

Bulletin for Numsa's Special Congress:

# Sikhokhele NUMSA!



## Time for working class to build own party

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The Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) congratulates the NUMSA leadership for recognising the changed political situation post-Marikana that necessitated the calling of a special congress and for tabling an agenda that addresses the key issues facing the working class. The NUMSA leadership's stand is a reflection of the understanding that the NUMSA members themselves have of the worsening situation in South Africa, their frustration with it, but crucially the burning desire to act to change the course of events in favour of the working class.

WASP wants to share our views and offer fraternal advice to NUMSA members - and indeed to all those watching the unfolding crisis in Cosatu - on two of the agenda items for the upcoming special congress: (1) NUMSA's approach to 2014 elections, and (2) Building a unified Cosatu and labour movement.

### **NUMSA's approach to 2014 elections**

It is time that the undeniable truth is faced: the ANC leaders - including those SACP members who have repeatedly attacked Numsa - are conscious agents of the bosses and the capitalist class as a whole. The working class is politically disenfranchised. Nothing signifies this truth more than the attempt to drown in blood the mineworkers struggle at Marikana and the ANC's adoption of the pro-capitalist neo-liberal National Development Plan (NDP). The ANC has made it clear that the NDP will be central to their 2014 election campaign. As NUMSA has pointed out repeatedly, the NDP is identical to DA policy and a blueprint for an attack of the wages and living conditions of the working class. This means that the capitalists have two parties to represent their interests!

We wholeheartedly support the decision of NUMSA's CEC not to campaign for the ANC in 2014. We call on NUMSA members to mandate their delegates to the special congress to endorse this decision. Not a cent more of NUMSA members' money, or a single Numsa members vote should be used to help elect a government that will attack us!

But adopting this position will only pose a further question. With the ANC and the DA united in their vision for a future anti-working class capitalist South Africa - even if they squabble on the detail - where will opposition to the NDP come from in the post-2014 parliament? It is not enough to abandon the ANC. An alternative needs to be created. We call on Numsa members to mandate their



delegates to go further than rejecting the ANC and mandate them to support NUMSA throwing its weight behind a working class and socialist political alternative to the ANC in time for the 2014 elections.

With the struggles that loom in the coming months and years, even a small grouping of MPs in the national parliament would be an important ancillary to the struggles that will be waged in the workplaces, communities and education institutions. Such a grouping could act as a tribune in advocating a socialist alternative to the neo-liberal NDP, and, in articulating this alternative, act as a lightning rod to galvanize the working class and forge unity in struggle.

To help make this happen we call on Numsa to take its place in the leadership of the Workers and Socialist Party. WASP was launched out of the mineworkers' struggles of last year with the aim of uniting the struggles of the working class. WASP is organised in a democratic and federal way that would allow NUMSA to nominate its own candidates to stand for election under the WASP umbrella. NUMSA could take its opposition to the NDP into the class enemy's bastion in the national parliament.

We recognise that in making such a bold move, the break-up of Cosatu would be posed. But the responsibility for any formal split would lie squarely with those who betrayed Cosatu's traditions of struggle, solidarity and socialism - the pro-Zuma/ANC union leaders. Undoubtedly this clique will accuse Numsa of the very thing they have achieved. But the so-called unity the pro-Zuma/ANC faction offers

is nothing but the unity of the graveyard.

### **Building a Unified Cosatu and labour movement**

The NUMSA leadership has taken a bold stand in defending Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi. A battle is underway for the heart and soul of Cosatu. Whilst we hold no brief for Vavi as an individual, he has become the focus for those forces seeking to save the traditions of struggle, solidarity and socialism in the federation - with NUMSA at the fore - traditions that the ANC wishes to wipe-out. The ANC is attempting to turn Cosatu into a 'labour desk' and neutralise any opposition to their pro-capitalist policies as Numsa has repeatedly warned.

It is to be applauded that the NUMSA leadership has campaigned tirelessly to force the pro-Zuma leaders to call a Cosatu special congress that will allow the Cosatu rank-and-file a say in the future of their federation. And it is absolutely correct for the NUMSA leadership to position NUMSA's own special congress as a planning meeting to devise a strategy to "reclaim Cosatu as an independent, militant, revolutionary, fighting and campaigning federation". NUMSA must mobilise well beyond its own members to wage a determined struggle at the Cosatu special congress.

But we must be clear that the pro-Zuma leaders will use every dirty trick in the book to try and defeat NUMSA. They will not 'play fair'. They may even attempt to prevent the congress going ahead or delay it until after the 2014 elections. It is crucial that Numsa

makes it clear that the congress must be held no later than the end of January or NUMSA will be forced to draw the conclusion that the federation is lost.

We must also warn that even if the pro-Zuma trade union leaders, arms twisted by an ANC leadership fearful of destroying their best electoral machine, make concessions to preserve the Tripartite Alliance at least until after the election, even to the point of reinstating Vavi, the ANC will still be taking the Alliance into the elections on the basis of the neo-liberal NDP. Additionally, any compromise at the Cosatu special congress would only be a temporary ceasefire. Just as they came for Vavi after the ANC's Mangaung conference, the pro-Zuma leaders will bide their time, and, post-2014, exact their revenge on Vavi, Jim and all those trade union leaders who have sought to defend the traditions of Cosatu. In a short space of time, counted in weeks from an ANC victory in 2014, the comrades will face the same dilemma they face now.

