



FOR A UNITED SOCIALIST CIVIC FEDERATION



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PART 1: A Platform for Community Struggle and Action

This platform is a call to action to coordinate the struggles of communities to organise resistance against the now thirty-year-long attacks on the working class as a whole. Over and above the struggle the working class is fighting as workers and youth, women are organising against gender-based violence, oppression and discrimination in the workplace. Students and youth fight financial and academic exclusion, unaffordable accommodation, NSFAS corruption, for free education and jobs. Organised workers are fighting casualisation, poverty wages and retrenchments and the reversal of legal protection against unfair labour practices including dismissal and more seriously the right to strike. A common message runs through these attacks: the working class must pay for the crisis created by the capitalist class and their government.

The struggles of the working class are, however, fought in silos. Communities, youth students, and organised workers have fought battles in each theatre, separate from others. Even within each theatre, there is no unity. On the other side of the class barricades, however, as the ANC-led Government of National Unity (GNU) has demonstrated within its first 100 days, the capitalist class and its political executive committee, the GNU, are united as never before against the working class.

It has become clear that since the GNU was inaugurated on June 14, 2024, it has embarked on a total onslaught on the working class in collaboration with the bosses. This offensive, rooted in the crisis of capitalism, is targeted at all sectors of the working class: communities, youth, students, women, and organised workers.

The GNU itself has set the tone for the entire ruling capitalist class. The savage budget cuts provided for in the ANC Government's 2022 Medium Term Budget Policy Statement, consolidated in October this year, are now being implemented by all its capitalist GNU partners. Provincial governments, irrespective of which party leads their coalitions, have responded to the requirement to cut spending in line with the national budget. Their plans include not filling vacant health, social services, early childhood development and school transport posts. They are effectively destroying jobs whilst there is mass unemployment.

At the national level, the GNU has adopted an aggressive, hostile posture in the public sector salary negotiations. It initially responded to the public sector unions' 12% wage demand with an insulting 3%—a cut in real terms given that inflation is at 4.4%. Since then, the Finance Minister has rejected the 4.7% revised proposal mediators put to government and the unions at the Public Service Coordinating Bargaining Council. This is a confirmation that the government regards collective bargaining as dead. This is in line with unilateral the 2018 3-year agreement the government repudiated with the backing of the Constitutional Court in 2020, when it refused to pay the 3rd leg. The 2020 wage theft was followed by public sector workers receiving below inflation increases, suffering a total 9.3% cut in income since then.

Private sector bosses have opened their own front in this war against the working-class with a new wave of redundancies. Thirty years of neo-liberal capitalism under the ANC Government has led to unemployment of 12.4m (42.6%). 70.6% of the unemployed are youth. According to Stats SA's 2024 2nd quarter report, the bosses are drowning more workers in the sea of mass unemployment. Ninety two thousand fewer people were employed by the end of June this year than at the beginning of 2024 in a retrenchments wave

that started seriously in 2023. However, the mining bosses heeded the ANC Government's call to postpone further retrenchments until after the elections. Since then, 9,622 jobs have been lost in the mines this year alone so far, with further retrenchment threatened eg by Arcelor Mittal as an xmas present of destitution for workers and their families. This brings the total number of people thrown onto the scrap heap of unemployment year-on-year since June 2023 to 144,000.

Nor is this class war limited to budget, wage and job cuts. Power and water cuts have become the method used to "solve" the problem of failing infrastructure. In the part of the world inhabited by the working class, "load reduction" has the same effect as loadshedding. Yet the Government and the bosses pat themselves on the back – praising a fish for swimming - for reaching 200 days with the return of load shedding. In addition, communities now have water shedding for weeks, with supply frequently interrupted by cut-offs or throttled pressure. In this world, corruption stares its victims, working-class communities, insolently in the face.

The crisis in the Middle East is threatening to expand into a regional war. Israel's threat to bomb oil facilities in Iran – the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries' third biggest oil producer – already pushed up the world crude oil spot price by 17% in a week. If Israel carries out its threat, the price will increase much more. The inflationary effect will ripple across the world and SA economy. The SA Reserve Bank's much-praised interest rate reduction cycle, which had only just begun, started with a negligible 0.25%. Combined with the possibility of a war-inflated fuel price increase, the economic convulsions that may follow globally following Trump's victory in the US elections, the SA Reserve Bank may call these reductions to a halt and increase them once again.

Working-class communities need organised and programmatic unity in action.

The unity of the working class has never been more necessary. Unity, however, requires firstly organisation. But that, in turn, requires a democratically agreed common platform of

demands. The fulfilment of those demands, in turn, requires a programme of action within each theatre of struggle and across them. Our aim must be to unite the different battalions of the oppressed and exploited into one army of working-class resistance and the unavoidable necessity for a counter-offensive. This platform and programme of action aim to bring working-class communities together in a united struggle against their common class enemy – the ANC-led GNU and the capitalist masters it serves.

