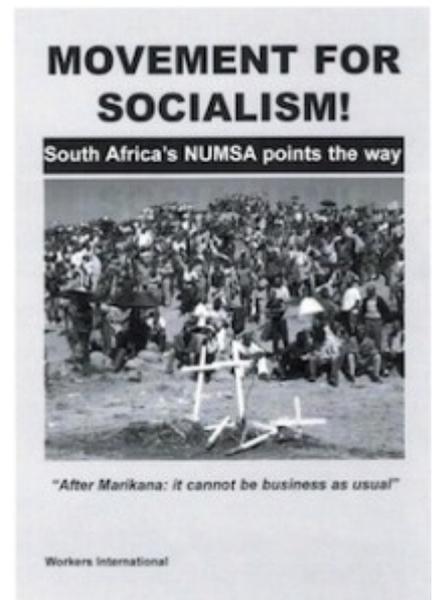
Today it is particularly important that the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) has broken with the ANC. Even when we joined SWAPO in exile in Zambia in 1974 we were already conscious of the corruption and political poverty of the SWAPO leaders and SWAPO in government has proved this to be true! We knew when we organised the general strike that workers' conditions could only be changed through political struggle. Workers here are faced with the same task as workers in South Africa – to start a Movement for Socialism.

NUMSA is the biggest affiliate of the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), but COSATU is in President Zuma's pocket and the ANC can't even implement the Freedom Charter! I thought the general secretary of the ANC was a communist, but then I listened to his statements on relations between the ANC and the unions and realised that the ANC seeks to seriously weaken the workers' situation, and so I agree 100% with NUMSA's decision to work towards a new independent workers' party for socialism.

It is now our job to educate and organise!

New Book: Movement for Socialism! South Africa's NUMSA points the way

On 7th May 2014 the African National Congress (ANC) was returned as the government of South Africa, but there is deep disquiet. For the defeat of apartheid did not bring an end to capitalism as many militant activists had hoped, and a small group of the ANC at the head of the government and their cronies in the trade union leaderships have prospered while imposing neo-liberal policies which are impoverishing the masses. Meanwhile the workers, movement has been set back in a number of different ways in the last 20 years.



In response to this, even before the general election, at its Special National Congress in December 2013, the National Union of Metal Workers of South Africa (NUMSA) had withdrawn its support from the ANC and its ally, the South African Communist Party (SACP), and had already begun a series of actions to establish a united front to coordinate struggles in the workplace and communities. These stormy developments in the class struggle in South Africa have profound implications for working people everywhere.

This book highlights the way forward proposed by the leaders of the NUMSA to resolve the crisis. To assist readers outside of South Africa to understand how this came about, we include the history of the struggle by South Africa's working class and its close links to the Namibian workers, movement to

overthrow white majority racist rule as part and parcel of the struggle for socialism by participants in the movement.

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Numsa and the question of a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist political organ of the working class in South Africa today

[original here](#)

***“It is obvious** that the black capitalist class favours capitalism and that it will do its best to influence the post-apartheid society in this direction.*

***It is obvious** that the black middle and upper classes who take part in a broad liberation alliance will jostle for hegemony and attempt to represent their interests as the interests of all Africans.*

***It is obvious** that (like their counterparts in every part of the world) the black middle and upper strata, who find*

themselves on the side of the people's struggle, are often inconsistent and vacillating. They are usually the enemy's softest targets for achieving a reformist, rather than a revolutionary, outcome." (Joe Slovo, 1988)

It has become necessary, and quite urgent, to emphatically re-state and explain the December 2013 historic Numsa Special National Congress Resolutions, especially the ones that talk to the formation of the United Front, the Movement for Socialism, the ANC and its alliance, and the formation of an independent revolutionary socialist vanguard party of the working class and the role of Numsa in all this.

The Resolutions adopted in our Special National Congress were a culmination of more than 26 years of working inside the South African Liberation Movement (LM) in general, and inside and building the ANC and its alliance in particular.

Over more than two decades of struggle inside the LM and the ANC and its alliance, by December last year, Numsa came to the inescapable observation and conclusion that there is no chance of winning back the ANC led alliance to what it was originally formed for, which was to drive a revolutionary programme for fundamental transformation of the country, with the Freedom Charter as the minimum platform to transform the South African economy and society.

As for the South African Communist Party (SACP) it was clear that its leadership had become embedded in the state and it was failing to act as the vanguard of the working class. Nor, for that matter, has the SACP any revolutionary programme, post 1994, for the struggle for socialism for South Africa.

By December last year, we became convinced that the chances of winning back the ANC onto the path of radical implementation of the Freedom Charter and the SACP onto the path of genuine working class struggles for working class power had become very remote, truly, had actually evaporated!

We therefore correctly resolved to call on Cosatu to break from the ANC led alliance. We stated that the need for looking for a political alternative had arrived.

We then resolved that NUMSA was going to lead the establishment of a **new United Front**, which will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities, in a way similar to the UDF of the 1980s.

The task of this Front will be **to fight for the implementation of the Freedom Charter and to be an organisational weapon against neoliberal policies such as the NDP**. For this to happen, the Special Congress charged our members and shopstewards to be active on all fronts and in all struggles against neo-liberal policies, wherever these policies were being implemented.

Clearly, the United Front is not a political party – it is simply an **organisational weapon against neoliberal policies and for the demand for the radical implementation of the Freedom Charter**. The fundamental purpose of the United Front is to **coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities**.

We have noticed that some creative journalists have gone so far as to announce for us that Numsa's political party is called the United Front. Nothing could be further from the truth. In our Resolutions, we clearly stated that the United Front will be an organization similar to the United Democratic Front (UDF) – a democratic umbrella coordinating structure of the shopfloor and community struggles of the working class bringing together all sorts of working class and progressive community organisations and individuals.

Again and for the record, the United Front **is not a political party!**

Side by side with the establishment of the new United Front, we resolved that Numsa would explore the establishment of a

Movement for Socialism, as the working class needs a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a socialist South Africa.

We said that Numsa would conduct discussions on previous and current attempts to build socialism. We resolved to commission an international study on the historical formation of working class parties, including exploring different type of parties – from mass workers parties to vanguard parties.

In our Special Congress we even mentioned countries such as Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia, Greece – as potential sources on socialist experiences we would study. We then said the whole learning process would lead to the union ***convening a Conference on Socialism.***

We said that the work to explore the formation of a Movement for Socialism must be regularly reported to our Numsa constitutional structures and the work must be finalised by ***the first NUMSA Central Committee in 2015.***

In the meantime, in all the work being done, whether on building a new United Front or exploring the formation of a Movement for Socialism, we said that ***we must be alert to gains that may present possibilities of either the new United Front, or any other progressive coalition or party committed to socialism, standing for elections in future.*** We charged the NUMSA constitutional structures to continuously assess these developments and possibilities.

It is in pursuit of this objective that we have recently announced that we will consider the possibility of the working class fielding candidates in Metros and Municipalities, in 2016 Local Government Elections, such as in the Nelson Mandela Metro.

The “Movement for Socialism” is not the name of a political party Numsa has formed. The name of such a political organ (could be a broad coalition of revolutionary socialist

formations) or party (could be a straightforward revolutionary socialist workers party – not necessarily of that name!), and how such an organ or party will be formed, ***all will be determined in the theater of struggle*** – the working class, once sufficiently mobilized and united behind the demand for socialism, will determine the programme, form and name of such a structure.

From the above, a few things that are very important must now be very clear.

Numsa is and will remain a trade union, inspired by Marxism Leninism. It will not convert itself into a political party. It cannot do so, anyway.

Numsa sees itself playing ***a leading role*** in the formation of the United Front and ***a revolutionary and catalytic role*** in the formation of the revolutionary socialist organ of the working class – it is theoretically and factually wrong to assert that ***“Numsa will form a political party”*** or more ridiculously and quite incorrectly, that ***“Numsa has formed a political party”*** in the same way that Julius Malema or Bantu Holomisa formed their parties!

The political organ to logically arise out of the processes outlined above (whether it be a socialist movement or a socialist workers party, and called by whatever name) cannot be about ***“beefing up, or providing credible opposition to the ANC”*** precisely because the process we have outlined above are processes of ***the immense majorities*** – the South African working class, both black and white, in all their workplaces and communities!

All other previous and historic political formations, including the birth of the ANC itself, were movements of minorities!

The ANC and SACP are everyday reminding Numsa that the working class organised in Cosatu unions and Cosatu itself will always

remain in the ANC and its Alliance. This is arrogance of the highest order, and it reveals shocking ignorance and abandonment of Marxist-Leninist class theory and analysis, on the part of the leadership of both the ANC and SACP, about why the working class both organized in Cosatu unions, and those not organised in any union, have tolerated a clearly dysfunctional and anti-working class alliance for more than 20 years!

Simply stated, the working class, are not the political property of either the ANC or the SACP – their presence in the ANC and SACP **is premised on the sole fact that these organisations are able to protect and advance the class interests of the working class**. As more than 27 years of our Marxist-Leninist analysis and revolutionary work has shown, both these organisations no longer champion the interests of the working class or socialism. And the advanced working class has, and continues to, abandon these organisations.

The revolutionary strategic objective of all these processes is for the advanced detachment of the working class to rally the immense majority in order to win economic and political power for **the immense majority of South African working class** in all its manifold manifestations, for a socialist South Africa as the only solution to the human crisis in South Africa, and the world, today.

There are no individuals among the Numsa national leadership who harbor **illusions of personal grandeur, or who want political power in order to advance their personal economic interests**. Only a malicious and extremely ignorant imbecile would make such a mischievous and unashamedly false accusation.

Numsa as a revolutionary trade union inspired by Marxism-Leninism, will play its revolutionary part in solving the human crisis in South Africa by advancing the cause for the only alternative and solution available to us: socialism.

Writing in 1988 at a time when many left and revolutionary socialist formations condemned the SACP's strategy of working inside the ANC led Alliance for many reasons, including the possibility of the SACP abandoning the struggle for socialism in favour of the struggle for bourgeois nationalism, Joe Slovo then SACP General Secretary warned the working class thus:

"It is obvious that the black capitalist class favours capitalism and that it will do its best to influence the post-apartheid society in this direction.

It is obvious that the black middle and upper classes who take part in a broad liberation alliance will jostle for hegemony and attempt to represent their interests as the interests of all Africans.

It is obvious that (like their counterparts in every part of the world) the black middle and upper strata, who find themselves on the side of the people's struggle, are often inconsistent and vacillating. They are usually the enemy's softest targets for achieving a reformist, rather than a revolutionary, outcome."

