

# *The New Unity Movement*



*3<sup>rd</sup> BQM (28)<sup>th</sup>*

*Presidential Address*

*CAPE TOWN*

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*at 19:00*

# PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS 2015

## WELCOME

Comrades, friends, and honoured guests, I bid you all a warm welcome to this the open session of our third BGM which incidentally is also the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NUM!

## INTRODUCTION

Our meeting here this weekend takes place against the background of a number of momentous events and developments which have occurred during the past year or two.

Whilst I will be concentrating on events and developments pertaining to the national scene I will review these against the background of the global crisis of capitalism–imperialism as manifested by the global financial crisis, the war in the Middle East and the ever present threat of the ecological disasters wrought by climate change.

Amongst the national events and developments which I wish to focus on are: the crisis in education and the Numsa moment and its aftermath which will include developments within the labour movement. I believe that these two developments in particular have the potential for making a significant impact on future political developments in this country and hold the promise of a whole new chapter in the history of struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation. That is, if certain anomalies that have come to the fore, in both, are resolved.

Other issues that I will address include the Municipal Elections of 2016 and the rise of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) against the background of the continuing unravelling of the neo-liberal inspired policies of the ANC led government.

In contemplating these events which are taking place in this the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century one is mindful of the fact that conditions obtaining in the world to-day are, if anything, worse than they were at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> when the Polish revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg said: “In this hour, socialism is the only salvation for humanity. Socialism or Barbarism”<sup>1</sup>. And as events have been unfolding both globally and here in South Africa, the need for mankind to make that choice, have become more urgent.

## SIGNPOSTS OF THE GLOBAL CRISIS OF CAPITALISM-IMPERIALISM IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

The Unity Movement (UM) as part of the national liberatory movement in this country, since 1943, has at all times stressed the fact the root cause of all our woes , political, economic and social, is the system of capitalism-imperialism. The truth of that assertion has become more

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<sup>1</sup> Rosa Luxemburg (1915) The Junius Pamphlet: The crisis of German social democracy wherein she penned the phrase “*either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism*”.

apparent when one considers the question: why has the ANC failed to deliver on its promise of “A better life for all”, after 21 years of democracy? The simple answer is: it is because the ANC follows the policies and dictates of that very system!

It was because of its anti-imperialist position that the UM refused to be a party to the Codesa talks that resulted in the so called democracy that came into being in 1994.

Since then the UM has always stood ready to be a part of the building of a movement for socialism in this country. Such a movement must of necessity be a part of a global movement. And as recent developments show, there are the stirrings of a realization of the need for such a movement here in South Africa.

The Hungarian Marxist philosopher, Istvan Maszeros speaks of the *structural crisis of capital*<sup>2</sup> referring to its inherently crisis ridden and destructive nature. One need only look at a few current events and developments to get a sense of this.

Some of the current manifestations of the global crisis of capital which I will briefly allude to are:

1. The financial crisis , especially as it is playing itself out in Europe, but in Greece in particular
2. The war in Syria and the rise of ISIS
3. Climate change as a threat to the very existence of the planet.

## **THE GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS**

One of the many manifestations of the negative consequences of the global financial crisis which started in 2008 played itself out most starkly in Greece this year.

It may be recalled that the crisis in Greece arose out of the fact that the Greek capitalists had plunged that country deeply into debt, such that loans from the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were required to sustain the economy. By the rules of those institutions loans could only be obtained on condition of the acceptance of very severe austerity measures, which by their very nature would impact most severely on the working class of that country.

As this event played itself out, it provided us with valuable insights not only into the nature of capital but also with some lessons regarding the fight against the system.

The austerity measures, which included: large scale privatisation of state assets, cuts in the minimum wage and pensions, restrictions on the right to strike resulted in: the economy contracting, debt increasing to nearly 200% of GDP, unemployment increasing, wages

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<sup>2</sup> Istvan Maszeros Monthly Review Press (2015): “The Necessity of Social Control”

decreasing and as a consequence of all this, Greece now has one of the highest suicide rates in Europe.

However the Greeks did have a choice in accepting or rejecting the austerity measures. The government led by the Syriza party which was avowedly, anti-capitalist and anti-austerity held a referendum in which more than 60% of the electorate voted in favour of the government rejecting the austerity measures.

However, despite having a mandate from the Greek people to reject the austerity measures, the Syriza party ended up accepting even more stringent conditions.

Now, the reaction to the Greek government's anti-austerity stance was met with great enthusiasm by the Left in countries like Spain, Portugal and even in Britain where the spectre of austerity was beginning to loom large. This enthusiasm soon turned to disappointment and revulsion when the Syriza party did an about face and accepted measures that were even harsher than those on which the referendum was based.

So why did Syriza renege on its mandate? Perhaps it all comes down to "knowing, not what a party says it stands for, but knowing what it will fall for "as RO Dudley the late president of the NUM would say.

The Syriza leadership in the government clearly did not have the stomach to repudiate the debt, nationalise the banks, break from the Euro and issue its own currency as one would have expected they would do, given what they said they stood for. In short the Syriza party had betrayed their working class constituency.

So, are there any lessons in this for us here in South Africa?

Well for one thing the majority of the people in this country have been feeling the effects of an IMF imposed austerity package in the form of the ANC government's GEAR policy since 1997, and whist the ANC has long since given up any pretence of being socialist, there are others like the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) who say they are!

Let the people beware! Let us hope that those who are participating in the Numsa initiated Movement for Socialism (MFS) take the lessons from Greece to heart.

## **THE "ARAB SPRING" AND THE RISE OF ISIS**

The outcomes of the events of 2011 which has come to be known as the "Arab Spring" are well documented. Contrary to what many commentators believed was its early promise of signaling the dawn of a new era of social and political progress, the Arab Spring has in fact turned out to be a damp squib and if anything, it has created more hardship and suffering in the affected countries and led to the emergence of the ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

Certainly the rise of ISIS has turned most of the Middle East, but Syria and Iraq in particular, into a war zone, and the world at large into a very dangerous place.

Who could not be moved by TV screens depicting images of hundreds of thousands of hapless mainly Syrian but also, Libyans, and other nationalities fleeing this war? These refugees have in turn created a "migrant crisis" in the countries of Europe which have had to bear the brunt of an

influx of these refugees. This unprecedented influx of refugees is in turn putting great strain on the levels of tolerance and human solidarity within those countries to such an extent that right wing reaction to this influx is beginning to show its ugly face.

On the other hand the Paris massacre and the downing of a commercial Russian jetliner with more than 200 people on board in Egypt epitomises the way in which ISIS has taken its fight against imperialism into the very heart of Europe.

Predictably, the imperialist powers have responded to these latest atrocities by mounting a sustained aerial bombardment of ISIS held cities in Syria and one can only imagine what Syria will look like after the bombing has stopped.

The rise of ISIS is directly related to the unraveling of the complex history of Syria which has a lot to do with the role that imperialism played in creating the state of Syria.

One of the complexities is the brutal dictatorship of the Assad regime, operating under the patronage of Russia and lording it over bitterly divided ethnic groups including Kurds who are in conflict with Turkey. It was the “Arab Spring” that ignited a revolt against Assad that eventually created a vacuum into which the militants of what came to call itself ISIS emerged.