Service Delivery Protests – a two—decade long history of struggle

Working-class communities have been fighting against attacks on services since at least 2004. The realisation of working-class communities that there is no alternative but to fight set in as long ago as 2004 when what is now known as service delivery protests began. Working-class communities have expressed their anger in an active form in a wave of more or less continuous extra-parliamentary revolts from that time onwards. This is how SA came to be classified as the protest capital of the world - with more protests per head of population than any other country globally.

Paul Holden and Martin Plaut pointed out in their book, 'Who Rules South Africa', that service delivery protests brought more than two million people onto the streets every year between 2008 and 2012. The rate of protests rose dramatically in the first eight months of 2012, even before the Marikana massacre. By the middle of February 2014, Max Du Preez reported in the Pretoria News (14/02/2014) that there were "nearly 3,000 protest actions in the last 90 days – more than 30 a day – involving more than a million people."

GNU and bosses in a coordinated assault on the working class

According to the Institute of Economic Justice (IEJ), budget cuts in 2024, as over the last decade, will continue to shut the lid firmly on any possibility of escape from social deprivation. Budget expenditure between 2019/20 and 2026/27, according to the IEJ, will have been cut by R270 billion. They calculated that this translates into every person in the country having 23% less to spend over the 8 years from 2019/2020 to

2026/27. That figure will weigh far more heavily on working class people.

The ANC-led GNU has declared a class war on working-class people. The National Development Plan is the platform, and austerity is the GNU's programme of action, to which all GNU partners have had to pledge allegiance.

The Government and the bosses have embarked on a coordinated, simultaneous assault on the working class on multiple fronts. In preparation for this class war, the bosses have tabled several amendments to the labour laws at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) that will further erode hard-won workers' right to be protected from exploitation.

These include:

- the right of an employer to dismiss a worker without a formal disciplinary hearing
- removal of protection against unfair dismissal of workers younger than 30 years old for the first 6 months of employment.
- Unfair conduct by the employer no longer applies to promotion, demotion, probation or training, or the provision of benefits to an employee.
- workers will have to wait for 6 months instead of 3 to be deemed permanent.
- by deducting contributions to bonuses and provident funds currently included in the minimum wage, the slave-level national minimum wage of R27.58 an hour will be further reduced before the wage is paid.

Cosatu, in particular, must take full responsibility for conceding to Ramaphosa's demand to cripple the right to picket and to strike with compulsory secret ballots. This attack on the right to strike is imported from Britain's Margaret Thatcher, the prime minister most hated by the working class in British history to date. Cosatu's weakness invited this aggression. The bosses' appetite for concessions has grown with the eating. The capitalists want belatedly to build a monument to the late Tito Mboweni, who, as Labour Minister, called for a labour law regime that makes it easier to fire, allegedly to make it easier to hire.

The unions' failure to fight the 2020 wage theft has rendered collective bargaining meaningless. It has been reduced to a ritual where public sector unions are simply told how deep the next cut will be.

All of these attacks indicate that the GNU and the bosses are on a class war footing. The working class must prepare to defend itself by going on a war footing too. In preparation, it is necessary to be familiar with the terrain of struggle to be clear about what we are up against.

Local Government – the frontline of the class war

At the local Government level, the total weight of the social and economic crisis rests the most heavily on the shoulders of all sections of the working class. The crisis and the attacks impact township and informal settlement residents the most, and increasingly, more well-off middle-class suburbs. Youth, students, public and private sector workers fortunate to survive the deluge of retrenchments, and the unemployed all suffer.

Working class communities are where workers return to at the end of their shifts. They come home to overcrowded houses and shacks, streets littered with uncollected garbage and potholes, and spillage of raw sewage and water from burst water and sewage pipes. Often, there is no electricity in the streets or homes. This increases the frightening levels of crime: robbery, assaults, murder, rape, the mushrooming of drug addiction, smuggling and gangsterism.

The Whitaker Peace and Development Initiative's 2024 Violence Survey found that "82% of respondents reported feeling unsafe in their community. 36% of respondents claimed to never feel safe in 2024 — double those in 2020 (18%). 53% of women experienced gender-based violence." Yet, the Government's austerity measures have forced many women's shelters to close their doors when they are often the only protection women have when violent partners threaten their lives.

Municipal dysfunction

GNU Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) Velenkosini Hlabisa reported to parliament that 41 of the country's 257

municipalities are currently under administration, up from the 32 reported at the beginning of 2024. The 2021/22 Audit Report released by the Auditor-General (AG) in May 2023 showed that only 38 municipalities received a clean bill of health — a further decrease from the previous reporting period. Others struggle to pay staff salaries and employment benefits, deliver basic services such as refuse collection, or provide drinkable water and sanitation.

The AG points out they suffer from inadequate skills, governance failures, and a lack of accountability. They racked up R4.74bn in fruitless and wasteful expenditures. Financial losses associated with non-compliance, fraud, and material irregularities stood at R5.19 billion. She reports that of the 257 municipalities, more than 120 have corruption cases under investigation by the Hawks.