Twenty years into our neoliberal capitalist democracy, it has become clear to us, the working class, that **sections of the black petit-bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie who took part in the broad liberation alliance are viciously jostling for hegemony and attempting to represent their interests as the interests of all Africans by claiming that the Black and African working class will forever remain in the ANC and the SACP, and in the neo-liberal and capitalist ANC led Alliance.**

The SACP, when it was still led by Marxist-Leninists, further warned the working class about these tendencies of the vacillating strata among Black people, in its 1989 Programme:

"In the period after the seizure of power by the democratic forces, the working class will need to continue the struggle against capitalism. It will need to strengthen its

organisations and build the bases of working class and popular power in the economy, in all sectors of the state and in the communities where the people live.

A deliberate effort will have to be made to prevent attempts by the bourgeoisie and aspirant capitalist elements – and their imperialist supporters – to dominate state power and divert the revolution. Constant mass vigilance will also have to be exercised and action taken against such negative tendencies as the stifling of popular democracy, the bureaucratisation of the state and corrupt practices in government or in society as a whole.

In order to prevent the emergence of a seed-bed for capitalist resurgence and ensure an advance to socialism, the working class must win to its side other sections of the working people, both now and after the popular seizure of power. The landless rural masses, sections of the intelligentsia, students, large contingents of youth and women (as social groups) and some small businessmen and other forces stand to gain from the victory of the socialist revolution.

The transition to socialism will be neither completely separate from nor contradictory to the tasks of the national democratic revolution. On the one hand, consistent implementation and defence of the national democratic programme constitute a major guarantee for progress towards socialism. On the other hand, many of the major objectives of the national democratic revolution will be fully accomplished in the process of socialist construction. Among these tasks are complete national liberation and equality, elimination of sex discrimination, and, more significantly, the elimination of monopoly domination over the economy.”

As Numsa we have consistently maintained that the NDR is not on track. The only track for the NDR is towards socialism because we believe many of the major objectives of the NDR can be fully achieved in the process of socialist construction.

Our call for a United Front of the working class and a Movement for Socialism is precisely a defence of the national democratic programme, the Freedom Charter, which remains the only programme that is capable of laying the basis for socialist transformation of South African society.

There is no turning back, for us in Numsa. We will do whatever it takes to contribute to uniting the working class behind the demand for the radical implementation of the Freedom Charter, for the struggle against a neoliberal capitalist post-Apartheid South Africa, and for Socialism. As the Marxist-Leninist SACP said in 1989; “in the aftermath of the democratic forces assuming political power, the working class has the duty to continue the struggle against capitalism, for socialism”.

Irvin Jim,
Numsa General Secretary
20May 2014.

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Numsa President Opening Speech during Central Committee at The Lakes Hotel and Conference Centre on 12 – 16 May 2014

20 Years After 27th April 1994: what is the state the South African Revolution?

“Nothing demonstrates better the increasing rigor of the colonial system: you begin by occupying the country, then you take the land and exploit the former owners at starvation rates. Then with mechanization, this cheap labour is still too expensive. You finish up taking from the native their very right to work. All that is left for the Natives to do in their own land at a time of great prosperity, is to die of starvation.” (Jean Paul Sarter, 2001)

Numsa National Office Bearers,
Delegates to this Numsa CC,
All Numsa Staff,
Invited guests,
Media present.

On behalf of the National Office Bearers of Numsa, I welcome all of you to this first Central Committee meeting of Numsa after our historic December 2013 Numsa National Congress.

As we seat here, we are meeting after the first South African National Elections in which Numsa as an organisation did not support any political party.

This Central Committee must help all of us to fully understand the moment we are in, from a clear Marxist-Leninist class

perspective. There should be no confusion over what Numsa resolved to do, in the Numsa National Special Congress. All of us must be very clear what these just ended elections mean to the working class of South Africa. All of us must be clear what our revolutionary and trade union responsibilities are, post the Numsa historic Special National Congress.

From the beginning, please allow me to thank the General Secretary, the Deputy General Secretary of Numsa and the entire Head Office and all our staff in all our Numsa provinces for putting together a most comprehensive information and documentation package for this important Central Committee. This is as it should be.

Among other important matters this Central Committee must initiate is a serious and urgent national dialogue among all the left formations in general and in Numsa in particular, on the fundamental question of the form and content of the socialism we want for South Africa and the world.

We are required to go beyond theoretical formulations to concretely defining the economic and social formation we would like to see South Africa and the world become, when we win the struggle for a socialist South Africa and socialist world.

In order to help us all fully appreciate the moment we are in, and the state of class struggles in the whole world in general and in South Africa in particular, I want to, very briefly, tackle the following:

- A. The state of the world capitalist system;
- B. The South African revolution: its theory and revolutionary practice;
- C. The Freedom Charter as the minimum programme and basis of the class alliance of the forces that spear-headed the South African violent revolution for freedom in South Africa;
- D. The South African negotiated settlement and post 1994 South Africa;

E. Numsa and post 1994 South Africa and the Numsa Special National Congress;

F. The 2014 National Elections and their class significance; and

G. What is to be done, to build the power of the working class and accelerate momentum towards a Socialist South Africa as the only viable alternative to the savagery of the current racial capitalism and imperialist domination?

Obviously, in the course of this Central Committee delegates must make time to reflect upon these and all the other business of this Central Committee. My hope is that when we depart this meeting on Friday the 16th of May 2014, no one who will have attended this Central Committee Meeting must be a source of confusion when we are back in our regions, locals, communities and on the factory floors.

Numsa is a serious, mature and revolutionary Marxist-Leninist inspired trade union. We pride ourselves in being a worker driven and worker controlled revolutionary trade union. Internal robust debates and discussions before decisions and resolutions are taken is our democratic lifeblood. This is the cornerstone of our democratic centralism.

It is my duty to always remind ourselves that our Constitution charges us to, at all material times, grow the power of the working class in the factories, in our communities and in the whole world so that we can win the war against exploitation, oppression, discrimination and for socialism.

We are a socialist trade union precisely because we know that our real war is ultimately for winning the dictatorship of the proletariat as the only true democratic state of affairs.

We understand capitalism as the dictatorship of the bosses, of the capitalist, no matter how well concealed this fact may be, behind false liberal hopes as captured in all liberal constitutions.

Very briefly then, allow me, Comrades, to deal with the matters I said I will tackle above.

A. The state of the world capitalist system

We all have a duty and revolutionary responsibility to understand, in class terms, the world we live in. This is important because we need to be fully aware at all times, of the actual revolutionary potential for winning the war against the barbarism capitalism inflicts upon the world working class and peasant populations.

We also analyse the world in order to understand how our own class struggles are linked to the rest of the class struggles taking place in the world, so that we may better grow faster the power of the world working class against our class enemy: the capitalist class.

The world capitalist system is in a deep terminal systemic and structural crisis. The world capitalist system is terminally sick, it cannot recover. Unless the world capitalist system is soon destroyed by the world working class and replaced by revolutionary and democratic scientific socialism, the Earth and all life on it are faced with the real possibility of being destroyed!

This is not an empty threat, nor is it a false alarm: capitalism has today developed enough atomic, nuclear, biochemical and other kinds of bombs to destroy the Earth and all life on it.

We now know that land, sea and air pollution are all at record high and life systems in all these spheres are threatened with total destruction. Global warming is not a joke. It is real and is fast destroying the energy balance of our Earth system as we know it.

As Marx and Engels so scientifically and correctly explained more than 150 years ago in the Communist Manifesto, the world today is ruled by the money form of value. Everything has been

reduced, is being reduced, into a money relationship – finance (money) capital is dominant today. No human value or relationship is immune to the penetration of money.

We live in the true age of imperialism as the phase of human history in which finance capital is truly dominant.

The world capitalist class that owns and controls the global economic production and financial system ultimately controls all our lives, as they make sure that nothing that does not serve the interest of money can survive and thrive! The search for faster, more efficient, global means of accumulating money is conditioning all economic and social activities, and therefore all human life on Earth today.

Even our poverty, diseases, homelessness, ignorance and all miseries are everyday being converted into businesses for making money. If ways have not been found to make money out of any of our problems, those problems will not receive any attention until money can be made out of them!

All this is happening at a time when the development of productive forces have never been so advanced! We now live in the age in which no human being should go to bed hungry – there is enough agriculture and food science to properly feed more than 100 times the current entire human population.

No one should have no decent modern house to live in – there is in fact too much construction science and technology to ensure that every human being lived in a luxurious and palatial house!

There is so much medical science and health technology that each human being can today have their health problems attended to, and medicines provided, according to their individual needs and specifications.

There is so much communication knowledge, technology and science that in fact nursery schools, primary schools,

colleges and universities as they exist today are actually museums of ancient education: information technologies and computers, and manmade robots have made learning, transferring skills and education such a simple and accessible process that every human being can virtually learn anything, know anything, acquire any skill, communicate in an instant, as often and as many times as they want in their life time.

In the meantime, billions of human beings live miserable lives because the world capitalist class controls and dominates the world production system, all for money, for profits, and not for serving human beings and protecting our Earth.

Thus we see that on one hand, at no time have the productive forces been so developed such that every human being can live a full, enjoyable and happy life, on the other hand, precisely because a small and minority world capitalist class owns and controls the world economy for their profits, the majority of the world peoples suffer terribly, and the Earth itself is threatened with total destruction.

Thus there is no alternative to the victory of the world working class over the world capitalist class, if we must save human life and the Earth, from the potentially inevitable destruction from the power of the world capitalist class. We are engaged in a life and death war with world capitalism!

Because of their greed, the world capitalist class has actually already started curving up pieces of the moon for themselves, even as we seat in this CC!

B. The South African revolution: its theory and revolutionary practice

South Africa today is firmly and fully imbedded in the world capitalist system. The 1994 negotiated settlement had as one of its most important objectives the full and rapid integration of the South African economy (inevitably, society too!) into the world capitalist system.

This is not to imply that before 1994 the South African economy was not part of the world capitalist system, rather, the negotiated settlement removed all the impediments which the Apartheid government had caused, and a post-Apartheid neoliberal and vicious capitalist trajectory was adopted to fast-track this "integration".

But, when we say that there was a struggle for freedom in South Africa prior to 1994, what do we mean? What were we fighting for? What was the theory and revolutionary practice of that "revolutionary struggle"?

Was our struggle for the fuller integration of, and the normalization of the white minority South African economy into the world capitalist imperialist system?

Was our struggle a struggle for a neoliberal capitalist South Africa?