There are now so many contending forces, including Russia which supports Assad on the one side with NATO forces and the USA who are opposed to both Russia and Assad on the other; and all of them are opposed to ISIS. Turkey although being a member of NATO, seems to be conflicted in that whilst being opposed to ISIS, it fears the Kurds might take advantage of the situation and assert their rights to an independent state.

In response to the Paris massacre, Pope Francis presciently has called this a part of the “piecemeal Third World War”. And perhaps he is right, because ultimately both the first and second world wars were the result of inter-imperialist rivalry which is a hallmark of the system of capital.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

Istvan Maszeros the Hungarian Marxist philosopher whilst detailing and analysing the structural crisis of capital describes its inherently destructive qualities thus:

Another basic contradiction of the capitalist system of control is that it cannot separate “advance” from destruction, or “progress” from waste — however catastrophic the results. The more it unlocks the powers of productivity, the more it must unleash the powers of destruction; and the more it extends the volume of production, the more it must bury everything under mountains of suffocating waste. The concept of economy is radically incompatible with the ‘economy’ of capital production which, of necessity, adds insult to injury by first using up with rapacious wastefulness the limited resources of our planet, and then further aggravates the outcome by polluting and poisoning the human environment with its mass-produced waste and effluence”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Istvan Maszeros Monthly Review Press (2015) : “*The Necessity of Social Control*”

The Lancet Medical Journal in an editorial in its November issue gives us a perspective on the effects of climate change on health.

“Tackling climate change could be the greatest global health opportunity of the 21st century.” This finding, the central message of the second *Lancet* Commission on Health and Climate Change, attempts to answer the stark conclusion of the first *Lancet* Climate Change Commission, published in 2009 — namely, that “Climate change is the biggest global health threat of the 21st century.”<sup>4</sup>

The editorial goes on to say “When climate change is framed as a health issue, rather than purely as an environmental, economic, or technological challenge, it becomes clear that we are facing a predicament that strikes at the heart of humanity.”

The health effects of climate change, such as under nutrition and food insecurity, have the potential to accelerate political action in ways that attention to carbon dioxide emissions alone do not.

The editorial mentions the fact that the 2015 Commission on Health and Climate Change provides nine recommendations for governments to consider in countering climate change. They include: scaling up financing for climate-resilient health systems worldwide; ensuring a rapid phase out of coal from the global energy mix; encouraging a transition to cities that support and promote healthy lifestyles for the individual and the planet; establishing the framework for a strong, predictable, and international carbon pricing mechanism; rapidly expanding access to renewable energy in low-income and middle-income countries; ensuring adequate local capacity and political support to develop low-carbon healthy energy choices; adopting mechanisms to facilitate collaboration between Ministries of Health and other government departments and empowering health professionals; agreeing and implementing an international agreement which supports countries in transitioning to a low carbon economy; and investing in climate change and public health research.

Accordingly, the 2015 *Lancet* Commission proposes the formation of an independent, international Countdown to 2030: Global Health and Climate Action Coalition to monitor progress and action on the health dimensions of the climate crisis.

The United Nations sponsored Climate Summit, the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) was held in Paris from 30 November to 11 December. The conference was still in session at the time of writing so one is unable to comment on its final outcomes save to say that it is known that any agreements reached will only come into effect in 2020 and that a major sticking point between the rich, major producers of green house gases and those countries most liable to suffer its effects, is whether the permissible rise in global temperatures should be at 1.5° C or

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<sup>4</sup> Second Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change

2°C and to what extent the rich countries will bear the costs of staving off the effects of global warming.

In her book *"This changes everything: Capitalism vs the Climate"* Naomi Klein gives an excellent exposition on the causes and the disastrous effects of climate change especially on poor countries. Her conclusion is that it is "a rampant, rapacious, capitalist system which is ultimately responsible for the global warming and climate change."

Klein believes that only "mass social movements" can save the world from the dire consequences of the ecological disaster created by capitalism. The examples of mass resistance movements she gives are: the abolition of slavery, anti-colonial movements, and the civil rights movement in the USA. She contrasts such mass social movements with "effervescent moments"<sup>5</sup> which describes the Arab spring and the Occupy movement.

The question is, what is the likelihood of such a movement arising?

She does not consider the possibility of a worldwide socialist revolution as the only solution dealing with this problem as we do.

## **CHALLENGING CAPITALS'S HEGEMONY**

How then is the hegemony of capital to be challenged? Simply mouthing the phrase "socialism is the alternative' is not enough!

Whilst it is our belief that the alternative to capitalism/imperialism is socialism on a global scale, experience of the past century and a half has taught us, just how difficult it is to bring it about.

A number of recently published books deal with some of the global challenges facing us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century whilst providing answers as to how they should be challenged.

These include Hardt and Negri, "Declaration", Thomas Piketty:"Capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", Williams and Satgar: "Marxisms of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century", Naomi Klein: "This Changes everything: Capitalism vs the Climate"

As Hardt and Negri said, in commenting on the impact that the social movements that arose in 2011 made: "a discussion about constituting a new society is already mature and has become the order of the day"<sup>6</sup>

The question of social inequality was addressed by Thomas Piketty in his book "Capital in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century". This social inequality as he demonstrates has become starker since the onset of the global financial crisis in 2008. Piketty who visited our shores in November refers to the Marikana massacre as a manifest outcome of the inequality created by capital.

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<sup>5</sup> Naomi Klein – This Changes Everything. Capitalism vs the Climate (2014)

<sup>6</sup> Michael Hardt and Antnio Negri, Argo Navis Author Services (2012) "Declaration"

Whilst he says he wishes to make a contribution to the debate about “the best way to organise society and the most appropriate institutions and policies to achieve a just social order” he does not advocate socialism as an alternative giving the discredited Soviet model as a reason. He would much rather impose a wealth tax as a solution!<sup>7</sup>

Whilst in looking for answers to the challenge of overthrowing capitalism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is a sobering thought to realise that as a start, there are two key fundamental questions that need to be asked. These two questions were formulated at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century already.

Both of these questions were both popularised by the great Polish revolutionary, Rosa Luxemburg. The questions posed by her were formulated in terms of the need for mankind to choose between Socialism and Barbarism, and for revolutionaries to choose whether socialism could be brought about by reform or revolution.

The hallmarks of this capitalist barbarism Luxemburg referred to are manifested in the widespread poverty and economic inequality so graphically described by Piketty, the devastating effects of Climate change as so eloquently described by Naomi Klein and the brutal wars affecting the Middle East and other areas of the world to-day and raising the spectre of WWIII.

It is quite clear that the conditions that obtained in the world when these questions were first posed are still very much with us to-day. Certainly the barbarism of Capital seems to have exceeded the heights predicted by Marx in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

During the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries most organisations on the Left adhered to the standpoint that socialism is the only alternative to the barbarism of capitalism and that the only way to bring it into being is via a social revolution led by the working class.

However the manifest failure of such a revolution in Russia in particular has led many Marxists to question the validity of that formulation and has seen the elaboration of new perspectives on the struggle for socialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This is epitomized by the Bolivarian revolution of Hugo Chavez who, largely inspired by Istvan Mészáros brought about the change to “21<sup>st</sup> century socialism” in Venezuela.