Working-class communities bear the brunt of the consequences, including paying with their lives. Thirty-one died in the cholera outbreak in mid-2023 in Hammanskraal, Tshwane. It resulted from a corrupt contract to repair and upgrade water treatment works. It is now well known that infrastructure is deliberately damaged to create a water shortage. The water mafia of criminal syndicates supply water to residents, reduced to the indignity of queuing for water for hours from water tankers procured in corruptly awarded contracts.

An estimated 50% of the water from bulk water suppliers in South Africa does not reach the end consumer due to leakages, theft, and failing infrastructure. This is not a water scarcity issue. It is an institutional failure issue – the failure of municipalities to maintain and upgrade their water infrastructure. That failure originates at the top – from national Government budget cuts aggravated by corruption.

Electricity increases

In 2023, the ANC Government announced a plan to provide debt relief to municipalities that collectively owe Eskom R87bn. Municipalities were required to provide proof that they had (i) set the electricity rates at Nersa's "cost recovery level" and (ii) forced 80% of the people to pay to qualify for the annual instalment of the relief. This

meant those who could not afford to pay would have to be cut off.

Another condition for municipalities benefitting from debt relief is maintaining a minimum average quarterly collection rate from customers for property rates and services. They must achieve 80% from April 1, 2023, 85% in 2024, and 95% from April 1, 2025. Enforcing these conditions requires electricity cut-offs. Municipalities would have had to go to war against working-class communities.

This year, however, Treasury has been forced to admit that the plan has failed. On the one hand, they have been unable to tap blood out of the stone of impoverished people who overwhelmingly are unable to pay the exorbitant tariffs. On the other hand, the budget cuts themselves have impeded the municipalities' ability to govern. Both of these were foreseeable. Contemplating such a plan shows this Government's blindness to the consequences of its policies and that the implications on the lives of working class people leaves them cold.

In this display of a cold, callous, anti-working-class outlook, the Government denounces the inability to pay as a "culture of non-payment." Those who, in desperation, connect electricity illegally are insulted on public billboards as "izinyoka" (snakes). The ruling elite is criminalising poverty by deliberately conflating the desperately poor with criminal syndicates exploiting the crisis the Government has itself created.

The Government decided on these conditions irrespective of the fact that non-payment is clearly driven by mass unemployment, poverty and the consequent inability to pay the extortionate tariffs that Eskom now wants. Treasury proceeded despite admitting: "Our assessment, particularly in the 43 crisis municipalities, showed that many municipalities, particularly smaller ones, do not have tariffs that recover what it costs them to provide their services ...: yet their advice to municipalities is: "Some tariff increases could be significant, so it is vital that a municipality doesn't introduce a one-off tariff increase, but that this is phased in over a few years, said the Treasury's Marli van der Woude." This is the equivalent of being sentenced to death by a thousand cuts instead of by hanging.

Privatising Eskom

The GNU is stepping up the privatisation of Eskom and other SOEs. This means that “energy poverty” will increase because working-class communities will be forced to reduce their consumption or go without electricity due to increasing tariffs.

The GNU continues the ANC Government’s overall strategy to make the working class pay for the crisis. At the same time, the Government is “solving” the Eskom crisis they created over decades of their only partially successful corruption-tainted attempts to privatise, by now, bringing that strategy to full fruition. It uses the crisis to further enrich capitalists, who already pay less for electricity per unit than working-class residents – a fact that they tried to hide by citing the protection of “commercially sensitive” information in e.g. the BHP Billiton contract. The capitalists have been waiting in the wings to profiteer like vultures over Eskom’s carcass killed by neo-liberalism, incompetence and corruption.

The privatisation of Eskom through the unbundling of generation, transmission and distribution and the introduction of Independent Power Producers (IPPs) is now on track, they boast. Eskom is at the same time demanding an electricity tariff increase of between 36% and 44% for 2023/24 on top of last year’s 12.7%. Both are far above the inflation rate the SARB has been praised by government and the capitalists for having brought down to 3.8%. Between 2007 and 2022, the National Energy Regulator of SA (Nersa) approved Eskom tariff increases totalling 653%!

These increases ignore the fact that the minimum wage, now at R27.58 per hour, amounts to respectively, R4 779.38 or R5 379.29 per month for 40 and 45 hours per week, according to the Department of Labour and Employment. The Government should be aware that the Household Affordability Index calculations show that the basic food basket for a low-income family of seven has risen to R5255.77 per month. Only 3.8m are on the minimum wage because employers are refusing to pay even if it means breaking the law. How many are still earning below this slave wage? Those earning the minimum are left with no money for the electricity bill, let alone other expenses like transport, water, school fees and

debt repayments.

The one-quarter per cent reduction in interest rates is negligible, still far above the pre-Covid 19 pandemic levels. The ten consecutive increases since November 2021 took interest rates from 3.5% to 11.75% before the latest reduction to 11.5%. That represents a cumulative increase of 335% over 4 years. Given the uncertainty over the speed and size of US Federal Reserve interest rate reductions, from which the SA Reserve Bank takes its cue, and world oil prices given the possibility of Israel attacking Iran’s oil facilities, it is safe to say there is no respite in sight. Only the banks are celebrating like vampires over the continued supply of our blood.