Was our struggle for social grants?

Was our struggle for the protection of white minority cultural, social, political and economic rights at the expense of the majority of South Africans who are Black and African?

Was our struggle for the mere reform of Apartheid education, health and other social services?

Was our struggles for us to merely participate in choosing which faction of the capitalist class should be in government through the lottery of capitalist elections once in every 5 years, and then pretend that we too have "political power"?

Was our struggle merely for "basic services" in our apartheid designed geographical ghettos?

Why was our blood shed? Why did we shed blood? Was it for BEE? For Nkandla? For Ghuptas? For tenders perhaps?

Indeed, was our violent revolutionary struggle just for "a better life for all"?

For more than four centuries, why did we kill and risk being

killed?

Today, especially after the 2014 National Elections in which the ANC has won a majority in both the national and provincial legislatures, it has become extremely important to sharply remind ourselves why we waged a violent revolutionary struggle, what its theory and practice was.

Only when we fully connect to this understanding will we then have the necessary and sufficient theoretical preparation and understanding, to enable us to summon the courage we need to continue the revolutionary struggle. For, indeed struggle we must, precisely because the revolutionary war has not been won!

Our struggle was about ending forced and violent colonial occupation. Today, less than 8 percent of the white population still own more than 80 percent of our land.

Our violent revolutionary struggle was about ending social and cultural domination.

Today, 25 million Africans live a life no cat or dog of the rich white 10 percent of the population enjoys! They are classified as extremely poor. 23 million Black and African people in fact survive on less than R650 per month, far less than the weekly dog food for a rich white and Black middle class dog!

Our violent revolutionary struggle was about ending exploitation of the Black and African majority who are the bulk of the South African working class! Today, the majority of Black and African people cannot survive without selling themselves very cheaply to white or white black parasitic capitalists!

Today, 20 years after 1994, the majority of Black and African people, who because of our history of violent white land dispossession were turned into labourers on white farms and factories and mines, cannot find even these supper

exploitative jobs, thus they are left to die of starvation and extreme despondency, at a time when South Africa is one of the richest countries of the world!

Our violent revolutionary struggle was about ending land hunger among the formerly disposed, and restoring the ability and right to live anywhere where one desired in South Africa. Today, neither land redistribution nor decent affordable housing has been made available throughout the country to enable the destruction of Apartheid distributions of our population.

We fought and shed blood, not so that a few corrupt Black and African elites should become the new prison warders of Black and African labourers by becoming instant credit card billionaires!

In South Africa as elsewhere in the capitalist and imperialist colonies, we violently fought to end colonial occupation, to abolish colonial domination, to abolish exploitation, to end gender oppression and domination, to restore the right to land to all the people of South Africa, to return the wealth of the country to all the people of South Africa.

In a nutshell, we fought – we killed and shed blood – to restore the humanity of both the oppressors, dominators, exploiters and dispossessors and the exploited, dominated, oppressed and dispossessed.

It is my submission that nothing, not even an iota, of the theory and practice of our violent revolutionary struggle has been achieved in the past 20 years.

The extra water, electricity, small poorly located and constructed houses, poor quality but expanded health care, and a raft of empty liberal political rights (precisely because these rights are not backed by economic equality – which is the only foundation of real political freedom) in the past twenty years do not amount to even the smallest achievements

of the promise of our violent revolutionary struggle for freedom.

There is nothing extraordinary that has been done in the past twenty years that any ordinary capitalist formation would not have done, I submit.

To the contrary, we now have become the most unequal country on Earth, with the most violent of violent crimes, with an explosive youth unemployment that threatens to blow this this country up any time now, with the world's largest and most violent civil protests against inhuman conditions of life. Our poor rural populations have simply been forgotten!

C. The Freedom Charter as the minimum programme and basis of the class alliance of the forces that spear-headed the South African violent revolution for freedom in South Africa.

With all the noise making the rounds about "a good story to tell" and the results of the 2014 7th May National Elections, it has become absolutely necessary to remind ourselves of the basic demands that brought together the coalition of forces that participated in the struggle for liberation in South Africa.

The Freedom Charter is the basic document that contains both the principles and the demands for the minimum programme that was the basis upon which the revolutionary block of the African, Black and White working class and other progressive strata in South African society united, and constructed and fought the struggle for freedom and liberation.

We remind ourselves of the 10 demands of the Freedom Charter:

1. The People Shall Govern!
2. All National Groups Shall have Equal Rights!
3. The People Shall Share in the Country's Wealth!
4. The Land Shall be Shared Among Those Who Work It!
5. All Shall be Equal Before the Law!
6. There Shall be Work and Security!
7. The Doors of Learning and Culture Shall be Opened!

8. All Shall Enjoy Equal Human Rights!
9. There Shall be Houses, Security and Comfort!
10. There Shall be Peace and Friendship!

To govern means to have political power. Land and economic power has not been transferred into the hands of all the people of South Africa as a whole. White monopoly capital and US and British and other imperialist finance capital dominates and controls the South African economy. The people are not governing!

The 2014 National Elections perfectly captures the fact that all national groups do not have equal rights!

The results of the Elections perfectly mirror the colonial and racist distribution of the racial political groupings in South Africa today. The results are a perfect reminder of the fact that white monopoly economic and political power continues to live side by side with majority Black and African poverty and extreme inequality. Nothing best captures the colonial nature of South African economy and society than the racial voting patterns.

Black and African people are still condemned to live far away from former whites only economic centres, rely on extremely inferior education, health and housing facilities, are condemned to inferior colonial wages and have no similar access to modern science, technology and the fruits of their labour! This explains why Black and African communities today are warzones.

The fundamental point to note here is that as long as a minority controls and owns the economy, with the support of US, British and other imperialist backers, the essence, the fundamental reason for our violent struggle for liberation will remain unachieved: the transfer of the wealth of the country into the hands of all South Africans!

Racism is a necessary feature of our continuing post 1994

racist colonial economic and social system, whose destruction were the basis for our violent revolutionary struggle.

D. The South African negotiated settlement and post 1994 South Africa

Today, 20 years after the 1994 negotiated settlement, we the revolutionary South African working class are very clear that:

- While the working class in the townships were making the Apartheid government and society “ungovernable” and sorting out traitors in their communities, even by using burning tires, the Black and African middle class elites at the heart of the negotiations were busy stitching together with the enemies of the working class, secretly, a neoliberal anti working class and capitalist post-Apartheid South Africa, without the formal democratic mandates of either the ANC or SACP members and leadership structures.

- We now know that the totality of the openly and secretly negotiated settlement firmly entrenched a neoliberal capitalist post-Apartheid South Africa, and threw the Freedom Charter into the dustbin of history!

- We now know that the racist dominant and exploiting white block won by simply mutating racial social and economic dominance into economic class domination and exploitation through the South African liberal constitution which protected their old and newly created economic and property rights.

- The 1996 South African most liberal constitution guaranteed both existing and created new property rights for the white minority population, especially in land – thus entrenching racial capitalism, post 1994.

- We are now convinced that BEE was secured as a means both to pay off and consolidate a Black middle class, post 1994 that would act as the new policeman for the new version of the same Apartheid capitalist society and economy that South Africa became, after 1994.

- We are very clear that the 1994 democratic breakthrough was nothing but the mechanism for the racial capitalist transition, entrenchment of the racial social and economic domination order we are now living in.
- The 1994 negotiated settlement laid the capitalist foundation for the post-Apartheid rise of a kleptomaniac, corrupt black and African political class.
- The negotiated settlement contained the seeds for the dismantling of the popular and revolutionary block that had waged the struggle for genuine freedom in South Africa.

We are therefore, not surprised that today, 20 years after 1994, Black and African working class communities will, on the same day, participate in the elections by returning a black government into power, even as they are coming straight from a violent protest against their inhuman conditions of life. This is a perfect reminder that our colonial and racist society and economy are alive, and the struggle for freedom continues!

E. Numsa and post 1994 South Africa: the Numsa Special National Congress Resolutions

Numsa is a socialist Marxist-Leninist inspired revolutionary trade union. We make no apology to anyone for this fact.

In our December 2013 Numsa National Special Congress, we confirmed and resolved that the ANC led alliance no longer serves its revolutionary purpose. We, accordingly, ended our political support for the ANC and resolved to campaign for Cosatu to break the Alliance.

We further very correctly recognised that the SACP has exhausted its revolutionary potential in South African politics and in the South African revolution.

In order to prevent Cosatu from being destroyed and converted into a useless and toothless formation of the working class and the poor, we have resolved to call for a Cosatu Special Congress to deal with the class paralysis and leadership

question in Cosatu.

I am happy to report that we have placed this demand before the courts.

Our demand for the President of the ANC and the country to resign because of the neoliberal trajectory and corruption in government and the country stands. This CC must determine how to carry this demand forward.

In order to sustain our membership growth and simultaneously to defend and service our members, we produced and adopted a Service Charter for Numsa. We must all live by this Charter, in Numsa.

F. The 2014 National Elections: Significance for the revolutionary South African working class.

We have already explained above that the continuing ANC victories from all the previous elections and especially the 2014 National Elections are all simply proof of the racist colonial polarization of South African Society – they are all perfect proof of the continuing US/British financed neocolonial economic and social status of South Africa.

The foundation of the South African social and economic formation remains racial capitalism: the super exploitation of Black and African labour.

The ANC negotiated settlement guaranteed this neoliberal and colonial status of post 1994 South Africa. The majority of the population, therefore, who are Black, African and proletariat, in the lottery that is the capitalist election circus cannot be expected to vote for a white minority party with the same capitalist policies as the black party, no matter how rotten the black parties may be!

The solution to this crisis of development lies in the working class (white, black and African) creating their own political organ to continue the struggle for liberation which can only

inevitably lead to socialism as the only viable alternative to the savage and backward system of capitalism and imperialism.

Numsa resolved in its December 2013 Special Congress to work to unite the working class behind a movement for socialism, and to work to initiate the formation of a genuine revolutionary political organ of the working class.

G. What is to be done, to build the power of the working class and accelerate momentum towards a Socialist South Africa as the only viable alternative to the savagery and misery of the current racial capitalism and imperialist dominated South Africa?

Numsa must jealously guard and defend the unity of its organisation as a revolutionary Marxist-Leninist inspired trade union.

While retaining our independence and autonomy as a trade union, Numsa must carry through its resolution to build a united front of the working class in South Africa.

Simultaneously, we must deepen and sharpen our understanding of what we want our socialism to be like, even as we work towards the formation of a revolutionary socialist political organ of the working class which must lead the revolutionary struggle for a socialist South Africa.