The role of vanguard parties in bringing about socialist revolution has been largely debunked. This is the clear message of contributors to the book “Marxisms in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” edited by Michelle Williams and Vishwas Satgar published in 2013. These essays are worthy of further study.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Michelle Williams and Vishwas Satgar. Wits University Press (2013) Marxisms of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



Another view is that offered by Lucien VD Walt who argues the case for a “Rebooted Left Politics” in which he argues the case for “self-managed class-struggle and universalism, rejecting notions that nationalisation or political parties (or localised projects/ struggles without a clear strategy of radical rupture), can enable fundamental change. As an example, this article discusses the bottom-up collectivisation of the anarchist/syndicalist Spanish Revolution, 1936-1939, and its strategic implications.<sup>9</sup>

The above approach echo’s what is contained in Immanuel Ness and Dario Azzellini’s monumental “Ours to Master and to Own: Workers Control from the Commune to the Present”. Published in 2011. The book deals comprehensively with all aspects of the Marxist concept of worker control and worker self management.

Clearly there is a need for further study, introspection and debate amongst organisations on the Left, concerning this question, as will be shown later on in this address. .

## **NATIONAL EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS**

The events and developments that have played themselves out in the past one to two years may be seen as symptomatic of the failure of the ANC’s much vaunted “a better life for all” and the unravelling of the flawed democracy brought about the negotiated settlement of the 1990’s.

Before addressing the specific developments mentioned above I will address certain realities of our situation post 1994 that have thrown up a number of challenges that confront the oppressed and exploited masses of this country.

The challenges that confront us revolve around the inability of the ANC to deliver on its promise of “a better life for all”. The reasons why the democracy that was ushered in 1994 should rather be called a “demockery” is spelt out in an article in our Bulletin of April/May 2014 and I won’t go into that here, save to say that developments that have occurred in the past year or two and that are symptomatic of this ‘demockery’ are:

1. The Marikana massacre of August 2014
2. The Numsa Moment and its aftermath
3. The student revolts at universities across the country that started in March this year and which may be seen as just another manifestation of the crisis in education as a whole.

After assuming power in 1994, the ANC after promising “a better life for all” started experiencing a decline in its fortunes and the country became beset by the endemic service delivery protests affecting all the poor and disadvantaged throughout the country. So much so that South Africa has become known as the protest capital of the world.

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<sup>9</sup>Lucien vd Walt, Global Labour Bulletin, October 2015 <http://column.global-labour-university.org/> “Self-Managed Class-Struggle Alternatives to Neo-liberalism, Nationalisation, Elections”

And it is against that background that we are in more recent times, witnessing the unravelling of the ANC's policies.

Beginning with the Marikana massacre in August 2012, we have witnessed a number of events which serve to show why and how the ANC has failed to deliver on its promise of *"a better life for all"*.

Commentators and political analysts have identified many reasons for this but ultimately the main causes of their failure to deliver on their promises are:

1. The ANC is hamstrung by the constitution which effectively prevented them from instituting the changes needed to deliver on its promise especially in respect of land and housing.
2. The adoption of a Neo-liberal economic policy in the form of GEAR and later the National Development Plan (NDP)
3. Widespread corruption which has become a hallmark of ANC rule
4. The unresolved National Question

In the interests of time I will not elaborate on items 1-3 but I do wish to comment on the unresolved national question. Although I did do so in my address in 2013 I will expand on that with reference to the fact we have contributed a chapter to a book that was commissioned by the Chris Hani Institute, under the directorship of Prof Eddy Webster. The book which will be published sometime next year is called: "The Unresolved National Question in Left Thinking: Hidden Voices, Unpublished Works 1950s to 1990."

In our introduction to the chapter we say: "The current reality 'proves' that the National Question will not be resolved as long as capitalist relations of production are dominant. In other words, the National Question amounts to far more than just the constitutional acceptance of a single South African nation (a necessary but not sufficient condition). As long as the ruling capitalist order persists, not only will historical imbalances in the distribution of wealth continue, but future imbalances are guaranteed to persist and most likely, deepen. The answer, then, is unequivocally: transition to a socialist order.

We then proceed to explain our strategic approach to resolving the national question in terms of our Ten Point Programme of Transitional demands and the adoption of an action-programme underpinned by the slogan "Towards a People's Democracy."

We conclude our essay with this statement: "The Unity Movement's trajectory of struggle will see it on the path sketched out by the Communist Manifesto. Capitalist globalization has ensured the primacy of class over nation. Thus, "the working men have no country." However, capitalism needs to be conquered "country by country." Thus, in the words of the Manifesto, "the proletariat must first of all acquire political supremacy, must rise to the leading class of the nation, and must constitute itself the nation . . . though not in the bourgeois sense of the word."

And as stated by me in my address of 2013 by way of rebutting Pallo Jordan's criticism of Neville Alexander and the Unity Movement:

“The NDR which he champions is incomplete. For while they have achieved the primary objective of the NDR, namely to promote the development and interests of a black middle class, they have done so at the expense of the well-being and advancement of the majority. And instead of eradicating racialism and ethnicity, they have entrenched it even further. Instead of rooting out tribalism and group identity they have entrenched it in the constitution and introduced a Traditional Leadership Bill.

The theories and policies propounded by the ANC and Cosatu, namely the Colonialism of a Special Type (CST), the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) with its two-stage theory, the four nation thesis and the Freedom Charter lie at the heart of the failed NDR.”

The recent upheavals on university campuses throughout the country call to mind the events of 1976.

It will be recalled that 1976 set in train a sequence of events which had far reaching consequences for the struggle in this country. Can the same be said of events that have unfolded on our university campuses this year?

When one considers that these events follow on those of 2012 which witnessed the Marikana massacre which in its turn was followed by what has become known as the Numsa moment. And when one, adds to this the endemic service delivery protests which have been ongoing since 1994 then it becomes clear that this country is entering a state of heightened social upheaval.

When taking into consideration that these events are accompanied by: a worsening economic crisis as evidenced by an increasing budget deficit, rising interest rates, rising inflation, an unprecedented rise in currency exchange rates, drought exacerbating an already serious water security crisis, the decline in mining revenue, the collapse of the steel industry, amongst others, then the writing might well be on the wall.

And to compound matters even further, the recently released (October 2015) Stats SA statistics which were based on data for 2014 are sobering and carry serious implications which don't need to be spelled out: Unemployment nearly 25%, which translates into 20 million people.

Of the approximately 19.7-million working-age youth (15 to 34 years), 9.8-million were not economically active, 6.2-million were employed, and 3.6-million were unemployed. The "not economically active" include discouraged work-seekers, full-time students, and homemakers.

The report stated that "Over the period 2008–2015, key labour market rates deteriorated by a larger margin among youth compared with adults, and the frustration of not finding employment has led many young people to become discouraged and exit the labour force altogether."

Clearly, the question arises, what does all this presage? Is this a harbinger of South Africa's version of the "Arab Spring"?

## THE NUMSA MOMENT: THE AFTERMATH

### 1. THE UNITED FRONT AND THE MOVEMENT FOR SOCIALISM

The Numsa moment as it has become known refers to the decision taken by Numsa at its Special National Congress (SNC) in December 2013 when they declared that: they were not going to support the ANC in the general elections and announced their intention to build a United Front (UF) and a Movement for Socialism (MfS).

The reason for Numsa's break with the ANC is best summed up by the following quote from an article written by Tengo Tengela a *NUMSA Research and Policy Institute Senior Researcher* which appeared in the November edition of the MFS official news letter.