Wastewater and sanitation crisis

The 2022 Water Institute of Southern Africa’s Green Drop Report reveals an alarming and unacceptable state of wastewater treatment works in the country. It shows a continued decline in the intervening years since the last report was published has resulted in a national crisis. The Department of Water and Sanitation’s latest Blue Drop Watch Report found that half of South Africa’s drinking water is of poor quality. According to the report, the country’s biggest water issue is drinking water quality, with only 38% and 11% of systems achieving excellent and good microbiological quality, respectively.

354 wastewater treatment works (39%) out of 955 systems – are classified as critical compared to 248 (29%) in the 2013. In addition, only 22 municipal and one private wastewater treatment works achieved Green Drop status in the 2022 Report. The classification of municipal treatment works as “at risk” deteriorated from medium (65.4%) to high risk (70.1%) between 2013 and 2021.

Some municipalities are increasingly incapable of addressing wastewater management issues. The Municipal Strategic Self-Assessment report released in 2019 painted a picture of municipal water services’ inability to respond to failures, particularly in smaller municipalities. This is due mainly to weak management, a lack of competent and experienced technical staff, and very low revenue collection levels.

Water and sewage crisis across the country

A Daily Maverick investigation revealed that 1,604 water cuts occurred in the first nine days of October 2024 in Johannesburg alone, an average of 178 areas without water per day. Johannesburg Water pipelines and its network of reservoirs and plants are all past end-of-life, resulting from spending cuts and the failure to maintain or upgrade infrastructure.

Residents in Mzondi Street, Dunoon, Cape Town, are in despair as their surrounding environment has become a breeding ground for rats, mosquitos, and other disease-carrying pests. Residents say they've been living in these conditions for decades.

For over ten years, Strand, Cape Town residents have been subject to a worsening crisis from ageing and overburdened infrastructure, causing frequent sewage overflows into streets, houses and the nearby beach, exposing them to disease.

Budget cuts and corruption from tender wars have combined to produce eThekweni's "non-revenue water" losses to a staggering 56% (compared to less than 33% 10 years ago) – the highest in the country. This refers to water revenue lost from various causes — including leaking municipal pipes, non-payment, theft or metering errors. In Ntuzuma, residents have been informed that they will face water cuts till 2025 while a water pumping station, damaged in a fire a short distance away from the Fire Station, undergoes repairs.

The Gauteng province faces Day Zero like the Western Cape a few years ago when the Government imposed severe water rationing. Already, water pressure has been reduced, and some communities in Johannesburg have been without water for weeks. Half the reservoirs have leaks as a hot, dry summer looms for the city that is South Africa's economic heartland. Yet on October 31st this year, Deputy president Mashatile said it wanted Gauteng to restrict water supply to level 3 – 46% reduction, and level 4 – emergency level with no water at all.

The Housing Crisis

A 2024 UN Report estimates that some 12 million people need houses in South Africa. Many live in more than 2,700 informal settlements across the country in shacks vulnerable to fires and floods and often have limited sanitation, water, and electricity. There is no budget for Temporary Emergency Accommodation for people displaced by floods and fires, which occur more frequently due to climate change and government neglect of infrastructure provision, upgrades, or maintenance.

This consequently makes little impression on the 500,000-strong housing backlog and breeds further homelessness in Joburg. In an interview with City Press in June, Gauteng Housing MMC Mlungisi Mabaso said Joburg's housing backlog will take 100 years to address while the City's population grows by more than 25,000 people every month.

Shack fires are now a regular winter season occurrence across the country, especially in overcrowded settlements on the outskirts of cities. More recently, fires in hijacked buildings in inner cities, such as in Johannesburg, where 76 people died a horrible death in the Isindiso building fire, hundreds were left homeless for a criminal degree of neglect. An official inquiry headed by Judge Sisi Kampempe found the City of Johannesburg responsible. More fires and flood disasters followed Isindiso. The City of Joburg responded to the Isindiso catastrophe by embarking on a xenophobic witch-hunt against the minority of foreign nationals, eking out an existence in dilapidated buildings. It has done nothing about criminal syndicates run by South Africans who extort and intimidate residents regardless of nationality.

The Government's reaction to KZN's most devastating floods in history indicates the governance crisis. Nearly 500 lost their lives. Over 4000 homes were destroyed, 40,000 people were left homeless, 45,000 people were displaced, and over 600 schools were damaged. A significant factor in the extent of the damage to housing and schools was the poor quality of infrastructure and the failure to identify appropriate locations for human settlement.

Yet when the Government implemented its Intervention plan, it had to give assurances that the budget allocated would receive special protection from corruption.

