

## Time to organise our communities...

# Build a new socialist civic federation

The hopes our communities had for improvements in living standards after 1994 have been betrayed by the ANC government. Millions of people are still waiting for a house and adequate and affordable water, sanitation, electricity and roads. After twenty years, what are the ANC government and councils waiting for? It is clear that only struggle will take us forward.

The Workers & Socialist Party is calling for the creation of a country-wide socialist civic federation with a united programme of demands. A country-wide civic movement could lead national campaigns for house building, free education and job creation and coordinate service delivery protests turning them into a mighty national movement fighting for the development of our communities.

The ANC leadership and its armies of councillors and MECs have failed us because they sold-out to the super-rich capitalist bosses. So has the ANC-supporting SA National Civic Organisation (SANCO). The ANC government runs society in the interests of the rich, not in the interests of working class and poor communities. Through corruption, tenders and other kick-backs many in the ANC are rewarded for betraying our communities. The capitalist bosses and the ANC elite see building houses and providing services as a cash cow to raise their own living standards.

Things will get worse unless we struggle. If we do not fill the leadership vacuum in our communities with mass organisation and socialist ideas we will see people resorting to crime – including drugs, burglary, muggings, theft and violence against women – as

they struggle to survive in a war of all against all. We will also see continuing outbreaks of xenophobic violence. But if we are organised to fight for jobs, houses and service delivery we can stop this from happening.

There are **40** service delivery protest every day

In the vacuum left by the ANC, many independent civics, crisis committees and community forums have already been created. But these heroic efforts at organisation are isolated. The outbursts of community anger that lead to headline-grabbing service delivery protests are also isolated and uncoordinated. We need to bring discipline and organisation to the determination of our communities. A new civic federation is necessary to turn isolated local protests that

government can easily ignore into co-ordinated country-wide protests, with hundreds of communities protesting on the same day, on the same issue, raising the same demands. Where communities need to struggle on a specific local issue the entire federation could be mobilised in support.

Where communities are already organised, their structures could act together in such a new federation. If communities are not organised, then they must get organised. (See Izwi says box). But local community structures must not be talking shops. They need to be action committees. They need to extend mass democratic control over the life of our communities. This is how we can begin to immediately make a difference to our living standards and fight against corruption and the crime that blights our lives.

### IZWI SAYS:

- Build democratic, accountable mass community organisations in every community.
- For accountability and complete transparency in our community organisations. Leaders to be accountable and recallable. Mass community meetings to decide on all major issues.
- Link-up all community organisations in a country-wide socialist civic federation beginning at local, municipal and provincial level.
- Organise disciplined community struggles and begin to coordinate those struggles through the civic federation.
- Build up to a community general strike and national service delivery day of action including a national march, reaching out to other sections of the working class for support – the trade unions, the youth etc.
- Nothing for communities, without communities. Scrutinise the work of local councillors and local councils. Delegates from community structures to observe all council meetings and report back; organise lobbies and protests outside meetings where this is refused.

## Communities: challenge in 2016 elections!

The local elections in mid-2016 offer an opportunity for communities to challenge corrupt and ineffective councillors. We cannot again vote for an ANC that is failing us, nor any of the other parties that support pro-rich policies at the expense of the working class and poor. Boycotting (not voting) just lets the same politicians get back in to office on fewer votes.

We need a fighting alternative. Community structures should stand their own candidates on a socialist programme (see box opposite). Candidates must be

selected by mass meetings of the community. They must be the best community fighters, pledging to take only the average wage of people in the community. The mandate of anyone elected will be to open up a second front of struggle in the council chamber and report back every tiny detail of council business to mass meetings, only taking mandates from the community.

Communities in Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Gauteng are already planning challenges in 2016.

The ANC has never been weaker electorally. In the 2014 national elections they barely achieved 50% of the vote in the key metros of Johannesburg, Tshwane, Ekurhuleni and Nelson Mandela Bay. In the 2016 local elections they could lose these metros.

## Socialist Civic Programme

We need to link the struggle to improve our communities to the struggle for a different way of running society. More of the same capitalist poison that the ANC government and councils have given us these past twenty years will not help our communities – we need to struggle for socialism! Capitalism cannot deliver because it is based on inequality – low wages and services on the cheap mean bigger profits for the bosses.

A socialist society would be run in the interests of the working class and poor. Wealth would be used to benefit **all** in society not just the super-rich capitalist bosses at the top. That is why we need to organise our communities on a socialist programme and fight for it with socialist methods of mass democratic struggle. Below are extracts from WASP's socialist civic programme. The full programme can be read on our website.

Create jobs, share out the work fairly

- Civic federation to campaign and fight for a fully-enforced national minimum wage; mass job creation programmes; labour registers to match job vacancies with workers; and a mass apprenticeship programme with a guaranteed job at the end.
- Community organisations to establish labour desks and draw up registers of the unemployed and their skills; negotiate with local businesses the employment of a quota of workers from these registers when filling vacancies, the number depending on the circumstances of the business. Regular community inspection of registers to protect against corruption.
- Stop greedy bosses abusing foreign workers and undercutting wages! Trade unions to organise foreign workers. Community organisations and local businesses must agree community-wide minimum wages.

Housing allocation

- Civic federation to campaign and fight for a mass house building programme to provide everyone with a decent home with adequate and cheap electricity, water and sanitation.
- Housing waiting lists to be under the democratic control of community organisations using fair and objective criteria to prioritise housing allocation, including current housing situation, number of dependents and length of time on waiting list. Need must determine allocation.
- Fight evictions and forced removals. Campaign for cancellation of all rent and rates arrears for working class communities.

Electricity

- Community struggle to fight electricity cut-offs! Campaign for cancellation of all electricity arrears for working class communities.
- No to pre-paid electricity meters. For a sliding-scale of

tariffs – the more you earn the more you pay. Adequate and free basic electricity provision for unemployed and pensioners.

Crime & Xenophobia

- Participate in the Community Policing Forums and fight for genuine community oversight of policing to combat corruption, harassment and the waste of resources; organise community-watch programmes under the democratic control of community organisations with the mass participation of the community.
- Organise mass community mobilisations against gangsterism and organised crime.
- Organise to stop xenophobic violence. Organise community-watch programmes under the democratic control of community organisations with the mass participation of the community to protect foreign residents and foreign businesses against xenophobic violence.

## Building unity in Tshwane



Meeting of All-Tshwane Communities Forum in July 2015

Community structures and activists from Atteridgeville, Mamelodi & Stoffelburg, Ga-Rankua, Arcadia, Capital Park, Bronkhorstspuit and Ekangala, as well as representatives of the Rwandan, Somali and

Eritrean communities have begun organising together in Tshwane. This unity has already shaken the municipality who have stopped the forced removal of residents from the Stoffelburg informal settlement in Mamelodi.