Numsa Views on the state of Class Struggles in South Africa and the Crisis in Cosatu

> *"Numsa is calling ALL South African workers, Black and White and African, to join us in our United Front to demand the immediate and radical implementation of the Freedom Charter as the only basis for a truly democratic South Africa and in our fight against all neoliberal manifestations."*

Numsa Headquarters, Johannesburg

"*People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises*."

Lenin in *"Three Sources and Three Component parts of Marxism"*, March 1913

"Nothing demonstrates better the increasing rigor of the colonial system: you begin by occupying the country, and 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 Sartre, 1964)

A. The world we live in today and our 20 years of "Democracy"

It is impossible to deny that the world has seen the most severe crisis of the global capitalist system. And, there is

no end in sight, to this crisis.

[threecolumns]More than anything else, what makes the current systemic and structural global crisis of capitalism more dangerous and frightening than in the past is the total intellectual, ideological, political and moral bankruptcy of the world capitalist leaders and their capitalist theorists: they have no answer to what increasingly appears to be the world's relentless progression towards mass poverty, worldwide unemployment, growing extreme global inequalities within and between nations of the world, vicious and extremely violent civil and international wars, global warming, environmental destruction – all pointing to the eventual destruction of our Earth and all life on it.

The neoliberal "Washington Consensus" has been completely discredited and confirmed dead especially by the 2007/8 global financial capitalist crises.

There is no alternative to discarding the theories and practices of capitalism, if we must save the Earth and its living systems. No amount of cosmetic reforms either in the centre of the global capitalist system nor anywhere in its periphery can hide the most obvious fact today: at a time when humanity has the most profound knowledge and technology, the world capitalist system of private greed risks all our lives and the very Earth we live on.

Mankind today is faced with one choice: abandon the capitalist system or perish by it.

We at Numsa have no illusion that only a total destruction of capitalism and all it represents can save the Earth and give birth to a new civilisation, a new reordering of common and democratic ownership, production and consumption patterns along a higher human life and Earth respecting human civilisation. Such a civilisation is Socialism.

A.1. The South African "Democratic Transition" and squandered

opportunity

We at Numsa have taken the trouble of reading the South African economic and political history, ultimately focusing on the imported capitalist revolution in the 20th Century and our "negotiated settlement", and their impact on the South Africa we live in today.

We have come to the following conclusions, very well captured in our policy papers and resolutions of our December 2013 National Special Congress, also found in the SACP "Path to Power" document of 1989:

a. The South African capitalist state did not emerge as a result of an internal popular anti-feudal revolution. It was imposed from above and from without.

b. From its birth through to the present, South African capitalism has depended heavily on the imperialist centers.

c. Capital from Europe financed the opening of the mines. It was the colonial state that provided the resources to build the basic infrastructure – railways, roads, harbours, posts and telegraphs.

d. It was an imperial army of occupation that created the conditions for political unification. And it was within a colonial setting that the emerging South African capitalist class entrenched and extended the racially exclusive system to increase its opportunities for profit.

e. The racial division of labour, the battery of racist laws and political exclusiveness guaranteed this. From these origins a pattern of domination, which arose in the period of external colonialism, was carried over into the newly formed Union of South Africa. From its origins to the present, this form of domination has been maintained under changing conditions and by varying mechanisms.

f. ***In all essential respects, however, the colonial status of the black majority has remained in place. Therefore we characterise our society as*** “colonialism of a special type”.

The 1994 “democratic transition” was supposed to lay a foundation for destroying colonialism of a special type in South Africa, a form of colonialism characterised by the existence side by side, of the colonial subjects and the local agents of colonialism and imperialism in the same geo-economic and political space.

Today, 20 years after the “democratic transition” nothing best confirms the fact that***in all essential respects, however, the colonial status of the black majority has remained in place*** than of the 26 million South Africans who live in abject poverty, 25 million are Africans.

Further, all economic policies since 1994 have been incapable of defeating***Colonialism of a Special Type*** and the effects of Apartheid capitalism, which condemned the South African black working class to a life of misery and hardship.

The South African government own 2011 Census so well captures this ugly fact, the fact of the continuing colonial lives of millions of Black and African South Africans, post 1994.

Any shallow class analysis of the “negotiated settlement” in South Africa easily reveals the most obvious fact: the “negotiated settlement” was secured on the basis of abandoning the Freedom Charter and the land and property claims of the “natives”.

These devices of protecting white property rights in the “1996 negotiated constitution” effectively guaranteed white property rights and therefore, white economic dominance, and the logical and inevitable continuation of imperialist economic and political domination of South Africa.

