

EFF silent on metro job losses

A dress rehearsal for propping up capitalism after 2019 elections

In 2016 the EFF assisted the DA to power in Tshwane, Johannesburg and Nelson Mandela Bay (NMB). In recent weeks they have threatened to collapse the same DA-led minority administrations. This has raised important questions about the tactics needed for using elected positions in the capitalist state to push forward the interests of workers, the poor and youth.

The working class needs its own party. But it could not be 'like all the others' – asking for a vote once every five years and then simply leaving everything to councillors and MPs in between. A party genuinely representing the interests of the working class and poor majority would first and foremost be a party of struggle – organising and mobilising workers, the poor and the youth to campaign for permanent jobs, living wages, decent service delivery and free education.

The role of workers' MPs and councillors would be to support struggle. Elected positions would be used to *expose* the capitalist parties and politicians; to reveal how *undemocratic* today's 'bourgeois' (i.e. capitalist) democracy is; and, to "speak to the windows" – to the masses outside, popularising the ideas of socialism and the methods of struggle.

Is the EFF the kind of party that the working class needs? Unfortunately, we would have to say no. We believe that the recent experience, especially in Tshwane, has given hard evidence that the EFF is not fundamentally different to the other capitalist parties.

Some might ask: then why talk about them? That is determined by the EFF leadership. It is they who insist that the EFF is a radical alternative. Further, within the new Saftu trade union federation EFF supporters are positioning themselves against the idea of a new workers party on the basis that "we have the EFF". It is therefore our duty to examine this claim.

Tshwane

The DA-led City of Tshwane is terminating contracts with outsourced security companies. As a result up to 3,000 workers will lose their jobs. But workers have organised to fight. Many are EFF members and expected the EFF councillors to come to their defence. So it came as a shock to find out that the EFF supported the DA's plan! This is not an isolated episode. The Jozi@Work and Ace Parking workers in Johannesburg also

faced job losses at the hands of the DA, with the EFF remaining quiet.

At a mass meeting in June senior EFF leaders and councillors pleaded with workers to agree that new tenders should be issued. The only 'strategy' they offered workers was to go and apply for jobs with the new companies! But workers were clear that they wanted to be insourced. EFF leaders were forced to abandon their speeches, shouted-down by a furious crowd. We believe that the EFF leadership hopes to benefit from the new security tenders. But we stand to be corrected. We would welcome a statement from the EFF clarifying that they are opposed to outsourcing *in principle* and that none of their councillors or leaders will benefit from this super-exploitation of workers.

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The EFF was nevertheless forced to place itself at the head of the security workers campaign but at each step they have acted to divert attention from the inaction of the EFF councillors. When WASP members pointed out that the EFF holds the balance of power in Tshwane, and should use that to save jobs, we have been accused of "playing politics". We asked the simple question: is the DA mayor's job more important than the jobs of 3,000 workers? The EFF believes so.

Workers understood that the EFF had the power to force the hand of the DA. At WASP's suggestion it was agreed to draft a council motion guaranteeing the workers' jobs. It would only take two councillors to force the council to debate it. We argued that surely the EFF would sponsor the motion. Then it would be for the DA and ANC to vote it down. However, we suspected that the ANC would support the motion in order to frustrate the DA. This was a danger for the EFF leadership – that the motion might succeed!

Confirming our suspicions, WASP members were then removed from the security workers' WhatsApp group and the committee meeting venue changed. To our knowledge the motion was thrown in the bin to protect the EFF councillors and their business aspirations.

Contrast

But the EFF was willing to threaten the collapse of all three DA-led minority administrations over the sacking of NMB UDM deputy mayor Bobani. In response to this, EFF councillors boycotted council meetings paralysing the DA administrations. They said this was to teach the DA how to work with small parties. But this was posturing and not part of a serious strategy to bring down these anti-working class administrations. The EFF were in their seats for the September council meetings without any explanation of why they were again able to work with the DA.

In Mogale City, Julius Malema himself publicly threatened disciplinary action against EFF councillors who voted with the ANC to pass a budget. It was not the content of the budget that was the problem it was that the councillors gave support to the ANC.

The EFF's tactics are focused entirely on squabbles with other capitalist parties over who is to profit from control of the capitalist state. They have no vision for how to use their councillors to advance the struggles of the working class. On the contrary the EFF appears to be using its local government positions as a dress rehearsal for the role they hope to play nationally after the 2019 elections. There is a strong possibility that the ANC may not be able to win enough votes to govern on its own, forcing it to look for coalition partners. The EFF's actions in Tshwane, Joburg and NMB show that their leadership has no problem with bending principles to fit opportunist objectives. If the EFF is prepared to prop up neo-liberal administrations in the metros why would they not be prepared to play the same role in a pro-capitalist coalition at a national level where the spoils of office are much greater?

The need for a socialist mass workers party with accountable and recallable public representatives, earning no more than the average wage of a skilled worker, has not been answered by the EFF.

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