The General Secretary will brief this CC on how we expect work to explore the state of socialism in the world is going on. We need to fast track this work. Socialism is international because capitalism is international. The victory of the South African revolutionary struggle for socialism will not be possible if we do not simultaneously struggle for a socialist world.

We must be humble, ready to learn from all other revolutionary and progressive working class formations even as we are very clear about what we want: it is not the resuscitating of any

version of some pre-Marxian utopian socialisms: ours is the struggle for scientific socialism in which the dictatorship of the proletariat is the ultimate goal, as the only true democratic state of any society.

I am confident that this CC will do its work properly, and contribute fully to growing our union and firming up our revolutionary struggles for socialism!

Forward to a socialist world!

Forward to a socialist Africa!

Forward to the Socialist Republic of South Africa!

We cannot afford to fail. The future will not forgive us!

Andrew Chirwa,
Numsa President

12th May 2014.

original posted here:

[Numsa President Opening Speech during Central Committee at The Lakes Hotel and Conference Centre on 12 – 16 May 2014](#)

**Statement on the decisions of
the National Union of Metal
Workers of South Africa by**

the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International Conference 29-30 March 2014

The Special Congress (17-20 December 2013) of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA), with 1,200 delegates representing 338,000 members, unanimously decided to break with the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African Communist Party (SACP) as the first step towards establishing a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a Socialist South Africa.

For NUMSA the massacre of the Marikana miners marked a turning point in the social and political life of South Africa. It could not be business as usual. They put the question: How do we explain the killing of striking miners in a democracy? They had to conduct a sustained and thorough analysis of the political meaning of Marikana.

The leadership concluded that the decisions of the unions 9th Congress were no longer enough to guide [them]. The situation had changed to a point where [they] needed a new mandate from the membership, and their Special Congress decided to break with the ANC and SACP and call upon the Confederation of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu) to re-establish its independent campaigning role, for there is no priority more important than safeguarding the capacity of the working class to act in its own interests.

In so doing NUMSA is raising matters of vital importance for workers everywhere engulfed by the crisis of capitalism which manifests itself in mass unemployment, deepening poverty and

widening inequalities. To end the rule of capital, workers are faced with the task of breaking with fake socialist and communist parties acting on behalf of the capitalist class and failing to act as the vanguard of the working class.

The Special Congress therefore decided on a new united front to coordinate the struggles in the workplace and in communities, to explore the establishment of a Movement for Socialism and to conduct a thoroughgoing discussion on previous attempts to build socialism as well as current experiments to build socialism and an international study on the historical formation of working class parties.

For the Workers International to Rebuild the Fourth International these decisions of the NUMSA Special Conference and the unions subsequent statements and actions towards socialism are historic and crucial for the working class and its organisations internationally.

Inspired by the example of NUMSA we are making every possible effort through our own currently small and isolated organisations to oppose all the opportunism and anti-working class politics which are so widespread in the so-called advanced capitalist countries, with a view to preparing socialism. And, like NUMSA, in the midst of the majority of organisations which have gone over to the side of anti-Marxism or falsification, we are guided by Marxism.

We support, and will circulate and publicise, NUMSAs Special Congress Resolution and Statement throughout the working class;

We support and will act on NUMSAs decision to build a Movement for Socialism;

We enthusiastically welcome and want to take part in NUMSAs decision for an international study on the historical formation of working class parties.

Long live the South African working class as they get ready to storm the heavens!

by Balazs Nagy, April 2014

Here in France, as elsewhere, the media have hardly mentioned the social and political ferment currently convulsing South Africa, which is no surprise actually. This evasive and rather suspect silence contrasts oddly and strikingly with the unprecedented enthusiasm these same media showed during Nelson Mandelas elaborate funeral rites, an enthusiasm whose real purpose was to glorify the mans politics. The sleight of hand that makes important information like this simply disappear also contrasts strangely with the endless, servile, outpouring of easy-reading chatter when the President of France visited the US. (This sycophant never once stopped licking his hosts boots, although they hack into his private communications like they do everybody else on the planet, and US-owned businesses in France dont even pay their taxes).

These glaring contradictions clearly reveal what these media are really like and what they are there for. All working people, especially the politically active among them, should ponder this. It exposes the highfaluting idea that the media are there to provide reliable information as a gross, outrageous fiction. The deception they are currently trying on exposes even more clearly exactly what this vast brainwashing mechanism is for: to stop workers becoming conscious of the situation they are in and what they really need to do by mutilating, obscuring, and in this instance deliberately camouflaging, the great, irresistible strength that lies in workers international unity. This colossal strength, whose development is as uneven as that of capitalism itself, is

still deeply divided and fractured along national and regional lines. It is split and stunted even more by the crying lack of political organisation, a genuine, powerful International, on the part of this working class.

So what have the bourgeoisie and its purveyors of mind-altering mush been trying to keep from us in recent months? An initial answer to this question will just focus on the essential facts about this qualitative development in the workers movement in South Africa, since this exceptional groundswell is something we really will have to return to in days to come.

South Africas biggest trade union takes some amazing decisions

To start with, these are admirable and astonishing decisions which break up the class-collaboration that the bourgeoisies power is based on and theoretically and politically re-arm the South African working class. Moreover, their character is such as to shift the international relationship of forces between the working class and the bourgeoisie, halting the long process of defeats and set-backs the international proletariat has suffered.

In December 2013, the powerful South African engineering workers union NUMSA (the biggest union in the country with more than 341 000 members) held a Special National Congress (SNC) attended by more than 1 000 delegates. After passionate debates it took a number of historic decisions (see Workers International Journal no3, March 2014) . To summarise:

The Congress paid appropriate homage to the miners massacred at Marikana, collecting a huge sum in financial support of the victims families, and condemned the compliant attitude, not to say downright complicity, on the part of the countrys political and trade union leaderships. Then in the same spirit it resolved:

To reject the tripartite alliance between the governing party, the Stalinist Communist Party and the trade union confederation (ANC–SACP–Cosatu) as agencies of the bourgeoisie

and its policies. As NUMSA General Secretary Irvin Jim stated in his speech of 11 February 2014, the ANC and SACP leadership has consistently attacked the working class, because the current leadership, the very same leadership that calls itself anti-imperialist, is in a lucrative alliance with international capital. The delegates emphatically declared that The chance of winning back the SACP onto the path of working class struggle for working class power is very remote, something which Deputy General Secretary Karl Cloete re-stated in another speech in early February. Consequently the SNC decided to suspend payment of financial contributions to the ANC.

Evoking the disturbing situation the country faces, especially the growing impoverishment of the working class, the SNC launched a call for the nationalisation of the mining and finance sectors as an immediate and urgent requirement to save our nation.

This gathering of workers also resolved that NUMSA will play a central role, as a catalyst, in the building of a united front. That United Front will take up the bread and butter issues of the working class. It will link our struggles on the shop floor with our struggles in our communities.

The Congress then took a vitally important step. As Irvin Jim emphasised in the speech quoted above, there was in the SNC a profound understanding that unless the working class organises itself as a class for itself it will remain unrepresented and forever toil behind the bourgeoisie. For this reason the SNC decided to study, research and investigate various forms of independent working-class parties and to serve as a catalyst to form a party. Deputy General Secretary Karl Cloete was obliged to add in his speech that, as a trade union, NUMSA could not commit itself to setting up such a party, but it should explore the means and methods leading to it. So he recalled the exact words chosen by the SNC, according to which NUMSA should organise a Conference on Socialism as a stage in organising a Movement for Socialism to now be initiated by the trade union. In preparation for this conference, the whole

union should look at experiences of building socialism, now and in the past. At the same time: We must conduct an international study on working class parties.

He went on to explain this fundamental decision by saying: that the building of such an instrument needs patient and consistent work. Parties require political programmes that clearly spell out what they are fighting for. Such programmes need to inspire millions of people as alternatives to the existing order. A socialist political organisation needs to be rooted within the working class and its struggles. History is littered with initiatives to form parties that came to nothing and where such parties collapsed like packs of cards. History is also full of experiments to build socialism that went in other non-socialist routes. And he summarised NUMSAs position thus: While we understand the urgency, we are not rushing as we are not building an electoral machine but an instrument of revolution and transformation with very deep roots within the working class.

We cannot here present in detail the full richness of these resolutions, which trace the innovative revolutionary path taken by this working class in South Africa. We will return to this very shortly. Now, in line with its political line of class combat against the bourgeoisie and for socialism, the SNC took further substantial decisions.

It voted to call on the leadership of the trade union confederation Cosatu to convene a Special Congress and to break the alliance (with the ANC and the SACP) which, according to General Secretary Jim, failed to use the political power it secured in 1994 to take ownership and control of the national wealth of our country and replace the white racist colonial economy.

Going straight from words to deeds, the congress decided to launch a campaign of rolling mass action initiated by the NUMSA structures to demand fundamental change in the direction of the South African economy and society. For a start, NUMSA launched a powerful call for a General Strike and mass and community actions for 26 February. As Irvin Jim emphasised

towards the end of his speech: We are starting to build the irresistible force that will take back our nation and build it in the interests of the majority.

A few days after this speech, which clarified and explained the Congress decisions, nine trade unions affiliated to Cosatu, at NUMSAs prompting, launched a Statement which testifies to the fact that a tumultuous awakening of the working class is underway in South Africa. Note the names of these trade unions: Public and Allied Workers Union, the SA Football Players Union, the Democratic Nurses Union, the SA Municipal Workers Union, the Food and Allied Workers Union, the SA Commercial and Catering Workers Union, Communication Workers Union and the SA State and Allied Workers Union. There can be no doubt that this list will soon grow, although this will involve intense internal struggles in each union. The nine unions which signed this Statement urged the Cosatu leadership urgently to call a Special National Congress of Cosatu, which the factional leadership (an obvious reference to the line-up of leaders behind the right-wing leadership of ANC and the Stalinist party) has prevented from meeting for some time. At the same time they demand the re-instatement of Zwelinzima Vavi, the elected secretary of Cosatu, who was arbitrarily removed because he refused to follow slavishly the opportunist watchwords of the ANC and the SACP.

To complete its resolutions, which profoundly alter class relations within the country, NUMSA decided to organise Marxist-Leninist Schools for trade union delegates to explain, discuss and assimilate the unions socialist orientation and to explain what it means and how to do it. The first of these week-long schools took place in early February 2014.