A.2. The Freedom Charter and the Negotiated Settlement

At Numsa we are convinced that the abandonment of the property clauses of the Freedom Charter by the ANC and the SACP formed the basis for the "democratic transition".

We now know that while Cosatu was busy putting together the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), ANC and SACP negotiators, together with representatives of South African white monopoly capitalism and their imperialist counterparts were busy stitching together a neoliberal post-Apartheid South Africa.

We are not surprised, therefore, that the RDP was quickly discarded in favour of GEAR, which has now formally become the National Development Plan (NDP).

It was inevitable that in 2012, in the ANC Mangaung Conference, GEAR mutated into the neoliberal National Development Plan, and, in the ANC, the matter of expropriating land and the commanding heights of the economy without compensation was formally buried. Effectively too, was buried any prospects of a worker friendly "National Democratic Revolution" and all hope of a seamless transition to a Socialist Republic of South Africa.

Today in South Africa, black and African poor people must wait for the profits to grow of white people and their sprinkling of a tiny filthy rich black and African middle class for any changes in their mass poverty and widespread unemployment.

It is this cruel reality, post 1994, and 20 years into our "democracy", which caused Numsa to hold its historic 2013 Special National Congress, and to take the resolutions it did, prominent among which is the recognition that the ANC led Alliance no longer serves any revolutionary purpose in South Africa today.

A.3. The State of the South African black and African working class

At Numsa we are, following the class analysis above, not surprised that in all black and African communities there is a state of restlessness, there are widespread protests now increasingly turning violent, against the bitter and cruel conditions of life in these communities.

We are not surprised that 20 years after the negotiated settlement, very little real wealth has been redistributed and as a result, education, housing, water services, sanitation, electricity, distance from quality social and economic productivities activities and so on continue to be disastrous problems for black and African people of this country.

We are not surprised that South Africa, post 1994, has become the most unequal and socially violent place on Earth today.

We are not surprised that the white population continues to dominate in the economy, society and culture, today.

It is against this background that we examine the President of South Africa's State of the Nation Address of 2014, and the ANC government 2014 Budget Speech. Further, we examine the election promises using this background.

We in Numsa understand the crisis in Cosatu as simply a reflection of the on-going class struggles in the wider South African society in general and inside the ANC led alliance in particular.

B. State of the Nation Address (SoNA)

There is nothing in the State of the Nation Address that even remotely indicates that the ANC and its government are embarked upon a "radical transition" for full social justice in South Africa.

Nor does anything in the SoNA remotely signal the fact that the ANC is worried that virtually ALL Black and African communities, 20 years into democracy, are at war inside

themselves!

While the SoNA correctly recognizes the ongoing extreme burden of unemployment, mass poverty and extreme inequalities, the SoNA simply treats all these as products of the failure of the South African economy to grow fast enough post 1994, and on the global crisis of capitalism.

The SoNA lamentably fails to locate the real roots and causes of the South African crisis of unemployment, poverty and extreme inequalities – the ongoing economic and social domination of South Africa by white capital and its black and imperialist surrogates.

The SoNA celebrates liberal democracy in South Africa without any shame at the exclusion of more than 25 million South Africans from this system that is black and African.

We see that the 2014 Budget Speech takes its cue from the SoNA, and also wastes time singing praises of the neoliberalism of the past 20 years.

C. ANC's Elections Manifestos: a look at the ANC's 2014 Vision

In 2004, the ANC launched its "Vision 2014". The 2004 Manifesto was framed within this vision. We have now reached 2014, and the ANC has produced another Manifesto and yet another vision, which is now called "Vision 2030". It is therefore propitious that we evaluate the ANC's performance in relation to its "Vision 2014" and in relation to its subsequent Manifestos.

In its 2004 Message from the President, the ANC called for ***"A People's Contract to Create Work and Fight Poverty"***.

The combination of some of the most important targets and objectives making up Vision 2014, together with our findings, are as follows:

- Reduce unemployment by half through new jobs, skills development, assistance to small businesses, opportunities for self-employment and sustainable community livelihoods.

Today, unemployment has in fact increase beyond the 2004 levels today, self-employment has dwindled, and, more dangerously, Black and African communities are reeling from violent crimes and daily violent protests!

- Reduce poverty by half through economic development, comprehensive social security, land reform and improved household and community assets.

Precisely because unemployment has in fact increased beyond the 2004 levels, we see today that more than 26 million South Africans are classified as extremely poor!

- Provide the skills required by the economy, build capacity and provide resources across society to encourage self-employment with an education system that is geared for productive work, good citizenship and a caring society.