*"Without any doubt, the ANC led government has capitulated, without putting up even a pretence of a fight, to the caprices of financialised neo-liberalism by abandoning the Freedom Charter, the Reconstruction and Development Program and the Macroeconomic Research Group recommendations which, together, if implemented, would have laid the basis for resolving the incorporation into the global division of labour as the Economic Transformation Document says above!"*

*"The ANC cannot do any of the things it professes precisely because its leadership is right wing, and its social and economic interests are best served by being parasitic to both imperialism and South African white capital"<sup>10</sup>.*

In declaring our own support for this initiative by Numsa, the editorial in the April 2014 edition of The Bulletin concluded with a message on behalf of the workers of this country. We said the following to Numsa:

*"Please lead our reorganization as a class force by reframing the entire organization of Cosatu!*

*Please take us out of the "one industry, one union" straight jacket set up by neoliberalism for the purpose of bargaining us to the ground!*

*Please help us to rebuild a huge general union federation for the employed as well as the unemployed working class in this country!*

*Please help us to build a united front of workers and the poor in this country, in town and country for a proper re-articulation in the organization of the forces of the poor so that we can properly unite on a national scale and come to grips with our class enemies after all!"<sup>11</sup>*

In the same editorial we also said the following:

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<sup>10</sup> Movement for Socialism Newsletter November 2015

<sup>11</sup> NUM Bulletin Vol. 20 No. 2

*“Whatever else it may be deemed to portend, let those be the minimum understandings in the political bottom lines set by the masses of the poor in this country. This message is not just for the leadership of NUMSA and the forces of the left in the old COSATU, but to be sure, for the whole “organized left in South Africa”. The problems of the times are urgent let our stand between these milestones of history be firm, principled and unwavering.”*

A brief overview of key developments is as follows:

1. The preparatory assembly of the UF took place in Johannesburg 14 December 2014 where a National Working Committee(NWC) to oversee the implementation .Front on the 25-27 April 2015, to oversee the setting up of regional UF structures which included Political Discussion forums (PDF) were established.
2. The assembly issued a declaration which said in part:  
”Between now and the official launch of the United Front we are going to unite in struggle against the national austerity budget, particularly on the issues affecting poor communities on February 25. We will organize a day of mass action on March 21 in defence of human rights, freedom of expression and the right to organize and against police brutality.”
3. The next significant event to take place was the NUMSA Conference on Socialism which took place on 16 April 2015 in Johannesburg Delegates present came from 11 socialist political parties, the United Front, Numsa Central Committee, Numsa regional structures leftist socialist intellectuals, academics and observers.  
The Movement for Socialism (MfS) task team was established in October and three MfS task teams were established (draft a programme, publication editorial committee, co-coordinating structure)
4. and an official MfS Newsletter has been published
5. A Draft programme for a “Socialist Workers Party” has been issued.

We have been participants both regionally, especially in the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape, as well as nationally.

We participated in the conference on socialism which was convened by Numsa in April and at the follow up meeting that took place in October at which the members of the MfS task team were elected. One of our joint secretaries is a member of the co-coordinating sub-committee.

Now, whilst the launch of the Movement for Socialism (MfS) carries with it the hopes and aspirations of the millions of unemployed and poor masses of this country we do need to express a number of reservations that we have concerning the manner in which this initiative has unfolded as well as the ideological underpinnings of Numsa’s approach to setting up of the MfS.

The November issue of the MFS newsletter carries a number of articles which are illuminating as far as thinking within Numsa is concerned.

Firstly, Numsa advocates what are three separate entities: The UF, the MfS and a Workers Party.

Secondly, from reading the MfS newsletter one gets the impression that the views of parties other than Numsa who participated in the Conference on Socialism and in MfS meetings are not taken into account. That is despite the fact that there are a number of non Numsa members on the MfS task team. That in fact the MfS is all about Numsa!

On the other hand, the Numsa moment has evoked some mixed reactions, some of which we have to agree with.

We ourselves have made it known within the forums of the UF and the MfS that as I have explained earlier we are critical of Numsa's apparent commitment to the Freedom Charter together with the strategic concepts of colonialism of a special type (CST) and the National Democratic Revolution (NDR) which we believe led to the political degeneration of all the organisations in the congress movement including Cosatu.

And in similar vein, for example, the ideological underpinning of Numsa's call for a MfS is criticized by Prof Jane Duncan of the department of Journalism at the University of Johannesburg. In an article published on line by the South African Civil Society Information Service (SACSIS) she is critical of Numsa's professed adherence to Marxist Leninism, the theory of Colonialism of a Special Type, the NDR and the Freedom Charter. She says:

*"It is unfortunate that Numsa is invoking a Stalinist path to socialism: a path that has been tried and shown to fail."*<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, WASP which is represented on the MfS task team has argued that: "The MfS disappointingly appears to be aiming less to serve to unite the Left on a commonly agreed ideological and political basis, but to whip the Left behind Numsa's ideological line. That line, if the editorial by comrade Jim in the second edition of the online bulletin of the MfS is an indication, points in the direction not of the total rejection of the revisionist Marxism of the SACP but the refurbishment of its ideological traditions and organisational culture. The stubborn adherence to the theoretical concepts of the National Democratic Revolution, Colonialism of a Special Type and the Freedom Charter, point in only one direction – the resurrection of the bankrupt Stalinist theory of the two-stage revolution. The comrades are approaching the question in the manner of political prisoners freed from incarceration in the SACP, but voluntarily returning there as ideological re-offenders. What the situation demands is not a Reformed (Herstigte) SACP, but a mass workers party on a socialist programme."

## **THE UNITED FRONT**

Numsa conceived the United Front as playing a central role in bringing together civil society and organized labour into programmes of action and as playing a pivotal role in the struggle for better education, a comprehensive social security system and social justice.

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<sup>12</sup> SACSIS Newsletter 7 November – article by Prof. Jane Duncan

However this initiative does not appear to have been as successful as expected.

Problems encountered thus far include the following:

1. Interim Regional UF structures were established in but there are question marks re whether they are all functioning
2. Regional UF meetings that were scheduled for 5 December were cancelled at the last moment as was the UF National Consultative Conference from 13 to 15 December 2015 in Johannesburg.
3. The date of its official launch has been postponed number of times. First it was to be in April then June, then September and now it seems like it has been postponed to sometime next year

Despite these setbacks we have been involved at local level, in the Western Cape and in the Eastern Cape.

Sadly, it must be said that it would seem that at this stage of the process there are more questions than answers as far as the fate of Numsa's UF is concerned.

## **2. DEVELOPMENTS IN COSATU**

Events leading up to and succeeding the Numsa moment to have resulted in a decline in the fortunes of Cosatu which has been reduced to being nothing more than a lap dog of the ANC.

The relationship between Numsa which had soured, took an irrevocable turn when the former was expelled from Cosatu in December last year.

In July the Numsa leadership in parallel with its mission of building the MfS, announced that they were ready to begin the process of forming a "new independent, democratic, worker-controlled, militant, anti-imperialist trade union federation".

To this end they announced plans to convene a national workers summit by October this year to discuss the future of the labour movement.

However the promised workers summit did not happen and the Steering Committee for a Workers Summit which met on 5 November 2015, issued a statement to the effect that they would "convene a Workers' Summit to bring together all those workers and organisations committed to building a strong, united and independent trade union movement and to mobilise around policies to end the challenge of the triple crisis of unemployment, poverty and inequality", early in 2016.

