

# 10 interview

## The role of Nehawu, SAMWU and EFF in #OMF

# The “friends” of the workers?

#OutsourcingMustFall was organised as a broad campaign with all organisations that supported the workers' demands welcome to participate. Unfortunately, some organisations – including the ANC-aligned Cosatu unions, the National Health & Allied Workers Union (Nehawu) and the South African Municipal Workers Union (SAMWU), as well as the Economic Freedom Fighters – did not act in the spirit of the campaign.

Izwi spoke to Austin Mofya, a WASP member and GIWUSA union organiser, who is playing a leading role in #OutsourcingMustFall in Tshwane.

### Austin Mofya, interview

#### What was NEHAWU's attitude to outsourced workers before the #OMF campaign began?

Nehawu has in all the past years rejected outsourced workers saying it does not take casual workers. Nehawu organised permanent workers in a lot of workplaces where there were also outsourced workers. Often workers approached Nehawu wanting Nehawu to become their trade union but Nehawu rejected those workers stating that they're casual workers and they do not deal with casual workers. I for one see Nehawu as a union that deprived workers the opportunity to become protected from the challenges of workplaces.

#### What are NEHAWU saying now, three months after #OMF showed that outsourcing can be beaten?

It is shocking, not only to the outsourced workers but to the labour movement at large. After so many years of workers suffering this slavery, Nehawu now comes with no shame to try and be part of the party, after organisations like WASP and GIWUSA have initiated the #OMF campaign. But they have not come with the attitude of approaching the campaign to support it. Amazingly Nehawu came as an opportunist by going straight to the workers without even coming to those who had initiated the campaign. That indicates on its own that Nehawu wants nothing to do with workers except to gain from the very small wages that they are earning. I have never heard a word of support from Nehawu for #OMF even though we have been the drivers of the fight against outsourcing from day one.



Austin Mofya leads an #OutsourcingMustFall march through Pretoria CBD

#### There was an incident at TUT where workers were attacked. What is your understanding of the role of NEHAWU in that incident?

I feel pity for any workers who have faith in a union like Nehawu. They played the role of a stumbling bloc in negotiations between workers and TUT management by deliberately delaying the talks. They clearly sent students to attack workers [via the ANC-aligned SASCO] at TUT forgetting that students are the children of those workers. They turned the workplace into a battleground. When we started the campaign we clearly indicated that unity amongst students and workers is key and we continuously said that workers would need student support. Nehawu played a terrible role trying to divide workers and students. The only reason I can see for this is that Nehawu wanted those workers for themselves even though they had failed them in the past.

#### Did the EFF support the #OMF campaign?

I can say that they partly supported the campaign. Unfortunately though, they viewed workers struggle as a moment to score political points. If EFF wanted to support the campaign of outsourced workers they should have understood their role as being to support the workers not hijack the struggle. If you could hear how EFF approached issues with workers, they were more interested with their own gains than pushing the demands of workers. I do not understand why a political party comes to try and score political points when the mandate of the workers is clear: political parties were called to support the demands of workers.

#OMF was very clear that it operated from the mandate of workers. We did not just wake-up and make demands on behalf

of workers. We consulted and talked with all those workers in mass meetings at Burgers Park. With EFF their arrogance and their hunger for political power is a problem. They forgot we are dealing with issues of workers and sent students to take leadership of the workers struggle. But leadership must be clear: is there is workers' struggle then workers must lead. At Unisa especially, EFF hijacked a programme that was not their programme. But they could not finish what they did not start and had to invite #OMF back.

WASP played a very important role by not pursuing an agenda separate to supporting the demands of workers. Workers will decide afterwards what to do with their political future and which is the relevant organisation to go for, instead of being publicly obsessed and showing hunger for political point scoring.

#### How do the workers view the EFF now?

Many workers have opened their eyes and see EFF as a stumbling block to the success of their struggles. They do not appreciate the conduct of EFF in their struggle. They view them as point-scoring opportunists with an arrogant leadership that listens to no one but themselves.

#### What role has SAMWU played in the struggle of COT workers?

The issue of outsourcing has existed across the municipality. SAMWU should have tackled the issue years ago but instead just stop anyone from outside of Cosatu from campaigning against outsourcing. They want to get their hands on the workers money and nothing else. Groups of municipality workers joined #OMF after organising themselves. SAMWU is there as a skeleton doing nothing but conniving with management.