Marikana sums it all: the bulk of the population remains poorly educated, unskilled, living in abject poverty and in a very uncaring society. Today we are being conditioned to accept that every community protest will lead to deaths of some protestors!

- Ensure that all South Africans, including especially the poor and those at risk – children, youth, women, the aged, and people with disabilities – are fully able to exercise their constitutional rights and enjoy the full dignity of freedom.

Violent crime and crimes against women and children are still intolerably high. An African child in South Africa today is many times more likely to be borne in a poor household than

before 2004.

- Compassionate government service to the people; national, provincial and local public representatives who are accessible; and citizens who know their rights and insist on fair treatment and efficient service.

Again, the Marikana massacre speaks volumes about where we are. It is an open secret that the system of local government has collapsed, with very few of them having clean audits. So-called service delivery protests are the order of the day everywhere in the country. South Africa in fact leads in the number of violent community protests in the world today.

- Massively reduce cases of TB, diabetes, malnutrition and maternal deaths, and turn the tide against HIV and AIDS, and, working with the rest of Southern Africa, strive to eliminate malaria, and improve services to achieve a better national health profile and reduction of preventable causes of death, including violent crime and road accidents.

While there have been some improvements in these variables, the quality, levels and efficiencies in the health system, especially the public health system, are pathetic. TB cases have actually increased.

- Significantly reduce the number of serious and priority crimes as well as cases awaiting trial, with a society that actively challenges crime and corruption, and with programmes that also address the social roots of criminality.

Unemployment is globally recognized as a "significant contributor" to all crimes, including violent ones.

The fact that unemployment has in fact increased since 2004 is experienced by black and African communities through the high incidence of violent crimes, today with an increasing

incidence of extreme forms of violence even among teenagers.

The failure to implement the property clauses of the Freedom Charter is the most profound root cause of violent crime in South Africa, in our opinion.

- Position South Africa strategically as an effective force in global relations, with vibrant and balanced trade and other relations with countries of the South and the North, and in an Africa that is growing, prospering and benefiting all Africans, especially the poor.

The xenophobia that has engulfed post 1994 South Africa is the best test of just how badly positioned South Africa is globally, especially in the South. None of the rhetoric on balanced trade and other relations have materialized precisely because the ANC government has no real economic levers, because it has not implemented the property clauses of the Freedom Charter.

D. The ANC 2014 Budget speech

Numsa has carried out the only comprehensive and detailed class analysis of the National Development Plan (NDP). Our conclusions are that the NDP is simply GEAR dressed up as a populist document.

Not only does the NDP fail to tackle the economic and social structural and systemic foundations of South African colonial economy and society, it quite pathetically promises wholly unrealistic and totally unachievable goals, just like its father – GEAR.

Numsa has consistently argued that South African National Treasury Department has been post 1994, the home and custodian of neoliberalism in the South African government.

Pravin Gordan's 2014 Budget Speech announces that it locates

the 2014 medium term budget in the NDP.

Like the SoNA, the 2014 Budget is littered with some self-praise, and the false promise of jobs, more housing, more water, more social security, better health and so on, all of them to be done within the NDP framework.

It is impossible to ignore Lenin's words in 1913:

"People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises."

The sweet coated promises contained in this Budget, including the pathetic increases on the social grants do not succeed to hide the fact that this is a budget designed to please South African white capital and its local agents and imperialism and their rating agents.

There is nothing in this budget which signals a "radical transition". This is why the bosses and their political formations have received it very well.

A most blatant betrayal of the Black and African working class is the bribery to white and black capital the budget gives in the form of the Youth Employment Incentive Tax. This has been done without exhausting the NEDLAC process and actually by contemptuously bypassing NEDLAC.

Rather than abolition the colonial and apartheid wage as demanded in the Freedom Charter, the budget instead bribes capital with free money, to divide the working class!

This budget, more than anything else, confirm the rightwing shift in the ANC/SACP government.

E. The crisis in Cosatu

We understand Cosatu's launching principles and values as being the following:

a. Cosatu is a worker controlled and democratic trade union federation.

b. Cosatu is a Revolutionary Socialist Federation.

c. Cosatu is an anti-imperialist federation; it fights against foreign capitalist domination.

d. Cosatu rejects all forms of cultural, male chauvinist and racist prejudices.

e. Cosatu is a militant federation.

f. It is a transformative federation.

g. Cosatu is a champion of working class democracy.

h. Cosatu believes in working class power, and advocates worker control not only of the progressive trade union movement, but of society as well.

i. Cosatu believes in the revolutionary power and unity of the working class, which is why it champions the formation of one union in one industry and one federation in one country.