What the historic rebirth of NUMSA means and what it teaches us

It would be impossible to squeeze into one short article everything that can be learnt from the way this big trade union adopted radical positions, even just in relation to

South Africa, not to mention the rest of Africa, starting with her neighbours, or indeed the international working class movement, especially Europe. So we are obliged to confine our remarks to some essential points, with a promise to return soon to a more complete and systematic evaluation of the invaluable contribution to Marxist theory and socialist practice this section of the great South African working class is making as it starts to move.

First and foremost, this class vigorously states that, faced with the bourgeoisie and its policy of enslaving working people, the only way forward is to commit firmly and openly to smashing capitalism and opening the road to socialism. This clear and unequivocal slogan, backed up by energetic commitment, stands in striking contrast to the reticence, not to say downright confidentiality, in relation to their programme, on the part of the great majority of organisations on the so-called Left in Europe and elsewhere. Even the most advanced political formations such as the Front de Gauche, Syriza and die Linke (France, Greece, Germany) drown their programmes in a fog of mealy-mouthed phrases and random, unexplained and non-committal hints. In the unflattering popular phrase, they try to hide behind a matchbox. One wonders whether they have any plan at all apart from somehow improving capitalism. We urge our comrades in these organisations: be inspired by the example of NUMSA in South Africa. Steer a clear course towards socialism! All the experience in South Africa and in Europe proves that there is no third way between this path and the reign of the bourgeoisie with its attendant attacks and miseries.

Such a clarification would allow us to take the South African road, and so cleanse from top to bottom the theoretical source that illuminates workers struggle for emancipation, by opting for creative Marxism, as the African workers did, the only theoretical guide for such a struggle. Of course such a choice goes hand in hand with a complete rejection of the jumble of all sorts of left-over ideologies and conceptions the bourgeoisie uses to keep working people chained to them. It is

urgently necessary to get rid of the mish-mash of the most widely-held—but all bankrupt—fragments of conceptions about class-collaboration, from the insipid hotchpotch of stale Keynesianism to Stalinisms various—catatonic but still clinging on—popular fronts.

For all trade unions, even the most combative ones, like the CGT in France, the message from South Africa should ring like a persistent wake-up call. It is frontally opposed to the opportunist and degrading conception and practices of partnership with the bourgeoisie and its state which the European trade union leaderships put forward for their unions, following their bourgeois gurus, anti-reform reformists and de-frocked Stalinists. This is where NUMSA has made a radical break. By taking up the resolute defence of the interests of the working class against this class-collaboration, it has necessarily chosen and politically committed the union to fighting for the interests of the independent working class as a whole. By doing so it has entirely confirmed and reinforced the correctness of Trotskys analysis in *Trades Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay*, the writing of which was interrupted by the ice-pick of Stalins assassin. All working people and the activists among them should study this pamphlet afresh in the light of the formidable break-through opened up by the South African trade union.

By its very nature, said Trotsky, imperialism in its death agony provokes violent and repeated aggression on the part of the bourgeoisie which mean that must urgently fulfil a political role in relation to the fundamental choices the working class as a whole faces. Now the trade union leaderships have done and still do everything they can to divide up trade union activity and restrict it—at best—to the absolute minimum of defending their members immediate interests. They have erected this separation, which in reality is the same actual break already advocated by the syndicalism of old, into a rigorous, strict dogma in union work, which the majority of organisations, even ones claiming some attachment to Lenin and Trotsky, cheerfully adopt, promote and ruthlessly

apply. Now NUMSA flatly repudiates this whole trade union swamp in a way whose ultimate ramifications are still difficult to foresee.

The only European trade union which to my knowledge has decided and adopted a definite, truly political role on the side of the working class is the biggest UK trade union, Unite. This surely demonstrates that NUMSA is not at all on its own and that the awakening of the world working class really has begun. Clearly opposed to the so-called neo-liberal policies of the Labour Party, Unite has rejected its opportunist leadership and pushed the party to break with this policy and adopt a workers programme. The significance of the tenacious struggle going on in the UK is not confined just to that country; its implications are and increasingly will be valuable for the working class as a whole right across Europe. Similarly, there is no doubt that the meeting between NUMSA and Unite, which was planned before these most recent events, will involve fruitful exchanges of considerable interest not only for the working class of these two countries but for the whole international working class.

As against this renewal, our Journal has already denounced, in particular in a recent article, the class collaboration on the part of many unions, their consequent refusal to take on a political role for the working class and their insistence on confining themselves to an obsolete, ossified, narrow and sterile trade union practice which has led a great mass of workers to turn their backs on them and reject them as blunt and rusty tools. Even a weapon as powerful and deadly (and double-edged!) as the general strike, which the Greek, Portuguese and Spanish working class have boldly and repeatedly wielded in the course of recent years, showing remarkable courage and spirit of self-sacrifice, has ended up each time in a bitter setback. All that these repeated general strikes have actually achieved has been to exhaust the working class and undermine its morale, since their leaders have refused to open their only way out, i.e. the political assertion of the working class taking over the economic and

political leadership of the country. As for the half-hearted mobilisations in partial strikes and demonstrations, whose pathetic results merely emphasise the contradiction between what the situation demands and a trade union movement embalmed in routine, the less said the better.

This sclerosis has eaten its way so deeply into the unions that their leaders now constrict and limit their actions even further, not even fulfilling their basic responsibility to organise workers and defend their interests. Just take unemployment! Deferentially adopting the doctrinal precepts of bourgeois ideology, trade union leaderships only consider those who are directly—and officially—employed in an actual job to be workers. Capitalists are throwing more and more workers out of the production process, but these leaderships are no less eager to get rid of them out of the unions! They don't think that the unemployed deserve to belong to trade unions at all, and any attempt to organise them systematically on a wide scale is sabotaged and abandoned.

Fortunately, pretty well all over Europe workers will not accept being thrown on the scrap heap in this contemptible, humiliating way, like worn-out rubbish. Spontaneously, but at the initiative of local former leaders and cadres, they have gathered in various other structures at the margins of or outside the official unions. In the UK, the Liverpool dockers, after a long and difficult two-year dispute sustained and encouraged by port workers around the world, which was the stuff of legend, were nevertheless deprived of their jobs and the historical Liverpool docks wiped out. But they never said die. Inspired by local leaders and cadres such as Jimmy Nolan, Terry Teague and others, they organised, in this ravaged working-class city, around their Casa with its intense political, social and cultural life to maintain their class as a living, active force. And in the North East of the country, in Tyneside and Durham, former miners whose mines have all been completely closed and the miners left to rot, like one of our former comrades, Dave Temple, have woven back together the broken threads of the union and kept alive the collective

activity of the miners. They even revived their disused links with the Spanish Asturian miners when they came under attack. It is no coincidence that this rock-solid working-class resistance has kept going in the UK, the historical cradle of the working class and its movement, a country where working peoples consciousness of belonging to a distinct working class is incomparably stronger than anywhere else. But even in Europe, various groups of workers are stubbornly trying a variety of ways to resist degradation. They are essential component parts of a united and powerful working class and of re-constituting its general movement as a whole.

The deterioration caused by the massive destruction of the productive forces, in the first place of workers themselves, has been made even worse by the way in which the aims and methods of their organisations have been obscured and by the general de-naturing and impoverishment of their trade unions. However, the determined orientation and decisive action of South African workers bring the reviving message of a real global awakening of the workers movement.

NUMSAs SNC has opened the floodgates to a development of profound importance in the trade union movement, comparable to the general shift from craft unionism to industrial unionism which started in the first half of the twentieth century. Whereas the trade union bureaucracys practices, ossified into a dogma by reformists and Stalinists, stop at the gates of the workplace, the NUMSA SNC resolved to smash through this barrier. It decided to extend the activity of the union to the struggles waged in the communities (townships, suburbs, settlements, towns and villages) for workers and unemployed peoples basic demands for water, electricity, housing etc.,—struggles which are intense in South Africa. Consequently the union has taken the initiative to take on and directly organise these struggles and the activists involved. These struggles already have a long history stretching back to the 1990-1994 period, and even then NUMSA wanted to link them up with what it was doing. Its then leader, Moses Mayakiso, worked out a whole political and organisational plan to that

effect, to which NUMSA now refers. But the union abandoned these plans when its revolutionary line buckled under the right-wing influence of the overall ANC-SACP-Cosatu alliance. And it was precisely then that these community struggles really took off as the way in which the impoverished masses defended themselves against the violent destruction of their living conditions by the governments class-collaboration policies.

As a member of a NUMSA delegation to the UK led by Mayekiso, the young Durban engineering worker Bongani Mkhungo easily grasped the correctness of the Marxist orientation of our day contained in Trotskys teaching. And so it was as a member of our Workers International that he returned to Africa, where from the outset he was marginalised by NUMSA. But he completely dedicated himself to organising these community struggles to obtain and improve water and electricity supplies and other essential services and for a decent life. Illness and privation struck down our comrade, whom we sorely miss, before he could witness this re-birth of our movement, but what he did greatly contributed to its preparation and current flowering.

The struggle is particularly lively and violent throughout the region. In neighbouring Namibia, our comrades Erica and Hewat Beukes and their group have spent years organising a whole movement of impoverished and dispossessed working people for access to decent housing and against various abuses at the hands of their bosses and the state.

Over the last two years, these comrades have broadened out this activity to include the defence of miners and teachers robbed of their pensions by the mining trusts and state organs, and of the rights of various ethnic groups of farmers and agricultural workers. To organise and centralise them, they and their supporters and associates have established the Workers Advice Centre, whose activities and influence have become quite extensive. Rapid and brutal reaction from the Namibian bourgeoisie, its old colonial master South Africa, and its own repressive legal organs was not long in coming,

especially once our comrades resolved to prepare to set up the Namibian workers party in the very near future. A raft of administrative hassles, legal threats and arbitrary measures, fines and charges and police summonses and harassment, cutting off of water and electricity supplies, warnings, intimidation and arbitrary accusations paralyse their work and disorganise and even put in question the very existence of the Workers Advice Centre. Certainly they will not be put off doing what they do, and especially not their big project. But active and effective solidarity on the part of working people across the whole world provides precious support which, even in modest forms, helps the Namibian comrades efforts and forges and cements international unity of the working class and all working people.

For a South African turn everywhere!