The programme that NUMSA must stand upon to fight at the Cosatu special congress must include the following: (1) Cosatu out of the Tripartite Alliance, (2) including the resignation of all Cosatu office holders from ANC and SACP positions, (3) for Cosatu to play a central role in the building of a mass working class party, (3) the removal of all Cosatu leaders and fresh elections.

The NUMSA leadership recognises the danger of a being outmanoeuvred by the pro-Zuma trade union leaders and have said that the NUMSA special congress "must also discuss what we should do if our plans to reclaim Cosatu do not succeed". It is excellent that this question is being posed head on. We believe that NUMSA must break with the ANC and the Tripartite Alliance regardless of the outcome of the Cosatu special congress if NUMSA is to continue to be seen as the leading voice

of working class interests and socialism by the millions of workers looking toward them. But a defeat at the Cosatu special congress poses the additional question: should NUMSA break with Cosatu and initiate the formation of a new federation?

### Building workers unity now

The most serious consequence of the crisis in Cosatu is the fracturing of working class unity. This is weakening all workers whether inside or outside Cosatu. As NUMSA has warned, the crisis has led to the paralysis of Cosatu as a leader of united working class struggle. Inevitably workers are not waiting for their bankrupt leaders. New unions are being formed out of splits in Cosatu affiliates. In other cases, workers are moving between unions en masse. Sometimes this is between Cosatu affiliates; sometimes this is out of Cosatu affiliates to independent unions, for example the exodus from NUM to AMCU. In struggle workers have turned to non-union structures to lead strikes such as the mineworkers and farmworkers use of independent strike committees to organise and lead struggle on their own terms. A complicated and fractured picture is emerging.

Without an organised pole to regroup those forces leaving Cosatu that can simultaneously act as a bridge to those remaining in Cosatu for now, the capitalist class will be able to utilise our divisions in order to attack. The imposition of e-tolls, retrenchments in the mining sector, labour broking, the youth-wage subsidy and many other issues requires that we act now. We must not allow the capitalists to storm through the breach in our defences, but must lead the charge in the regrouping of all class conscious workers even in advance of being faced with the decision to launch a new federation out of the Cosatu special congress. No time can be lost in raising the banner of working class unity.

WASP has made the call for the founding of a Socialist Trade Union Network that would put the issue of workers' unity centre stage by being open to all workers willing to struggle regardless of industrial and political affiliation. On this basis the network could begin to play the role of uniting the working class on the industrial front in the manner WASP is attempting on the political plane. We call on NUMSA to co-launch the network with WASP and others as a way to foster unity, build solidarity and extend the hand of friendship to those workers for now imprisoned in the pro-Zuma led unions.

### NUMSA lead the way!

If NUMSA were to initiate the formation of a new federation, founded on Cosatu's original traditions, in reality the re-founding of Cosatu away from those who betrayed it, the mass exodus from NUM that followed NUM's betrayals in the mining industry last year could be repeated across all of the unions led by the pro-Zuma clique. Workers in every sector are already following the lead of the mineworkers and heading out of their respective Cosatu affiliates and out of the federation. The splits and developing splits in a whole number of Cosatu affiliates over recent months and years indicates this.

If NUMSA were to make the call for a new federation, Cosatu could be re-born and the road to re-building working class unity embarked upon. In breaking with the Alliance, re-founding Cosatu, and taking its rightful place in the leadership of WASP, a platform would be created from which to call an Assembly for Working Class unity that could unite the struggles of the working class as a whole behind a challenge in 2014 to the neo-liberalism of the NDP and the ANC that advocates it. The banner of struggle, solidarity and socialism, in true keeping with the best traditions of NUMSA and Cosatu itself, could be raised high again.

## WASP's basic manifesto

- **ECONOMY.** Nationalise the mines, the factories, the farms, the banks and big business. Nationalised industry to be under the democratic control of workers and working class communities. For a workers' government. A publicly owned and democratically planned socialist economy to meet the needs of all and not the profits of the capitalists.
- **WORK.** Decent jobs for all. End unemployment. Struggle for a living wage of R12 500 per month. Create employment and socially-useful jobs through a mass public works programme including the building of houses, roads, schools and hospitals. For a reduction in the working week without loss of pay and the sharing out of work to address unemployment, workers' quality of life and as the basis for workers control and management of the economy.
- **SERVICE DELIVERY.** For free, sufficient and accessible public services for all. Stop cut-offs and evictions. End homelessness with a mass public works programme to build 2.5 million decent homes and roads and to provide free, accessible and sufficient electricity, water, sanitation, public transport and social services for all. Scrap e-tolls.
- **EDUCATION.** For publicly funded, free, accessible and high quality education for all. Cancel student debt.
- **HEALTH.** For publicly funded free, accessible and high quality health care for all.

**JOIN WASP**  
Workers & Socialist Party  
SMS "JOIN" + your name + your area to 076 977 9997



WASP spokespeople Mametlwe Sebei & Liv Shange