In our opinion, it is these values and their articulation, which is at issue in Cosatu today.

On one hand, there are those among Cosatu leaders who see a Cosatu guided by the values above as a threat to their potential careers in the ANC or its government. These leaders have long abandoned Socialism and are only paying lip service to the struggle for Socialism.

On the other hand, there are those leaders such as in Numsa and the affiliates Numsa is working with, who are determined to defend and advance the ideals for which Cosatu was founded,

including defending a Socialist Cosatu.

Given the abandonment of a radical NDR by the ANC and the cooptation of the SACP into the ANC and its government, it is inevitable that Cosatu must be plunged into a crisis by the fight to the death between these two class positions in Cosatu – one for a Cosatu that simply transmits the wishes of the right wing ANC nationalists among the working class and the other which wants to fight for a Cosatu with its original values.

Numsa has thus become the "enemy within" among the Cosatu leadership clique that is imbedded in the ANC and SACP. It so happens that this clique is numerically strong in the CEC of Cosatu.

This pro rightwing ANC and SACP clique in Cosatu wants to engineer the expulsion of Numsa from Cosatu. It has already engineered first the paralysis, and later the suspension of the General Secretary of Cosatu – Zwelinzima Vavi.

This right wing Clique ignores the Cosatu Constitution at will. It has refused to abide by the Cosatu Constitution that demands that when a third of Cosatu affiliates demand the convening of Cosatu Special Congress, the President of Cosatu must convene such a Congress or be replaced by a convener.

This rightwing clique, knowing very well that its positions have no mandates from its own members, is very scared of a Special National Congress because it knows the Special National Congress, besides exposing this right wing, may also trigger leadership removals in their unions.

Numsa's positions are very clear and quite simple:

1. Zwelinzima Vavi's unconstitutional public humiliation, harassment and suspension must be lifted immediately.

2. All mischievous and unconstitutional efforts to

frustrate and expel Numsa from Cosatu must stop forthwith.

3. A Cosatu Special Congress as requested by the appropriate number of unions must be convened immediately, to resolve all the causes of the crisis in Cosatu.

4. Numsa will do everything possible to achieve these objectives, including using the courts to stop the violations of Cosatu Constitution.

5. Numsa is calling upon all members of Cosatu affiliates to defend their federation from being swallowed into the ANC/SACP right wing camp.

In the meantime, Numsa continues to run with its section 77 campaigns.

F. Progress on the United Front and the Movement for Socialism

In order to understand Numsa, especially in order to understand our resolutions on the United Front and Movement for Socialism, one has to understand what Numsa is first.

Numsa is a revolutionary formation, a red trade union, playing a leading role in the struggle to defeat capitalism and the exploitation that is associated with it. In that role we are unashamedly Marxist-Leninist, rooting ourselves in the traditions of Marx and Lenin. So we defy the boundaries between nations that are set up to divide workers as we proclaim ourselves as proletarian internationalists. That tradition also gives us democratic centralism, that combination of robust, vigorous and democratic debate with the discipline of marching together when we have made a decision. That combination makes us what we are proud to be – a red union.

The leadership of the national liberation movement as a whole has failed to lead a consistent radical democratic process to

resolve the national, gender, and class questions post 1994. ***This leadership is predominantly drawn from the Black and African capitalist class; it kowtows to the dictates of white monopoly capitalist and imperialist interests. It is nothing more than parasitic and crony capitalists.***

It is half-hearted and extremely inconsistent in the pursuit of a radical democratic programme and has completely abandoned the Freedom Charter.

It is these circumstances, combined with the worsening situation of the South African working class as a whole post 1994, which has lead Numsa to rethink and revisit its relationship with the ANC and its Alliance.

Work is well underway to mobilise the working class in all their formations, into a United Front for the radical implementation of the Freedom Charter and against neoliberalism.

During our January Numsa Marxist-Leninist Political School we met with the leaders of some of the social movements and community structures, to begin the process of mapping out how we will work together.

In order to reach out far and wide, Numsa shall convene Provincial and National consultative meetings to share the content of our resolutions on the United Front and Movement for Socialism.

We are happy to note that many social movement organisations and community organisations are joining us in our Section 77 campaigns starting with a national strike on 19th March 2014.

During the course of this year, work will be done to assess the state of the world socialist movement and its formations, to inform our work towards the Movement for Socialism. The Numsa Marxist Leninist School in the first week of April 2014 shall receive representatives of Workers and Communist Parties

from countries such as Brazil, Greece and Venezuela to share experiences and to lay the basis for our international research.