The City of Cape Town has matched the inhumanity of their Johannesburg counterparts by “solving” its housing backlog problem by evicting people without housing. They are forced to live on the streets with no access to ablution or shelter, which is deeply undignified, unhealthy and detrimental to their well-being. Despite this, the courts have sided with the City by granting eviction orders. The courts accepted the City’s argument that the occupation of public spaces by people experiencing homelessness is unlawful. The court also accepted false claims about the ‘safe spaces’ the City offered. Yet the evidence shows that they do not meet the minimum standards of decency fit for human habitation. The shelters do not provide beds, ablution facilities, meals, access to medical care, social workers, or substance abuse treatment as the City claims.

These crises are compounded by dysfunctional local Governments already wracked by corruption, budget cuts, coalition instability, and party infighting caused by competition for well-paid positions and access multi-billion rand portfolio committees ripe for tender looting. As the South Africa Local Government Association reports, this is reflected in the declining level of service delivery, weakening institutional capacity, inability to spend already inadequate budgets, and rising debt owed to municipalities.

Working-class community protests are rising again.

It is unsurprising that the number of service delivery protests is heading back to the peak they reached before the imposition of the COVID-19 State of Disaster. These protests confirm that working-class communities are even less prepared today than before to sit back and allow the Government’s policy of loading the burden of the social and economic crisis onto their shoulders. The willingness of working-class communities to struggle remains undiminished. The flame of resistance still burns as intensely as before.

However, the biggest weakness of these protests is that they are not united. Their most striking

feature is that they have been and continue to occur separately and spontaneously. Yet they are fuelled by the same discontent grievances and demands caused by the government’s neoliberal capitalist policies.

This has enabled the ANC Government to ride out the protests relatively easily, rendering their impact largely ineffectual. Under the ANC-led GNU, this will continue with its new partners united around the common purpose of making the working class pay for the crisis they have created. They serve the interests of the capitalist class – the tiny parasitic minority of less than 1% of the population.

The disunity of the protests has further opened up the legitimate grievances of communities to be exploited by all kinds of formations that consciously or unconsciously serve interests opposed to those of working-class communities.

Formations substituting themselves for the organised working class

Outright criminal organisations such as the AK47-wielding construction mafia carry out raids on construction sites. They cynically exploit the desperation caused by working-class poverty and joblessness and demand 30% of contracts or revenue, citing procurement legislation providing for contracts to reserve jobs and business opportunities for communities. The so-called Zuma riots of July 2021, which claimed 354 lives, was one of the most extreme examples of the lengths to which the type of forces that orchestrated them are prepared to go.

Others also deliberately incite racial tensions by dividing working-class communities on a racial basis, e.g. promoting the false idea that Black working-class people enjoy preferential treatment at the expense of Coloured people. Yet Black working-class people remain at the bottom of the social pyramid, suffering the worst social deprivation in both absolute number and per head of population.

The government, and other forces including Operation Dudula and the MK party have cynically used the deaths of children from food-poisoning allegedly caused by products bought from spaza shops, to further inflame xenophobic tensions.

The ANC secretary general has gone so far as to call for the deployment of the SANDF and some in the ANC have suggested the declaration of a state of emergency to deal with spaza shops. Meanwhile, a JJ Tabane pointed out on his show on eNCA, no conclusive findings have been released to the public over the cause of deaths of children who died in Hammanskraal after consuming contaminated water more than a year ago.

As he pointed out, there is a clear connection between the failure to pursue the case and the fact that the tender for the water treatment works repairs that led to the contamination had been corruptly awarded to a company owned by Edwin Sodi. In his luxury Cape Town house Sodi is known to host deputy president Paul Mashatile, despite his involvement in previous corrupt tenders.

Tabane should have added that Tiger Brands has used its millions since 2017 to fight tooth and nail against its culpability for the deaths of 218 and the destitution of over a thousand some of them maimed for life from the listeriosis poisoning. There has not been even a peep of protests or feigned indignation over Tiger Brands' arrogance including challenging the definitive findings of the internationally renowned Institute for Communicable Diseases – the country's most authoritative body'.

These opportunists cynically exploit legitimate working-class grievances to orchestrate what the media lightmindedly portray as "community protests." They include those using working-class communities as cannon fodder or rent-a-crowd for self-enrichment, corruption, and to settle factional scores, e.g. in the ANC. They portray themselves as legitimate community representatives to get their noses into the state trough for corrupt self-enrichment through tenders, contracts and business opportunities.

Without a unifying independent organisation, working-class communities are also vulnerable to being used by NGOs and NPOs, many of whom operate as "social movements." NGOs operate as single-issue formations unconnected with each other, let alone the broader working class. To the extent that they identify the specific aspect of the social crisis that is their focus, they promote the

illusion that it can be solved within the framework of capitalism and that the Government is simply following bad advice.

Such formations have stepped into the vacuum resulting from the collapse of civics, which drove community struggles, particularly against the apartheid regime. In that period, civics in working-class communities were part of a movement of the working class as a whole, united with trade unions and youth. Their collapse resulted from their entrapment in the Tripartite Alliance led by the capitalist ANC. The capitalist state at all levels absorbed the leaders of civics and trade unions into its ranks.