The immense scope of this initiative by South African workers in NUMSA arises in an international atmosphere where sharpening class contradictions have already provoked a series of revolutionary explosions. Since the Tunisian people unleashed their revolutionary march, spurred on by the working class and rapidly spreading to Egypt and then more or less all Arab countries, the massive mobilisation of working people against the bourgeoisie and the intolerable measures they are taking has accelerated and taken on increasingly sharp and violent forms. The inevitable avalanche of the world revolution has started, even if its various manifestations have a spontaneous character which makes their rhythm somewhat jagged, and even though they dress up in the nationalist or religious garb of past dominant ideologies. A spectre is haunting Europe (or rather the world): the spectre of communism. Even in the last year it has appeared noisily in Egypt, then entered the scene albeit briefly in South Korea and Turkey, while more or less gate-crashed and disguised by nationalist and religious stand-ins, defied the powerful from Palestine to Pakistan by way of Iraq and Afghanistan, and it

is ready to burst out in our old Europe, albeit tempered, softened and enfeebled. And all the while, travestied and disfigured as it has been, side-tracked and losing its bearings in Syria, it terrifies the possessors and drives their rulers all over the world to either desperate self-defence or complete paralysis.

This is the explosive powder-barrel within which the working class masses in Ukraine frontally attack the authorities with exemplary determination—but wrong and confused ideas. Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian workers in Bosnia-Herzegovina in turn have courageously and with great determination launched into an attack on the bourgeoisies feeble rule and its nationalist henchmen. Imperialism and bureaucrats joined together to impose this through the rotten Dayton Agreement, which divides these peoples and ties them down in the straitjacket of the failed and unviable pluri-national framework. Now they are under pressure from all sides to accept the so-called proper application of this Agreement, whereas it is precisely the yoke against which they rose up, as Comrade Pavlovics article explains very clearly (Lutte des classes no 20, February 2014).

At the same time in Ukraine the revolutionary explosion of the working masses has advanced legitimate demands but gets bogged down in the swamp of a false choice between the suffocating embrace of Putins dictatorship or the deceptive siren voices of a capitalist Europe that has itself lost its way.

The lucidity of NUMSAs position and its explicit orientation towards socialism cuts through this whole dense morass to bring vital clarity into the chaotic tangle of wrong roads. It brings the light people need to separate the good seed from the various kinds of bourgeois chaff fed to it, and opens the way to the only solution, which is socialist. It is also entirely valid for all organisations, even those claiming to speak for working people in the more developed countries. It spurs us on to either act like South Africans or take sides with the oppressors or, at best, fall into historical oblivion—and in both latter cases to drag working people into

a defeat.

Now, this re-orientation of the whole international workers movement that NUMSA has started—to take up once more and unequivocally the class struggle and the goal of socialism—is absolutely essential to combat the opportunist perversion of the movement. But other dangers immediately arise along the way to recovery. The most dangerous is probably the adventurous impatience inspired by panicking petit-bourgeois intellectuals—followed unfortunately by young people who are, by nature, necessarily impatient—who try to push this profound correction towards an ultra-left practice that is the licensed midwife of sectarianism.

In South Africa itself, on 14 February 2014, the small, recently-created, workers party WASP (Workers and Socialist Party of South Africa) published a statement. Having greeted the NUMSA decisions, the statement hurries to advise them that the time has come for NUMSA to lead the way to a new trade union confederation. In other words, whereas elsewhere in the same document it supports NUMSA's action in fighting inside Cosatu and forming an opposition group along with nine other unions, it also repeatedly calls for an immediate break with the Cosatu confederation! But that is exactly what the right-wing ANC-SACP leaders want! They would love NUMSA to leave Cosatu and abandon the fight inside it. It would save them a lot of grief. No, the struggle is inside Cosatu and in all the affiliated unions, and fortunately NUMSA shows not the slightest intention of following this suicidal recommendation to put the knife into this struggle by giving up in mid-stream. In particular, this short-sighted haste would limit the horizon to just Cosatu, whereas what is boiling up here is the whole South African working class with all its movements and organisations.

Not only is a bitter struggle developing inside every union, but the ANC and the SACP are undergoing an unprecedented crisis in which oppositions and groupings along a new line are endangering the right-wing monolith Stalinism built up within them. Even the radical turn made by the NUMSA SNC would not

have been possible without a decisive political turn on the part of communist and ANC activists who are NUMSA members and delegates. Do the WASP comrades seriously think that NUMSA and its leaders are going to put the brakes on this huge movement of renewal and strangle it by giving up the fight and looking for a hole to hide in somewhere outside this whole class in ferment?

They want nothing to do with this kind of siren call. Only recently it was very evident how this rash impetuosity allied to sectarian adventurism blocked and isolated the broad scope of the movement that developed after the Marikana massacre. They saw with their own eyes how a lot of activists, advised and guided by the UK-based Committee for a Workers International (CWI) launched themselves against the ANC-SACP right-wingers running the big miners union (NUM) in partnership with the mining trusts and compromised in the Marikana massacre. The CWI also urged them on to set this workers party (WASP) up in a hurry. Knocked off balance by the CWI's inveterate ultra-leftism, itself resting on the young workers genuine—understandable but ill-advised—impatience, activists encouraged the break with the union and with Cosatu and the establishment of an improvised and therefore botched left union. In that way they put themselves outside the battle in the unions and were absent from the actual renewal of NUMSA and the ferment going on throughout Cosatu. Alongside that, by over-hastily declaring the workers party WASP, they bungled its own process of growth to maturity and they are now marginalised in the workers movement as a whole and even stand outside of NUMSAs work for a new party.

These are recent examples which speak volumes to all activists about the CWI-WASPs methods. The great working class mobilisation following Marikana was disrupted and blocked and ended up at the back of the queue. Thoughtless excessive haste meant that the mountain of a huge upsurge by the working class gave birth to a mere mouse.

WASP and its CWI inspirers try to distract NUMSA from the job of winning the other unions for its socialist positions

through a struggle inside Cosatu and winning the confederation back. Instead they urge it to break away, as if that struggle was already over, and to stand on the side-lines as spectators. Which is where they themselves are.

Instead, the WASP comrades could have grasped the real job facing Marxist worker-activists by thinking through for themselves, for example, the implications of the NUMSA resolutions, instead of following the CWI's ultimatic watchwords. That organisation is known in various parts of Europe as a body locked in sectarian isolation which prefers brandishing ultimatums to democratic discussion either in its own ranks or beyond. WASP comrades have nothing to gain by following these watchwords; on the contrary, by doing so they risk doing damage to the South African workers movement. It isn't NUMSA which should break with Cosatu, but WASP which ought to break with the CWI.

All in all, sectarianism constitutes a significant obstacle throughout the whole great international movement, and one which it we must oppose from the outset. The struggle against the bourgeois degradation of the movement and the job of cleansing it of every nuance of its methods and agents is a greater, more urgent and more complex task, and that is what we need to get down to now.

The most obvious and natural thing to start with is to call on all trade union and political organisations anywhere which claim any attachment to the working class to publish the NUMSA resolutions and statement in full and organise a discussion about them as urgent, necessary tasks. That is an elementary duty, for if it is true that recent weather conditions have been somewhat out of kilter, it is no less true that to see the sun of workers struggles rise, from now on we should look not East but—South!

Numsa says: We built COSATU!! No Numsa Expulsion! No Numsa Suspension!

8 April 2014, Posted in [Press Releases](#)

Today, Tuesday 8 April 2014, over 500 Numsa members, shopstewards and staff picketed outside the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) special Central Executive Committee (CEC). Their message was clear, WE BUILT COSATU: No Numsa Expulsion! No Numsa Suspension! The picket was held in response to a faction within Cosatu wanting to use the meeting to expel or suspend Numsa from the federation.

The picket was addressed by Numsa national office bearers and the national office bearers of all 8 Cosatu affiliates who are in support of Numsa.

We have never acted against the interests of the federation nor in any way are we interested in dividing the working class! We offer eight reasons as to why we should not be suspended or expelled.

- **We built Cosatu!**

Throughout its existence, Numsa has been a dedicated and disciplined affiliate of COSATU. History can reveal that few unions in Cosatu today can match Numsa's contribution in the federation's campaigns, struggles and contributions towards leadership collectives. We are always the first to go in and the last to come out in battles that Cosatu declares. We have always taken ownership and provided leadership of decisions of the federation.

- **We remain an autonomous affiliate of Cosatu!**

As a union we have played our role in building Cosatu as an independent affiliate of the federation guided by Numsa's

constitution and our own worker-controlled and democratic structures. We pride ourselves of being a union that walks where others fear to tread. While others may be surprised it is not the first time that our union has called for a break from the ANC. We resolved this in 1993. When we did not win our position in Cosatu, we subjected ourselves to the discipline of the federation. What is the difference now?

- **Democratic centralism does not mean that affiliates cannot ask difficult questions!**

The fact that Cosatu has policies does not mean that affiliates cannot question existing policies. If affiliates don't have the opportunity to question policies how else would policy change within the federation take place? As Numsa we strongly believe that it is our right to question and criticise Cosatu policies and practices where these do not advance the interests of the working class. This is what our Special National Congress has done. It is the role of the others to prove us wrong, instead of threatening to purge us.

- **Nothing in existing Cosatu policies says that the federation will all the time endorse the ANC!**

The 2015 Plan of Cosatu calls for an evaluation of every election and to base our strategy on elections on what we have achieved in the implementation of the previous Election Manifesto. According to Numsa, no such evaluation has taken place on the 2009 ANC Election Manifesto. Most of the promises made then remain unfulfilled and we have seen few advances for workers and the poor.

- **Unions are creative animals!**

Our call for a critical review in organising strategies and approaches is in line with the 1997 recommendations of the Cosatu September Commission that argued that unions need to recognise the shifts and changes in how global capitalist production is organised. Cosatu itself has spoken about mergers and cartels between metals, mining, energy and chemicals. We as Numsa cannot be accused of taking a lead

in what are federation-wide decisions.

- **No dues for flouting the constitution!**

Nine unions in Cosatu have called for a Special national Congress in line with the federation's constitution. This has been persistently denied. How can we continue to pay dues to an organisation that flouts its own constitution?

- **No levy for liquidators!**

There had been a persistent campaign by the SACP over the past 18 months to attack Numsa and undermine its leadership. There have also been both open and clandestine attempts by the SACP to split our union. How can we continue to provide political support and resources to an organisation that has made it its mission to liquidate Numsa and its leadership?

- **We believe that the unity of workers and of the working class is sacrosanct!**

For us the unity of the working class is sacrosanct. Expelling or suspending Numsa will lead to a split in Cosatu. The only beneficiaries of this split will be the bosses. To us Cosatu was not an end in itself. It was an instrument of struggle. It is for this reason that we understood Cosatu as one step towards one country one federation. Our call for a revolutionary, militant and independent union movement and against a "yellow federation" is about safeguarding the capacity of workers and the working class more broadly to act in its own interests.