G. Engineering and Eskom negotiations in 2014 – The Numsa National Bargaining Conference (NBC)

As always, Numsa has begun our Ear to the Ground Campaign in workplace general meetings to listen to the aspirations of Numsa members with respect to collective bargaining demands in the Engineering industry and Eskom.

In collecting these demands our key and strategic objective is to improve the benefits and conditions of employment. The demands from the 9 Numsa Regions shall be consolidated and tabled for discussion in our Numsa National Bargaining Conference scheduled for 10-12 March 2014 in Saint Georges Hotel, Centurion.

Without pre-empting anything, we must be upfront that we are preparing for the mother of all battles as we shall champion the struggle for a living wage for workers in the Engineering Industry and Eskom in particular.

The union will use this round of negotiations not only for wages but also take up a very important campaign of defending existing jobs and to fight for more jobs. In extending our work beyond the factories, Numsa shall on the 19th of March 2014 embark on a national strike to demand the scrapping of the employment tax incentive act or the so called youth wage subsidy. We shall do so in defense of existing jobs as we have reason to believe that the current spate of retrenchments notices across various sectors are directly linked to this stupid incentive scheme.

We refuse that the working class of SA must be forced to pay for the global crisis of capitalism.

That is why we calling on the mining bosses and government to

quickly resolved the current strike in the platinum belt. It has become abundantly clear there is a joint pack between government and mining capital to destroy union activity outside of the NUM.

With respect to Eskom, Numsa shall not rest until workers at Eskom receive a fair increase. We view the arbitration award that imposed 5, 6 % as an insult that constitute a wage freeze.

We do need equity of pay. Currently white workers sit at the top of their pay grades while many black workers still languish at the bottom of their grades.

We can no longer tolerate Eskom and Government hiding behind the skirt of Nersa to justify paying lip service to a negotiation process where the power (the only power) of workers to withhold their labour is removed.

We calling on all workers at Eskom to unite behind their legitimate right to demand a living wage if in these round of negotiations Eskom management doesn't move swiftly to make a real offer that will settle workers' demands and hide behind essential service but pay workers peanuts, they would have to take fully responsibility for a load shedding that would come as a result of workers insisting that their demands must be met.

Eskom now has a shareholder compact with government, but it does not call for fair wages rather it focuses on profit targets. Profit targeting mean Eskom is under pressure to moderate wages.

Our members are victims of high standards of living as a result of administered prices that continue to rise and affecting negatively their basket of food and all aspects of their lives.

They continue to receive low wages as there is no National

Minimum Wage that can guarantee them a living wage.

Workers are taking loans from loan sharks in-order to make a living.

There is poor or virtually no assistance from the employers.

Unemployment which makes those who are working to support those not working imposes a heavy burden on our members as a result of the triple crises poverty, unemployment and inequalities.

It is our members who are victims Privatization and Commodification of basic needs/services.

H. What is to be done?

As Lenin so well said, in 2013:

"People always have been the foolish victims of deception and self-deception in politics, and they always will be until they have learnt to seek out the interests of some class or other behind all moral, religious, political and social phrases, declarations and promises."

Twenty years into our "democracy", we the Black and African South African working class are sick and tired of listening to the same stories about us having to wait for the rich to grow their profits for us to see some minor improvements in our lives.

The working class can only be defeated because it is not united. United, no force on Earth can defeat us.

As immediate tasks, we state the following:

- Numsa is calling ALL South African workers, Black and White and African, to join us in our United Front to demand the immediate and radical implementation of the Freedom Charter as the only basis for a truly democratic

South Africa and in our fight against all neoliberal manifestations.

- We are calling on all members of affiliates of Cosatu to demand that their national leaders explain where they stand today, on the ongoing crisis in Cosatu.
- We call on all members of affiliates of Cosatu to stand up and defend their federation from the vultures who want to turn it into a toy telephone of the ANC and the SACP.
- We call on all mineworkers to stand together, united against the mine bosses and the government who are both fighting mining workers in their just struggle for a living wage.
- As Numsa, we fully support the just demands for a living wage for the mineworkers. We remain convinced, however, that with the increasing marriage between the ANC and its government and the mine bosses and shareholders, no just wage will be secured by mine workers.

We therefore call upon all workers to intensify the struggle to nationalize South African wealth, including the mines and land.

Our consistent Marxist-Leninist inspired class analysis of the world and South Africa today informs us that we have no option but to fight to the bitter end, for a Socialist world and Socialist South Africa.

Issued by: Numsa National Office Bearers

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