NGOs promote false notions of capitalism with a human face

Many NGOs are staffed by well-intentioned individuals. However, by failing to recognise that the Government is acting in accordance with the interests of the ruling capitalist class, whose system is in deep crisis, NGOs do not promote a socialist alternative, nor does the necessity for working class unity arise for them. They, therefore, sow illusions in the utopian idea that capitalism can be given a human face and a social democratic heart. All the ruling elite needs is 'moral regeneration and political will' and to follow 'properly' researched advice, is their constant mantra.

The working class must content itself with being the beneficiaries of the good-hearted. The working class must not be encouraged to believe that they can take their destiny into their own hands, much less run society. Consequently, there is no need for a root and branch reconstruction of society, the overthrow of capitalism and the socialist transformation of society. Therefore, there is no need for the working class to organise itself and to fashion the instrument to realise its historic aims – a mass workers' party on a socialist programme.

This retards the development of class consciousness and independent working-class organisation, promoting instead a sense of dependency by the working class on forces other than their own. However well-meaning the salaried activists may be, they are funded by big business and serve the interests of the capitalist class. These capitalist funders present themselves

as philanthropists. Because NGOs are funded by big business, they are not under the democratic control of nor accountable to the working-class communities in whose names they have been created.

Philanthropic funding is, however, profitable as donors benefit from tax breaks for their “good works” but more critically through the indirect influence they yield in the political terrain. Their purpose is to posture as concerned over the plight of the poor, vulnerable and marginalised. Yet social deprivation is rooted in the capitalist system itself. The capitalists are self-evidently committed to the preservation of their system.

Nonetheless, NGOs can play a progressive role provided they are placed under the democratic control of working-class formations. There is a myriad of issues on which NGOs have developed the capacity and expertise to assist communities in identifying solutions to problems, informing campaigns to formulate demands, and mobilising resources to support their efforts. For example, NGOs can contribute by doing research to determine the cost, design, and plan to realise a needs-based budget developed by the community.

An alternative to unite the working class built by communities themselves.

Protests in isolation from each other are not enough! Working-class and poor communities must build a civic federation that unites community structures nationwide. A countrywide civic movement could lead national campaigns for house building and job creation. It could coordinate service delivery protests, turning them into a powerful national movement. Hundreds of communities can protest on the same day and the same issue. Where communities struggle on a specific local issue, the entire federation can be mobilised in support.

Where communities are already organised, their structures should participate in a countrywide formation that takes a federal, united front form. No existing formation must dissolve itself as a pre-condition for affiliation to the countrywide civic. They must affiliate as is, represented in it by delegates elected democratically subject to the right of recall.

Where communities are not organised, they must be encouraged to become organised. All affiliates of the federation must be democratic, accountable, and based on the community's mass participation. All community structures must unite residents irrespective of gender, race, tribe, religion, and nationality to prevent racial, tribal, and xenophobic divisions.

The federation can be brought into existence by first linking up neighbouring community structures in local civic federations. These can, in turn, link up at municipal, provincial and national levels. Every affiliate must see itself as an organ of struggle that leads communities and makes a real difference in their lives. Their impact will be magnified through the unity of the federation coordinating struggles. Such a federation must ensure that individual communities are supported through various forms of action, including engaging local authorities in bringing about sustainable solutions to service delivery.

Community organisations must fight to extend mass democratic control over community life. The allocation of jobs, business opportunities, etc., for example, access to housing, must be based on mass democratic decision-making to avoid a divisive struggle of all against all. Where structures exist that should play a role in democratic oversight in the community – for example, councillors' offices, ward committees, School Governing Boards, Community Policing Forums, etc. – community structures should struggle for influence and control.

For a united socialist civic federation

A countrywide civic federation would need to be organised around a socialist programme. The resources and wealth necessary to end poverty and unemployment and develop communities are locked away in the capitalist economy. ‘Township entrepreneurs’, who are unable to compete against big businesses trading in the townships leading to chronic small business failures, must be won over as part of the struggle. Communities should demand affordable loans, lower interest rates, and subsidies.

Many well-intentioned community programmes, charities, food sovereignty schemes, etc., can play a role in helping small communities. But they must

not sidestep the fact that they can, at best, build islands of survival in a sea of deprivation. They cannot solve the problems of the tens of millions of people in working-class and poor communities. They can only treat symptoms.

As a step towards a socialist civic programme, community organisations can conduct surveys to determine their communities' needs. This can then be developed into a Needs Budget specifying, for example, that the community needs 3,000 houses, 40 kilometres of tarred roads, expansion of the sewerage system, additional clinics, libraries, classrooms, sports and recreation facilities, etc. Such a budget based on democratically identified needs can be costed independently by experts appointed by communities acting under the direction and guidance of communities themselves.