The steering committee said the aim of the summit "would be to reverse the increasing fragmentation of the trade union movement, create a home for the 76 per cent of workers, mainly amongst the most vulnerable sectors, who are not organised in any union and spearhead the fight back against the employers."

The committee also revealed that draft policy documents were to be produced for discussion amongst the membership of all the unions, and unorganised workers, in order to establish a broad consensus. Additional documents would be drafted on all issues facing workers, including the national minimum wage, fighting corruption, a programme of action and how a new federation could be sustained. There was a consensus that there is a need for a new workers' movement to be worker-controlled and independent, particularly from employers and government, but that 'independent' did not mean apolitical. Also the new federation would be politically non-aligned. It was also agreed to do research on trade union movements around the world and learn lessons from their experiences.

The impact that the expulsion of Numsa has had on Cosatu is dealt with in an article that appeared in the MfS newsletter which give details of "a succession of internal divisions, scandals and splinter unions".

The article goes on to say "While we mourn the demise of Cosatu, our response must be to mobilise to rebuild a federation that reaches out to the 7 million unorganised workers and all existing union members and convince them that we can work together despite our historical organisational and cultural differences and create a new revolutionary socialist mass workers' movement"

Another significant development is that a new union calling itself the South African Liberated Public Sector Workers Union or the South African Public Service Union (SAPSU) which announced that it was officially registered with the Department of Labour on 29 October 2015. Obviously this new union will pose a direct challenge to the two dominant public sector unions SADTU and NEHAWU.

On 10 Decembe the "9 Plus Unions" headed by Numsa and including SAPSU issued a press statement which commented on developments within Cosatu and announced that they would be part of the workers summit scheduled for next year.<sup>13</sup>

A few words about the COSATU's 12<sup>th</sup> National Conference which was held 20-26 November and saw the acceptance that body of a union called LIMUSA which is made up of ex Numsa members .

In another twist, labour Minister Mildred Oliphant in her address to the conference accused Cosatu leaders of having double standards over the issue of labour brokers, alleging that some of Cosatu leaders were benefiting financially from the business labour brokering!

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<sup>13</sup> Press Statement : The Nine Plus Unions on the Crisis in the Trade Union Movement and the Way Forward for Workers 10 December 2015. The nine plus unions are: NUMSA, FAWU, SASAWU, SAFPU, DEMAWUSA, MATUSA, FUWO, SAPSU, SASFU, SACCAWU, PAWUSA, and NTM.



“Some of the affiliates have partnered with the same companies that are using labour brokers as part of investments,” said Oliphant. She accused the federation of renegeing on its initial agreement on the regulation of labour brokers. She said Cosatu leaders had agreed to allow labour brokers [to continue to do their job] for three months as long as companies contributed to a skills levy to its affiliates.

She said further “It seems as if they (the unions) are focusing on investments rather than servicing the workers. Immediately when you invest, you become an employer.

She referred to a *Mail & Guardian* survey earlier this year which revealed that Cosatu unions owned combined investments valued at R20-billion, some in top South African companies. In some instances, affiliates invest in companies where they organise workers, making it difficult for union leaders to act impartially in their members’ best interests.

Clearly all unions, including Numsa need to do some deep introspection with regard to their investment arms that appear to be creating a conflict of interest for them.

## **THE EDUCATION CRISIS**

The crisis in higher education which first came to the fore with the Rhodes must Fall (RMF) campaign in March this year, closely followed by the Fees must fall(FMF) movement in October are symptomatic of the fact that the whole education system is in a serious crisis

What are roots of the crisis?

During 2012 we devoted an entire edition of our Bulletin<sup>xx</sup> to the state of education in South Africa.

*We said: “This edition of our Bulletin focuses on the state of South Africa’s education. It is now common knowledge that education for the majority of the children and young adults in this country has been in a state of crisis, which the ANC’s ascent to political power in 1994 has done nothing to change. We believe that the present situation has deteriorated to such a degree that it has become catastrophic. Since a failed education system holds such serious consequences for the future of our country, we need to make a contribution towards mobilising social forces around the issue”.<sup>14</sup>*

And now 3 years later the crisis in Education has clearly deepened. These movements which have enjoyed widespread media coverage have tended to overshadow the deep-seated crisis in the education sector in general.

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<sup>14</sup> NUM Bulletin Vol. 20 No. 2 (2012) Focus on Education

The details of these specific events are well documented and it has spawned reams of analyses and commentaries in the print media and also on Television. I don't wish to detail all of them, but I will highlight a few which in my view helps to give greater clarity on the underlying issues and dynamics at play here.

Commentary on the RMF and FMF movements includes those by:

1. Jeff Rudin<sup>xx</sup> writing in the On-line Daily Maverick makes some telling observations on the *#Rhodesmustfall* (RMF) movement.

One can only concur wholeheartedly with what he has to say. With respect to the RMF he makes a number of telling points:

- (i) "Rhodes' legacy is that of a being an out and out racist and a capitalist who was responsible for setting up the brutal, exploitative labour system in this country by using the law to force African peasant farmers off the land and down the mines." Rhodes' racism rationalised his denial of the humanity of people subject to his colonial domination which resulted in his destruction of African traditional life, of his devastation of African families and of the sufferings of the workers he forced down the mines at starvation wages and with very little, if any, thought to the health & safety of the workers who, for him, weren't people worthy of human consideration."
- (ii) He admonished the students not to focus exclusively on the colonial insult symbolised by Rhodes' statue but rather on the Mineral Energy Complex (MEC) which he brought into being. Rather than shouting for the removal of 'white colonial' names and symbols they should expose the fact of UCT's "heavy reliance on the MEC for its current funding. The corporate takeover of all universities, not just UCT, is the living legacy of Rhodes.
- (iii) He castigates the students for dividing themselves on so-called 'racial' lines and thereby giving credence to Rhodes' "divide-and-rule legacy."
- (iv) He says "Colour-coding access to scarce resources is the main hallmark of the new, post-Apartheid, non-racial South Africa" only benefits a minority. The colour-coded access to wealth and/or promotion is exemplified by the BEE policy which in his view whilst creating black billionaires and millionaires further entrenches the capitalist class structure. Similarly, making university staff all black is plainly important to the people concerned but, in itself, does nothing to promote the interests of everyone else that's left behind in the inequality that makes our country a world-beater.

- (v) He challenges the view that black university staff is any more disposed to promoting the radical societal changes required by workers who still suffer the legacy of Rhodes' cheap labour policies and practices.<sup>15</sup>

As Rudin sees it, just like the service delivery protests, "The mass protests against a statue show that students, too, are becoming increasingly angry the failure of the new South Africa to meet even their privileged needs. A proper unity between the fortunate few who get to university and the seething mass our class structure guarantees to be left permanently behind is what Fanon demands. This unity would indeed be radical.

On the *#FeesMustFall* movement Jeff Rudin<sup>xx</sup> makes the following observations: "the revolt against fees, notwithstanding the joint student-worker successes against outsourcing ran in parallel with the whole issue of "transformation" of both academic staff, and curricula and that "race", has been central to both the demanded transformations"

He argues that " the decidedly apartheid logic of "race"-based representivity" is dominant within student discourse and that the institutionalisation of all the apartheid-invented races means that blacks still (mainly) see themselves as either African, coloured or Indian .