We built Cosatu!

Reclaim COSATU for Workers' Unity!

Defend Numsa! Defeat Factionalism!

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Calling On All Workers Demanding a Strong and United COSATU!

7 April 2014, [Originally posted here](#)

Come and Welcome Comrade Zwelinzima Vavi back to COSATU House from 8.00am Monday 7th April at COSATU House at 110 Jorissen St, Braamfontein (near Civic Centre)

The historic High Court ruling last week confirmed that Comrade Zwelinzima Vavi had been wrongly suspended for eight wasted months by the current leadership faction of COSATU. Friends and comrades are gathering outside COSATU House to say:

- Welcome back to work Comrade Zweli! Provide the dynamic leadership we need!
- End the paralysis in COSATU! Give workers a strong and independent voice once again!
- Forward to a COSATU that challenges corruption, exploitation, inequality and unemployment!
- Call the Special National Congress! Stop the victimisation of NUMSA and other Unions!
- Out with factionalism! Build a United, Independent,

Democratic COSATU under Workers Control!

Issued by the Nine Affiliates : Secretariat Comrade Radebe
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South Africa's youth unemployment crisis

5 March 2014, Posted in [NUMSA Bulletin](#)

Lessons from Germany

South Africa's structural unemployment crisis which affects the youth in particular could do with a good dose of German training medicine says Boniswa Ntshingila.

South Africa's youth unemployment crisis

South Africa's youth unemployment rate is amongst the highest in the world. Therefore one of the greatest socio-economic problems currently facing South Africa is youth unemployment.

According to the Quarterly Labour Force Survey by Statistics South Africa, in the third quarter of 2013, 34.8% of young South Africans¹ could not find a job compared with less than 15% of adults over 34. If one breaks down the youth unemployment figures by race, the picture becomes more gloomy for African and coloured youth. In 2010, African youth unemployment hit 58%, coloured youth unemployment 45% while Indian and white youth unemployment were at 22% and 18% respectively. However, these figures do not correctly reflect the seriousness of the youth unemployment problem because it

excludes young people that have not been looking for employment².

If all young people are considered in the calculation of youth unemployment then the actual youth unemployment rate was 47.5% for the third quarter of 2013. This means that 1 in every 2 young people cannot find a job and has very little chance of ever finding a job.

Since 1994, the South African government has implemented various policies and strategies aimed at tackling this serious challenge. However these policies and strategies have failed to create enough jobs for young people and to dramatically reduce youth unemployment. Instead youth unemployment has continued to increase. Between January 2008 and September 2013 youth unemployment increased by 2%.

South Africa's unacceptable high youth unemployment figures are a ticking time bomb that pose a threat to the country's political stability. Recent events in North Africa and some Euro countries show the importance of creating job opportunities for young people and the need for inclusive growth in South Africa.

South Africa's youth unemployment challenge has increasingly become an important topic in policy discussion. The recent youth wage subsidy and employment tax incentive scheme are just some of the policy proposals from government that have created a lot of heated discussion about youth unemployment and ways in which it can be solved.

It has become very clear from the policy discussions that in order for South Africa to permanently and sustainably solve its youth unemployment crisis will require that the inherited structural problems that are hindering the creation of jobs for young people must be eliminated. South Africa can draw some key lessons from international experience in order to properly tackle the youth unemployment challenge.

Global youth unemployment

In most countries in the world, whether industrialised, developing or in transition, young people suffer from lower access to the labour market than the adult active population. The global youth unemployment rate increased by 1.1% between 2011 and 2013 and grew to 12.6% in 2013. Global unemployment is expected to continue to increase and by 2018 the global youth unemployment rate is expected to rise to 12.8 per cent. Furthermore, young people continue to be almost three times more likely than adults to be unemployed.

Youth unemployment in the United States and Europe has seen a big increase since the beginning of the recent global financial crisis in late 2008. By the end of 2012, youth unemployment in the European Union stood at 23.3 percent, while it was at 16.3 percent in the United States.

International youth unemployment rates

Although there was a significant increase in youth unemployment for the European Union, however, not all countries in the European Union experienced increases in youth unemployment. Whilst many countries such as Greece, Spain and France witnessed significant and sustained increases in their youth unemployment figures, Germany on the other hand was able to escape this trend and its youth unemployment has continued to decrease. Germany's experiences should therefore be considered because they could draw some interesting lessons for South Africa.

The Case of France and Germany

France and Germany represent two opposites in the European debate about rising youth unemployment. Unlike France which has witnessed an increasing youth unemployment rate Germany's youth unemployment has been on a continuous decline for many years in spite of the recent global financial crisis. By the end of 2012, the French youth unemployment rate was at 25.5

percent. On the other hand, youth unemployment in Germany has been falling continuously since its peak at the beginning of 2005. It now stands at 7.9%.

How Germany was able to solve its youth unemployment problem and France was not?

Germany's institutional settings and public policies have played an important role in influencing school-to-work transitions and ensuring that enough jobs for young people are created.

The labour market institutions and labour policies that explain the differing youth unemployment experience between France and Germany are namely:

- a) vocational education and training;
- b) minimum wages and employment protection; and
- c) activation measures and labour policies.

So how does the German dual apprenticeship program work?

German apprentices sign a training contract that last about three to four years with a firm. It alternates between school- and firm-based training. Over 50 percent of all companies with at least one employee have acquired an entitlement to train. Apprenticeship training is basically provided in all sectors of the economy. Firms bear the costs of work-place training facilities and pay apprentices a standardized salary (about €600 to €700 Euro per month in 2011).

Companies benefit from this type of training scheme because it allows them to work with new employees and to retain those that perform well. Firms can also show their social commitment. The returns to completing dual apprenticeship training are significant in Germany because 66% of those who successfully complete training subsequently enter employment. Additionally participants of the dual apprenticeship program

also have faster entry into the labour market when compared to participants in school-based vocational training (Parey, 2011).

Furthermore, the dual apprenticeship system significantly improves wages and employment stability when compared to individuals with –schooling only|| (Adda et al., 2011). After about 3 to 4 years, about 80 percent are employed (of whom 60 to 70 percent are in –stable|| employment relationships). Their wage profile is similar to university students in early years, but flatter in later years.

The dual apprenticeship systems rely on the broad support of employers, trade unions and the government regarding regulation and financing. In particular, their success critically depends on the trade unions' willingness to accept apprenticeship contracts which are paid below the level of standard contracts–in exchange for a commitment from employers to offer practical training.

The support of the government involves not only developing special vocational schools and training qualified teachers, but also offering preparatory training for young people who are not yet ready to start apprenticeship after leaving school.

This –pre-apprenticeship|| training is essential for low-qualified young people–in particular, when the access to the dual system is as competitive as in Germany (Caliendo et al., 2011). As a consequence of such a broad support, vocational training via apprenticeships is widely recognized by young people, their parents and society as a solid pathway to employment in Germany, Austria and Switzerland.

1. In South Africa youth are defined as individuals aged between 15 and 34.

2. This paper reports the narrow definition of unemployment (used as the official definition in South Africa by

government). Individuals are narrowly unemployed if they “(a) did not work during the seven days prior to the interview, (b) want to work and are available to start work within a week of the interview, and (c) have taken active steps to look for work or to start some form of self-employment in the four weeks prior to the interview”

Structural unemployment

Many countries in Europe and the US are facing cyclical unemployment because of the global financial crisis from 2008 that affected economic growth in those countries. If the economies begin to pick up again, their unemployment figures will drop.

However, South Africa’s unemployment crisis is often called “structural unemployment”. This is because even if our economy is growing, there is still a problem of unemployment because of:

- the apartheid legacy of poor education – “out of a group of 100 Grade 1 pupils, only 40 will reach Grade 12. Of those, 28 will pass matric and four will enter university. Of the four, only one will graduate.” (Eugene Daniels, a former district director in the Western Cape) The less education you have, the less likely you are to find a job.
- the mismatch of skills. Not enough people are acquiring education in the careers that are in demand. Therefore some students get a tertiary qualification but cannot find jobs because there is no demand for their kind of skills.

A comparison of France and Germany’s policies for tackling youth unemployment

GERMANY FRANCE

Vocational education and training

Germany has established a dual apprenticeship system which

allows combining work experience, on-the-job training and classroom teaching.

France does not have a dual apprenticeship system but only has traditional vocational education.

The youth that participate in the vocational education and training are low-skilled young people.

The youth that participate in the vocational education are relatively qualified young people, i.e., youths who already have an equivalent or better diploma than the secondary school leaving exam.

This form of vocational training makes up the main path of transition from school to work in Germany. About 66% of the youths completing general schooling each year enter the dual apprenticeship system in Germany; and about 20% participate in full-time vocational schooling.

In France most young people are only exposed to the traditional vocational training program and apprenticeship system.

Businesses are open to hire apprentices.

Businesses are reluctant to hire apprentices.

The course contents and expectations are appropriate for vocational training which is developed through close and continuous engagement with the social partners, aimed at establishing and regularly updating training courses for each type of qualification.

The course contents and expectations for the final exam are too stringent and unsuitable for vocational training. The course content is similar to that of a professional qualification.

The apprenticeship pathway is viewed as a solid alternative in

Germany. Every detail is discussed and negotiated, including the duration of apprenticeships, expectations for the final exam, course content and pay levels.

In France there is a negative attitude and perception regarding the apprenticeship programme. Apprenticeships in France suffer from the perception that this training path is only an inferior alternative to full-time vocational schooling.

Activation measures and labour policies

Germany has compulsory and specific systems requiring the public employment service to encourage low-qualified young job seekers to resume their studies, apprenticeships or training courses (i.e. activation measures). The public employment service assists job seekers in searching for employment, preparing for interviews etc.

In France however such a system does not currently exist. This essentially means that young people in France are not afforded the same support in finding employment and becoming employable as in Germany.

Almost everywhere in Europe including Germany young people have access to a minimum income scheme before turning 25 years.

This income ensures that whilst young people are seeking employment with the assistance of the public employment service, they are not plunged into poverty.