Scrapping tenders – Insourcing all privatised services

Community organisations can then campaign for the municipality to adopt the Needs Budget. This must not be spent on tenders but on a programme of public works that includes massive job creation and training for residents. Outsourcing has impeded the ability of local Governments to provide services and has made them unaffordable. Insourcing all outsourced work will enable municipalities to absorb unemployed youth, provide them with training and create permanent jobs. Especially for those earning slave wages without benefits or the protection of labour laws in the Expanded Public Works Programmes must be incorporated into the public service on the same wages and conditions as permanent public sector workers. Working-class communities would then be able, based on a Campaign for Needs Budgets, to organise marches, protests and shutdowns, including contesting local Government elections, triggering bye-elections through recall petitions of existing councillors and standing their candidates against the councillors of the capitalist parties. Such candidates must be elected subject to the right of immediate recall and on the principle of a worker's councillor on a worker's wage.

However, even if united, communities cannot fight for socialism on their own. The socialist civic

federation will need to link up with organised workers in the trade unions. Of course, there is no wall separating workers from communities. In the 1980s, the community-based locals of the Cosatu trade union federation united the trade unions with the civic and youth movements. This tradition needs to be rebuilt.

The Saftu trade union federation took a step in this direction in 2018 when it convened the Working Class Summit (WCS) to bring trade union, community and youth organisations together under one umbrella. We encourage community structures to support all genuine steps toward greater working-class unity and affiliate with the WCS. On August 24, 2022, Cosatu and Saftu embarked on a National Shutdown and appealed for community support. The trade union leaders promised that it would be the start of a campaign of rolling mass action.

Community structures should campaign for the leaders of the trade unions to keep their promises. They should put forward resolutions calling on trade unions to support, for example, campaigns for bringing down electricity tariffs or for housing, including the involvement of communities through municipal services cooperatives. This can provide the basis for the issue of public sector workers' pay and the crisis of service delivery in communities to be united into a powerful campaign of mass action.

Working-class communities must unite.

However, working class communities, like their counterpart in the other theatres of struggle cannot wait for the paralysis in Saftu to break, nor depend on it happening on its own through initiatives from the bureaucracy at the top. The MWP is calling for the unification of all struggles in each theatre based on the initiative of activists themselves including with the rank-and-file trade union members and shop stewards living in their communities. The trade union leaders must be held to account and if necessary recalled and replaced with workers willing to struggle.

The struggles must proceed to cut across the paralysis at the top of the Saftu as well as the Working Class Summit Steering Committee which has failed to implement the Declaration adopted by over 1 000 delegates representing 147

community, youth and trade union formations at the 2018 Working Class Summit. That Declaration committed the summit delegates to form a mass workers party on a socialist programme. This is why the MWP calls for a Campaign for a Socialist Mass Worker Party.

Struggles in all theatres must be organised under a democratically agreed-upon platform, a joint programme of action coordinated by a democratically elected leadership representative of all formations unified under one organisation. The affiliates of the United Socialist Civic Federation must be based on the election of representatives on the principle of the right of recall from street, township, region/district, province, and ultimately national level.

Such an organisational approach will also insulate working-class communities from the influence of unelected NGOs and outright criminal syndicates. It will ensure that proper democratic control and accountability over all representatives is exercised. It will ensure complete democratic control over the formulation of demands and the working out of programmes of action. Unity in struggle can then be tested, evaluated, and lessons learned on a township/district/regional basis as a step towards unified action at a provincial level and, ultimately, a national service delivery general strike.

These structures must preserve their independence by being reliant on funding raised from the rands and cents of communities themselves. Funding must be democratically controlled, and oversight must be exercised by democratically elected control commissions based on full transparency and accountability. Such an approach will ensure complete democratic control and accountability within working-class community structures from the bottom to the top.

Many communities have already organised themselves. Independent civics, community forums, crisis groups, concerned residents' committees, and ratepayers' associations are mushrooming and acting independently as state failure to deliver services worsens. Mobilisation for the 2026 local Government election should begin now and used as an opportunity to unite community struggles through new and existing

structures on a clear platform and programme of action.

The MWP argues that struggles in all theatres must be fought with determination to achieve all their aims. It is however necessary to point out that for as long as the capitalist system exists, the ruling class will attempt to reverse all gains – to take back with the left hand what they have been forced through struggle to concede with the right. The right of a woman to choose to terminate a pregnancy in the US was taken away after it had been the law for 50 years following the famous victory in *Roe vs Wade*. In SA the right to strike is under constant threat; the right to public sector collective bargaining has effectively been removed. These inspired the private sector bosses' proposed LRA amendments at Nedlac.

Only following the root and branch transformation of society through the abolition of production for private profit and its replacement with production for social needs can we win lasting reforms. Only in this way will it be possible to end the squandering of the country's resources and labour power. The working class will have to take control of the economy so that the use of the country's resources can be planned democratically for this to become possible. You cannot control what you don't own. A socialist programme and the nationalisation of key sectors of the economy under workers control is ultimately the only way out of the impasse capitalism has plunged humanity into.

Under capitalism, each SOE is run as an isolated capitalist island that must make a profit. Like their privately owned corporate counterparts, the SOEs are dictatorships under unelected boards and CEOs composed of the employees of the capitalist class.