Rudin says that Race is also central to the students' demand for transformation of the curriculum.

He feels that there is "naked class interests driving the whole issue of representivity, which is presented as 'transformation'".

He speaks of the commodification of race to promote particular class interests, while leaving the class structure, itself, entirely untouched. Class society is, by definition, unequal and unfair. These are universal features of all class societies, everywhere. For the upwardly mobile, breaking through the myriad of obstacles is always fraught. This is all the more so for the young, who have to contend with others occupying positions to which they aspire. What could be more beneficial, in these circumstances, than a state-backed requirement that all positions privileged by the particular form of class structure in a particular country, be representative of a particular "race"?"<sup>16</sup>

The underlying tensions and deeper dynamics driving both the RMF and the FMF movements alluded to by Rudin is confirmed by views expressed by a number of academics but none are more revealing than an acrimonious debate between Xolele Mangcu<sup>xx</sup> and Crain Soudien<sup>xx</sup> at UCT.

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<sup>15</sup> Jeff Rudin. Daily Maverick 24 March 2015 "*Rhodes has Reason to be Realxed*"

<sup>16</sup> Jeff Rudin Daily Maverick 13 Nov, 2015 "*The shadow of liberation: Representivity and the commodification of race*"

The former's article titled "Danger of 'rationalist conceit'" strongly criticized the university administration for the attitude towards the protesting students in particular and to the flawed transformation of the institution as evidenced by their abolition of "race-informed affirmative action, despite the objections of black staff and students." That episode he said was "the grossest form of racial majoritarianism I have seen in this country since 1994."

He goes on to reject calls from the university administration for students to resolve the question of the removal of the Rhodes statue through "rational deliberation" which he says is based on a "rationalist conceit" and accuses the administration of being totally insensitive to the feelings of black students and staff.

Mangcu sees the position adopted by the administration as an example of white liberalism which has always been found wanting. For him the whites who are in the majority at UCT want to enforce "racial majoritarianism".

The administration is said to be denying "the centrality of race to our experience as blacks at the university." The arguments offered by the administration for retaining the statue are "patronising and disrespectful of the historical experience of black people"

"Let us be all clear about what this movement is: a black-led student movement with white students who have accepted there are times when those who feel the pain must lead. That modesty on the part of white students is a lesson for the university in dealing with blacks.

In his response to Mangcu, Soudien said "Worrying as Mangcu's assessment of the admissions policy is, more disconcerting in some ways is his attack on the university itself and particularly on the idea of the university and "to disavow the need for debate is to disavow the lifeblood of the university."

Another example of the underlying racial dimension to tensions existing on university campuses in the Western Cape is contained in a statement issued by the Western Cape chapter of the University of Cape Town Association of Black Alumni (UCTABA) expressing "our view on the polemic surrounding the removal, or not, of the so-called Rhodes statue at UCT." They then go on to say "that the challenge around the so-called Rhodes statue is code for something else that is bubbling under at UCT and on many of the campuses of our universities and colleges."

"Let us be clear the Rhodes statue must fall as a symbolic representation that it will no longer be business as usual and, like Rhodes, UCT has to come to terms with the fact that its largely untransformed staff and student composition and workers' conditions of employment will ultimately have to go."

The UCT administration responded to articles in the Cape Times, which questioned the universities commitment to transformation by stating that the "revised admissions policy was examined and debated thoroughly in all faculties and other university forums before it was passed first by the senate and then by council."

However judging by Mangcu's tirade, this seemingly reasonable explanation flies in the face of the fact that as Mangcu says the senate and council have a white majority of members.

Now, since it would appear from the above , that race is one of the issues at the heart of these movements I think it apposite, to make reference to an event that took place at NMMU on 27-29 August 2015. The Centre for the Advancement of Non-racialism and Democracy (CANRAD) hosted a conference with the title "Non-Racialism in South Africa- Past, Present and Future: Debates and Controversies"

### **IN DEFENCE OF NON-RACIALISM – A CONTESTED CONCEPT?**

The ANC's preoccupation with Apartheid era racial categorization of the people of this country is a sad reality. However the fact that so many of our compatriots feel comfortable with it is more so. The apparent centrality of race based thinking which has come to the fore in the FMF movement is a cause of concern for us.

In the light of the above, CANRAD's conference on Non-Racialism was indeed timely as it served to focus our attention on this continuing blight on political and sociological discourse in the country.

That we still need to defend our policy of non-racialism in this day and age is a serious indictment on us all.

Members of the NUM participated in the conference and presented a number of papers which dealt with the Unity Movements promotion of the principle of non-racialism in sport and education and the theoretical underpinnings of our position on race and class and posed the question "Why was racialism never dismantled in South Africa?" The deliberations at conference are yet to be published but it is available on DVD. Our own contributions have been published in The Bulletin volume 22, No.1.

As alluded to in my introduction the upheavals on university campuses call to mind the events of 1976. Are there any parallels? Can anything be learned from those events?

Archie Mafeje wrote an article titled: ' Soweto and its aftermath' which appeared in the Review of Political Economy (ROAPE) in 1978. This article evoked a response from Ruth First which although it was highly critical of certain assertions made by Mafeje nevertheless was complimentary of it in raising important questions concerning the struggle in South Africa.

I believe a reading of these two articles will prove rewarding in the context of debates and discussions taking place to-day. As stated in an editorial in ROAPE in 1982:" Both Archie and Ruth had important things to say about the impact of the Soweto uprising of 1976, which began with African students protesting against the use of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools, but turned into a more general conflagration"

Some of the assertions made by Mafeje and which might be of relevance to-day included the following:

1. The student revolt that flared up in 1976 was a clear indication of the extent of mass resistance to oppression and exploitation under Apartheid.
2. The revolt posed a number of questions for revolutionary strategy especially in terms of the implications for an alliance between students and workers in relation to the political movements which existed then
3. He addresses four main elements of what he calls the Soweto movement: Its social identity, its organisational form, its political programme and strategy, its historical meaning
4. He critiques the ideological position of the various political tendencies and asserts that none of them can claim to have had any significant influence on the Soweto movement which nevertheless marked a turning point in the South African struggle.
5. He encouraged the militant youth to take seriously the questions of ideology, theory and organisation.<sup>17</sup>

In her response to this article, Ruth First made the following observations: Soweto was in the long tradition of mass struggles in South Africa, which began by asserting fairly minimalist, immediate demands – and precipitately found themselves in full scale confrontation with the power of the state”

She argues that Mafeje fails to make connections in political practice between immediate demands which mobilise and the longer term programmatic revolutionary alternative society.<sup>18</sup>

So, the question that one wishes to pose is this; do the events of 1976 and of this debate in particular have any relevance for the RMF and the FMF movements of to-day?

Speaking for ourselves, the NUM has issued three statements on the events described above the most recent being that issued 8<sup>th</sup> on December.