France is furthermore an exception amongst European countries because it restricts its minimum income scheme to people who are 25 years and older. The consequence is that currently half of the poorest 20 percent of the French population are between 15 and 29 years old (Cahuc et al., 2013)

Half a million people to take to the streets on Wednesday 19 March in demand for youth jobs

17 March 2014, Posted in [Press Releases](#)

Yesterday Sunday 16 March many of you woke up to posters on lampposts announcing that “Numsa declares war”. Unfortunately, little did the posters tell you what the war was all about. Also not properly explained was the fact that the battle that made yesterday’s newspaper headlines involved not only the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) but hundreds of community groups, faith-based organisations, other unions, numerous women’s groups, taxi associations and a number of youth formations. This coming **Wednesday (19 March 2014)** close to 500 000 people will take to the streets to demand jobs for young people. After Greece and Spain, South Africa has the third highest unemployment rate in the world for people between the ages of 15 to 24. Half of the people between the age of 15 and 24 are unemployed in this country. About 71% of all unemployed people in South Africa are between the ages 15-29. Most of them are women; the majority of which have never had a job in their lives. As workers and parents, we are no longer prepared to fold our arms while our children remain jobless. We are also tired of political parties and business organisations that often refer to youth unemployment as a ticking time-bomb but do little to address the problem. As workers we also cannot continue to use our meagre wages to send our children to schools, colleges and universities to only find them wallowing in hopelessness as they cannot find employment after completion of their studies. Youth unemployment is a real problem in South Africa. **It is time for those with power to act!** On **Wednesday 19 March 2014**, we as a

coalition of trade unions, community groups, faith-based organisations, student groups, organisations of unemployed people, taxi associations, women and youth formations; we will march in seven towns (Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, Port Elizabeth, Bloemfontein, Emalahleni and George) to highlight the issue of youth unemployment and demand real solutions to the problem.

Youth unemployment demands real and not false solutions:

When presenting his Budget Speech on 26 February this year, the Minister of Finance Pravin Gordhan announced to a great applause in the Houses of Parliament and from the press gallery that since the introduction In January 2014 of the youth employment tax incentive, there have been

56 000 beneficiaries of the scheme. Little did the Minister tell us that the Employment Tax Incentive Act that President Jacob Zuma signed in December 2013;

- made it possible for employers to backdate the claims for the subsidy to October 2013. So many of the 56 000 people that the Minister referred may have been employed last year.
- for the 56 000 beneficiaries there will be no mandatory training.
- that for those in his 56 000 beneficiaries where there is no bargaining council agreement or sectoral determination or collective agreement; there will be no enjoyment of benefits such as provident fund and other benefits.
- No figure is given for actual jobs created since the Act was signed.

Why are we opposed to the Employment Tax Incentive Act?

The *first* thing that South Africans must note with the Employment Tax Incentive Act is that what is being proposed is something broader than a youth wage subsidy. The Act proposes two *additional* categories of workers to be subsidised:

- workers who work in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) as envisaged in the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) Act that was recently passed in Parliament.
- workers in industries that the Minister may designate by notice in the *Government Gazette*.

In both these additional categories of workers, there is no age restriction. Subsidised workers in designated industries and in SEZs could be older than 29 years. The Minister has the power to move beyond the 18-29 years bracket through designation.

This means that employers in SEZs get an extra “bonus” benefit in the zone together with the other benefits in the act.

The *second* thing that we need to note is the hypocrisy of the whole thing. While we hear everyday about how social grants create “a culture of dependency” among the poor and that there has been the rejection of the demand for a Basic Income Grant, employers seemed happy to accept handouts from taxpayers in the form of tax concessions or subsidies for them to open factories and create jobs. It looks as if the philosophy that underpins the legislation is that; *handouts to the poor are bad but good for the capitalist class!*

As this coalition we remain opposed to the Employment Tax Incentive Act for the following **NINE** reasons:

Reason 1: The Act asks the working class to subsidise employers.

As the Act says no incentive will be paid in respect of employees who earn more R6 000 a month. The bulk of qualifying employees in terms of the Act pay no income tax as the current tax threshold (2013) is R67 111. This means that an employer can withhold the subsidy he is entitled to from the general tax deductions. Tax which workers pay for schools, hospitals etc can be used by the employer as his subsidy!

This in effect means it is coming from workers and to an extent the middle class. It is they who will work to subsidise the capitalist class.

Reason 2: The philosophy of the Act is that 'handouts' to the poor are bad but good for capitalists!

The philosophy of the Employment Tax Incentive Act is that grants to the poor are bad but good for capitalists. The government is prepared to forego revenue to entice the capitalist class to create jobs. This is the same capitalist class that speaks about how social grants create dependency and that grants are unsustainable. The Act is also being implemented by a government that has thus far refused to implement the Basic Income Grant and which makes no effort to pay current social benefits at anything near a decent level.

Reason 3: The Act is based on the assumption that it is 'high' wages that are causing unemployment and not the refusal of the capitalists to invest that leads to joblessness.

The idea behind the Employment Tax Incentive Act is that it is 'high' wages that are the cause of unemployment; which is why we must subsidise wages. Unfortunately for capitalism even its supporters in the World Bank no longer believe this. In its 2013 *Development Report*, the Bank argues that youth wage subsidies have not worked.

The architects of the Employment Tax Incentive Act are however silent about the "investment strike" by the private sector that has been going on in South Africa for many years. No-one seems to be able to put a figure on this but there is little disagreement that it exists. It is the problem of the refusal to invest on the part of the capitalist class that government refuses to tackle head on. It is this avoidance of the real problem that leads them to false solutions such as the tax incentive scheme.

Reason 4: Even sectors with agreements are not immune from

abuse.

The drafters of the Act do not seem to know the distinction between ACTUAL and MINIMUM wages. In the implementation of the Employment Tax Incentive Act, eligible employers can bring in qualifying employees and pay them minima in the agreements. The implications for a two-tiered labour market therefore remain with one group of workers on actuals and subsidised workers on minimums.

In collective bargaining this will have an inevitable downward push on wages in general. This is not “greedy” workers trying to protect their own conditions. Each worker in South Africa supports many more who are at home and unable to find decent work. In reality the vast majority of workers in this country, have no bargaining protection and don't even negotiate their wages!

Reason 5: The dangers of displacement of older and permanent employees are not totally eliminated

Although the Act states that an employer will be deemed to have displaced a worker if the “order of court or otherwise, reveals that the dismissal of that employee constitutes an automatically unfair dismissal”, for us this is not good enough. For a start the employee must prove that he or she was displaced because of the subsidy.

The worker must then wait for the Labour Court to decide that the dismissal was caused by displacement. Employers are never likely to announce that a worker is being dismissed to replace him or her with a subsidized employee. Workplace reorganization will cover a multitude of sins! An employee could be dismissed, or leave in one unit and be replaced with a worker from another unit. The job of the replacement worker could then become subsidized. No new job has been created, the number of jobs remains the same.

But more serious in relation to any potential unfair dismissal

case is that in the case of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and industries that the Minister may designate, there is no age limit. So we cannot use age as the basis of an “automatically unfair dismissal” case.

Reason 6: Fraudsters are not disqualified!

In the original bill an employer who committed fraud would be disqualified from receiving the subsidy. In the Act that was passed although, there is a new penalty of R30 000, the automatic disqualification for receiving the subsidy in respect of other employees has been removed. According to the Act, a fraudster employer may not be disqualified if the Minister feels that the effects of the disqualification may directly or indirectly have an impact on employees of the employer.

Reason 7: There are still no mandatory training provisions in the Act.

Although there is some talk about regulations for training, these are very weak. The key word to watch in the Act is “MAY”; which is a very weak commitment. The Minister may or may not prescribe regulations requiring training or skills development. Don’t believe what is in the ANC Election Manifesto. The law says the Minister “may” pass regulations! They are not there.

Reason 8: The Minister of Finance still has wide ranging powers.

Except the consultation with the Minister of Labour on the training regulations that may be prescribed, the Minister of Finance still retains too much power. The Minister does not have to consult with other Ministers or stakeholders when designating industries for qualifying employees and eligible employers. Nor is there any provision for criteria that would guide the Minister’s decision.

Reason 9: The Act bypassed NEDLAC.

As this coalition we still maintain our view that the Act should have been tabled in NEDLAC as it is a socio-economic policy. This is what the NEDLAC Act requires. This was also the commitment in the Youth Employment Accord.

Don't believe what truth twisters say!

Last Monday 10 March, members of the ANC's Economic Transformation Committee (ETC) attacked our opposition to the Employment Tax Incentive Act and accused Numsa of speaking with "forked tongues". Leading the pack was the architect of the employment tax incentive scheme Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan and unfortunately Numsa's former general-secretary Enoch Godongwana. Both claim that Numsa is dishonest in opposing the tax incentive scheme because "tens of billions of rands worth of government incentives have over the past years gone into the auto industry and that such incentives have kept the auto industry alive".

Displaying the buffoonery that characterises what he says or does these days, the Secretary-General of the ANC Gwede Mantashe was blunter than Gordhan and Godongwana. According to Mantashe, "Numsa accepts incentives for the capitalist class in the automotive industry but refuse government subsidisation of unemployed people".

In the workshops that we have run in all our 52 locals since January 2014, we have dismissed as disingenuous the criticism that as union we accept incentives for the capitalist class, but refuse subsidisation of unemployed people. As indicated above it is not all incentives that NUMSA is opposed to.

We are opposed to schemes where the working class is forced to subsidise capitalists. The APDP works differently from the employment tax incentive scheme. Yes, through the duty-free import credits the state foregoes some revenue for the fiscus but this is different from asking the working class to

subsidise capitalists. The incentive scheme in the Act uses PAYE and avoids touching profits.

Gordhan, Godongwana and Mantashe conveniently forget that the APDP, through Numsa 's intervention has other components such Vehicle Assembly Allowance (VAA) and Production Incentive (PI) that promote local production and local assembly. Our support for APDP and opposition to the Employment Tax Incentive Act is not double speak or opportunism. Our support for the MIDP and now APDP is premised on our overall objectives of job creation, localisation and creation of decent jobs.

What are we then demanding?

In place of the false solutions that government is putting forward, WE DEMAND:

- A repeal and scrapping of the Employment Tax Incentive Act.
- Macro-economic policies that increase the demand for labour such as a tax system that penalizes companies who pay out dividends instead of reinvesting in job-creating activities.
- Credit and the lowering of the cost of capital for job-creating companies and sectors.
- A move beyond public works programmes to public-sector employment programmes.
- Training of apprentices, learners, experiential learners and interns to achieve qualifications.
- A job-seekers grant or a basic income grant instead of a subsidy for employers.

Our strike is protected:

The strike on 19 March is protected in terms of the Labour Relations Act (LRA) as the unions have served notices to the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC). Every worker can join the strike without fear of dismissal or victimisation.

STRIKE FOR YOUTH JOBS

AGAINST FALSE SOLUTIONS!!!

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