The statement reads: “2015 will be remembered for the stunning victories students achieved in campaigns such as *#RhodesMustFall*, and more notably, *#FeesMustFall*. It was a year in which students got to test their power, and found true strength in united action. The concessions – hard won as they were – hardly scratch the surface of students’ legitimate demands. Indeed, the *#FeesMustFall* campaign was noteworthy in that under its banner a wide range of demands were raised, including the demands for (totally) free education as well as for the sacking of various authoritarian management teams at specific institutions. The question is: will spontaneous student protests of the kind that worked so well in 2015 – marches, occupations,

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<sup>17</sup> Archie Mafeje, 1978, [www. Roape.org](http://www.roape.org): “

<sup>18</sup> Ruth First, 1978, [www.roape.org](http://www.roape.org): After Soweto: A response”

class boycotts, etcetera – prove to be sufficient to drive through the granite wall of government and university management intransigence, or will other methods be required?

What characterized student action in 2015 was its spontaneity, which is to say, the rapid and unexpected way in which it spread among students at all tertiary institutions, irrespective of any differences that might otherwise have proven to be obstacles in the way of student unity. But spontaneous action does not spring fully-formed out of fresh air. It arises from the fertile soil of past and ongoing struggle. The past twenty-years-or-so of neoliberal oppression in this country and the world has accelerated the erosion of already-dire living standards among large sectors of the working class community. Not for nothing has South Africa carried the brand of “Protest Capital of the World.” The student uprisings are just the latest in a widespread movement of popular resistance to the system and its effects”

.Into November, the early spontaneity soon gave way to confusion. It was clear that the majority of students wished to “bank” the gains of 2015, and turn their attention to year-end examinations. However, a vociferous minority was hell-bent on keeping the protest blaze alive, with often violent and successful attempts to “close down” normal university operations. This was particularly the case at CPUT and TUT, incurring heavy-handed responses from university management. For example, management at CPUT summarily closed student residences in November ahead of exams (which they were forced to cancel) creating a short-term crisis for students living there.....” “

At the time of writing it has been reported that UJ has suspended three “trouble-makers” and CPUT have expelled 78 who had been arrested.

This will obviously have repercussions in the New Year!

The statement issued by us on 8 December continues

“It is not unlikely that the student movement in 2016 will become an arena of fierce contestation for influence by a number of organized formations, not least the various student organizations operating on all campuses. These include SASCO and PASMA, which – it is well-known – are the student wings of established mainstream political organizations in South Africa. It can therefore be expected that much student action in 2016 will be aimed at driving the agendas of these political organizations.

In this regard the statement sounds a warning about the involvement of the ANC and the EFF in particular.

Now notwithstanding the points made above, it should be noted that so far as the “rural” based universities are concerned, SASCO has played a more progressive role there in leading the student protests on those campuses.

The statement then goes on to identify key challenges facing the Left such as ensuring that students directly link their struggle to the anti-capitalist struggle, uniting the student struggle with the anti-capitalist struggles of all sectors of the working class – for decent housing, free comprehensive healthcare for all, the bringing of the economy under social control, etcetera. The point is made that a free education system comes into its own in the company of other free services such as housing, water, sanitation, etcetera – in other words, the replacement of market imperatives with those of a planned economy. “Other challenges include ensuring that students are not misled into seeing parliament as the panacea, but to focus on becoming part of the movement for a People’s Democracy, such that for the first time in the history of this country, the franchise comes to acquire real meaning for the mass of workers. And then, not least, there is the challenge to strive for non-racialism as a defining characteristic of struggle. “

In conclusion the statement reads:”It is critical for the Left to maintain awareness that while the student protests of 2015 are a critical contribution and forward-thrust in the struggle for a new (socialist) South Africa, the struggle for liberation is a long-term, protracted struggle. The ruling class is not about to roll over and die. It will rise in defence of its privileges, and resort to whatever it takes to preserve its hegemony. In every sense, the struggle continues. “

Overall one perceives two positive outcomes of the RMF and the FMF movements. The first relates to the possibility of the formation of a national politically non sectarian student/youth movement. The second and perhaps most significant is the fact that the students have seen the need for linking their needs to those of the non-academic work force on university campuses.

According reports one has seen, student leaders at Wits are involved in an initiative to form a national student’s movement. It has also been reported that during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Neville Alexander Memorial Conference that took place at the University of Johannesburg on 1 December a discussion with students from 20 universities took place around topics like: Outsourcing/insourcing, Fees, the curriculum, the right to Strike and violence against students and workers, the role of students in communities.

It is hoped that there will be ongoing engagement amongst students and that as we said in a commentary on the RMFmovement: “The need for a national non-sectarian student’s movement which having renounced the imperialist legacy bequeathed to them by Cecil John Rhodes will seek to build a legacy of transformation, freedom, anti-capitalism, genuine equality and overall human emancipation. This student movement must become conjoined with national campaign by youth, workers and peasants. The national youth movement must join in the building of a United Front and participate in the task of building programme for socialist transformation in our time”

But I wish to go beyond just commenting on the developments around these movements as I believe that the current situation in our tertiary institutions must be foregrounded by an assessment of the crisis in education in the schools which is showing signs of being affected by similar upheavals in the New Year.



## **THE GENERAL CRISIS IN EDUCATION**

As was stated in our bulletin of June 2012 “The situation has become so dire that a united and coherent response from civil society is called for. This attempt at a comprehensive overview of the education crisis is intended to provide a basis for ongoing discussion and debate aimed at uniting forces that must strive to put things right. “

“And as much as we believe that the crisis in education will ultimately not be resolved within the context of the neo-liberal economic policies which hold sway in much of the world, it is our contention that here in our country this circumstance has been exacerbated by the misguided policies of the ANC government. The implementation of OBE and its successor, the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), as well as the government’s preoccupation with matric exam results as a measure of success in turning things around, as they see it, have proved to be disastrous. “

We believe that the crisis in education is ultimately a manifestation of the negative consequences of the ANC government’s implementation of its neo-liberal inspired macro-economic policies as exemplified by GEAR and the NDP...

The New Unity Movement regards education as a universal and inalienable right from early childhood to adulthood. We believe in a system of education that will help create a caring society in which all South Africans will be treated on an equal basis and where all children will be encouraged and enabled to develop to their full potential. Such a system will not serve the interests of Capitalism-Imperialism but will promote the ethos of Socialism.

It is a truism that the system of education in this country cannot be transformed without thoroughgoing changes in all other spheres as well.

As is stated in our Ten-Point Programme (TPP) of Transitional Demands, the NUM is dedicated to bringing about a dispensation in which children are guaranteed a free, comprehensive education. Point 3 of the TPP reads as follows:

### **COMPULSORY, FREE AND EQUAL EDUCATION FOR ALL**

- The state will promote the participation of the citizens in the development of its educational policy.
- All racialism and ethnicism at all primary, secondary and tertiary levels must be removed. Non-racial schools, colleges, and further and higher education institutions shall be open to all who seek an education.
- Education in all public schools shall be free of tuition fees. It shall be the duty of the state to provide such education, which shall apply to all pupils from pre-primary levels up to matriculation, with free textbooks, stationery and school equipment, free meals and access to adequately trained teaching staff. In addition, it shall be the duty of the state to provide such learners with sponsored transport to and from schools and other learning sites. Each school shall be equipped with specified minimum learning facilities. These

will include an adequately stocked library of books and other graphic material conforming to specified minimum standards, with annual budgets to increase and maintain stocks. Such learning facilities will also include adequately resourced computer rooms, free Internet access, adequately resourced science laboratories, and suitable sports facilities such as playing fields and sports equipment.

- The learner-teacher ratio shall not exceed specified norms, which at all times will be conducive to proper learning by pupils.
- It shall be the responsibility of the state to ensure the safety and security of all learners and teachers. This will be ensured through the provision of school and educational buildings that meet specified minimum criteria, and through the provision of an on-site security presence at each institution.
- It shall be the duty of the state to fund the first three years of students' tertiary education. This means that tuition, books and other learning facilities shall be provided free of charge.
- The twin scourges of illiteracy and innumeracy are to be eliminated as a matter of highest priority. Adequate provision shall be made for Adult Basic Education and to ensure special education facilities for inclusive education.

We believe that the current conjuncture screams out for an organisation of progressive teachers who see their role as being that of promoting and practicing what Paolo Freire called the "Pedagogy of the Oppressed".

In 1986, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was formed in response to the education crisis prevailing then. It will be recalled that this was during the state of emergency in 1985 in which school boycotts were the order of the day and education for the children in the townships had ground to a halt.

The formation of the NECC that was initiated by the Soweto Parents Crisis Committee soon developed into a national movement with support from Cosatu, non-racial sports bodies, including the South African Council on Sport and regional PTSA's around the country.

The NECC raised the slogan "*People's education for People's power.*"

Sadly, this potentially powerful movement became a victim of the ANC's machinations in the negotiation process and the disastrous and opportunistic slogan: "Liberation First, Education Later." It is this slogan that contributed in no small way to the breaking down of the culture of teaching and learning in the schools of the oppressed.

Is the time not ripe for the creation of a successor to the NECC?

We certainly look forward to engaging with interested parties around the matters raised here.

### **MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS 2016 (ME2016)**

With the municipal elections scheduled for next year we can again expect the question of our non-involvement to come under scrutiny. Especially in the light of the fact that there has been talk from within Numsa and UF circles in favour of participating.

Our position on parliamentarism in general and our attitude to the municipal elections in particular was dealt with quite comprehensively in 2011.

So, whilst the issues that will confront the electorate in 2016, namely increasing poverty, social inequality and a widening class gap between rich and poor. won't be any different from those that presented themselves in 2014, the question that may well be posed is this; should the arrival on the scene of the EFF and the United Front give us pause and make us review our position? I think not!

Firstly, as alluded to already, whilst the question of the UF participating in the forthcoming elections or those beyond has been raised, I don't believe there is consensus on the matter.

Secondly, certain facts that have come to light recently cast a negative light on how parties involved in the UF with us are operating

For example, we have received reports that in Port Elizabeth, members of the SACP or ANC have approached UF and Numsa members, presumably out of fear that the DA might win there, for talks regarding building some kind of coalition to prevent this happening. This is reminiscent of the campaign spearheaded by Ronnie Kasrils in the run up to the parliamentary elections of 2014 which asked people not to vote for the ANC except where there was any chance of the DA winning in any constituency!

It so happens that a polemic around this question has developed between ourselves and WASP which is also involved in the UF and the MfS.

I will not go into the details of our debate with WASP save to say that we remain unconvinced of their reasons, given the prevailing circumstances for participating, We can see no reason for changing our own position as enunciated in 2011 and 2013.

## **THE RISE OF THE EFF**

Unlike the previous defector from the ANC, COPE, the EFF has shown itself to be a horse of a slightly different colour in the sense that they seem to have made it as an indisputable fact that the EFF's election campaign characterised by its anti-ANC rhetoric and calls for nationalisation had captured the imagination of large numbers of mainly former ANC supporters. This is reflected in the fact that they garnered more than 1.1million votes which is similar to the impact that COPE had made in the previous election and we all know what happened to them! .

The EFF has subsequently established itself as a thorn in the side of the ANC especially with its "pay-back-the-money" campaign and put itself in the media limelight through its publicity stunts like marching on the JSE and causing mayhem in parliament and with Julius Malema mouthing outrageous statements meant to unsettle either the ANC or big business.

In our own view however the EFF, which as always, will be keen to present itself as the one true opposition to ANC rule. Not only is the EFF married to the system of bourgeois (that is,

neoliberal) democracy, but it is even now openly following the well-worn collaborationist path of its forbear, the ANC, by engaging in “talks” with the capitalist masters. Just this week, there were reports of EFF leader Julius Malema visiting London to address investors at Chatham House, where, apparently, he was “a hit with” and “enthralled” UK investors! With the 2016 municipal elections around the corner, a key goal will no doubt be to woo student votes.

However my reason for focusing in the EFF in this way is twofold.

Firstly, given their radical sounding rhetoric they do have the potential for misleading large sections of the working class, the unemployed and the poor to vote for them in the forthcoming ME 2016

Secondly, one is intrigued by the fact that WASP which participated in the last national elections and by its own admission performed very poorly, styles itself as “the first party to emerge to the left of the ANC in the post-apartheid period with a revolutionary socialist programme”.

In a lengthy , but very revealing article published on the WASP website, Weizman Hamilton rebuts views expressed in article published in the Amandla magazine, written by Floyd Shivambu of the EFF.

In giving details of the origins of WASP Hamilton reveals the following facts: It was members of the Marxist Workers Tendency (MWT) of the ANC which went on to form the DSM (Democratic Socialist Movement) which in turn became part of WASP.

I won't go into all the details of the polemic with the EFF save to say that the EFF is seen in a very negative light by the WASP. What I do find disconcerting are the details given of talks between the two organizations which were held to explore the registering of a joint entity to participate in elections. Now notwithstanding the fact that we are told that these talks broke down, one is puzzled as to why WASP, given its denigration of the EFF in the article, would be prepared to forge an election pact with such an organization. One is concerned because of the fact that the WASP is a prominent participant in Numsa's UF initiative and is represented on the National Task Team of the MFS.

This to my mind is a clear violation of our sacrosanct policy of non-collaboration with agents of imperialism, which the EFF clearly is!

## **CONCLUSION**

I trust that the review of the events and developments detailed above will serve some useful purpose, if only in illustrating the fact that the international and national situations are closely interlinked and that one has to have an international perspective in order to understand the national situation and that the solution to our national problems cannot be seen in isolation from what is happening globally.

For example what is happening in Greece to-day in terms of IMF and WB induced austerity measures can quite easily become a reality for us here in South Africa also.

And that in terms of responding to the crisis of capitalism–imperialism an anti-capitalist, anti imperialist movement operating on a global scale is needed.

Organisations on the Left clearly need to engage around questions regarding strategies and tactics that need to be adopted; the role of vanguard parties vs social movements, the place role of anarcho-syndicalist movements for example.

I have tried to show that we are confronted by global and local challenges and whilst re-iterating our commitment to challenging the hegemony of the whole system of capitalism –imperialism we are painfully aware of the difficulties we will encounter in doing so based on the realization that there no quick fixes.

Not the least of those difficulties is trying to overcome certain entrenched views amongst .left leaning organizations which militates against building a unified left project.

It behoves all of us to engage in debates about the alternative to capitalism and how it can be overthrown, and in this regard I've alluded to the debates and discussions around the classical questions like reform or revolution.

**Let our watchwords be: Mobilise, Rebuild, Organise!**

**Forward to the building of a new movement against capitalism-imperialism – a Movement for Socialism!**

**Forward “Towards a Peoples Democracy”!**

**Forward to “Uniting social forces for alternative power”!**

**Aluta Continua!**

I thank you for your attention.

**Basil Brown**

President

18 December 2015

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