Socialist nationalisation would be completely different. It would not be limited to the unattractive corners of the economy the capitalists find unattractive because they are not guaranteed to profiteer from them, socialist nationalisation would be extended to all key sectors. Linking up nationalised sectors under workers' control; would lay the foundations for a democratically planned socialist economy run in the interests of the working class majority. Only in this way would be possible to end poverty and unemployment and

pull out the roots of crime and corruption.

For example, the big construction companies, the prominent manufacturers of bricks, tiles, wooden beams and planks, door and window frames, water and sewerage pipes, electrical cabling, etc., alongside the big building wholesalers and retailers, like Cashbuild and Builders Warehouse, would be taken out of private ownership and placed under the democratic control of their workers and communities and the broader organised working class. A plan could then be drawn up to rapidly build all the houses that society needs based on designs that are ecologically sustainable and take into account communal living such as schools, clinics, sports and other recreational spaces. Millions could be given work and training as part of such a plan. The nationalisation of the banks would allow for the harmonious allocation of resources across the economy as well as cheap and affordable bonds and home loans.

PART 2: Organise Communities for Struggle

- Unite communities! Link-up community organisations in a country-wide civic federation. Unite and coordinate service delivery protests. Build up to a national community shutdown.
- Form a National Steering Committee for Working Class Unity in Communities – an alliance of civic and community organisations democratically constituted and accountable to the community.
- Build a mass campaign! Unite communities and workers in a mass campaign to reverse the cuts in education, health and social welfare, scrap electricity arrears and adopt a sliding scale of tariffs where the rich and corporations subsidise the poor.
- Only socialism means freedom! Arm communities with a socialist programme – at its heart the demand for the nationalisation, under democratic working-class control, of the biggest companies in all the key sectors of the economy: agriculture, mining, construction, transport, manufacturing, telecommunications, wholesale, retail, and distribution. Integrate nationalised industry according to a democratic socialist plan of production to raise wages, protect and create jobs, develop communities and end poverty.
- Build the unity of the entire working class! Unite with the organised working class in the trade unions in a campaign of rolling mass action against the crisis of capitalism. Build strike preparation committees in every community uniting shop steward and worker activists with community and youth activists. Affiliate community structures to the Working Class Summit
- For a socialist mass workers party! Implement the Sautu and Working-Class Summit

declaration to establish a worker's party. Reconvene the WCS to set the launch date! Build the party on a unifying, democratic and open basis allowing unions, community organisations, youth campaigns and the existing working-class political groups and parties to affiliate.

PART 3: Programme of Action

SERVICE DELIVERY

Campaign and fight for:

A mass decent housebuilding, electricity, water, sanitation, road and public transport infrastructure programme.

- Nationalise the big construction companies, building wholesalers and big building retailers. Full community involvement in the design of houses and the planning of communities, including parks, youth clubs, sporting facilities, libraries, and other community infrastructure.
- Resist forced evictions and relocations. Place housing waiting lists under the democratic control of community organisations, with allocation based on fair, objective criteria, e.g. current housing situation, number of dependents and length of time on waiting list.
- Massive investment in publicly owned, affordable and integrated public transport, including a massive expansion of rail and bus infrastructure.
- Campaign for cancellation of all electricity arrears for working class communities. For a sliding-scale of tariffs – the more you earn the more you pay – with adequate and free provision for the unemployed and pensioners.
- Open all Eskom contracts with big business energy users and increase their tariffs in line with their profits.
- No to the privatisation of electricity! No unbundling of Eskom! Oppose capitalist so-called 'Independent' Power Producers!
- Oppose nuclear power!
- Provide affordable electricity for all of South Africa through massive investment in publicly owned renewable energy programme under the democratic control of workers and communities. Transition away from fossil-fuels without loss of jobs and a retraining training programme for all workers.
- No more cholera outbreaks! Campaign for massive public investment in water and wastewater management infrastructure and maintenance.
- Clean-up our communities! Campaign for an integrated system of waste removal that incorporates the provision of concrete and steel bins in public spaces throughout the community to combat littering. Expand and effectively manage landfill sites. Support the work of reclaimers by incentivising households to separate litter and develop mechanisms that will ease the burden of reclaimers to transport waste collected for recycling purposes.
- Ensure oversight of environmental planning to combat pollution, the dumping of toxic wastes, the health impact of industrial and mining activity and the effects of climate change on the threat of floods, droughts, deforestation and desertification and protection of the ocean.
- A publicly-funded, free, accessible and high-quality national health service – reject National Health Insurance. Nationalise Mediclinic, Netcare, Life Healthcare, and the big pharmaceutical companies under the democratic control of health workers, patients and communities. Strengthen primary healthcare through building clinics adequately staffed, equipped and supplied for ease of access to communities 24/7.
- Funding and resources to end violence against women and children. For (i) a free, accessible, secure and high-quality network of women's shelters for survivors of domestic abuse and rape, with provision for children, giving women the freedom to leave abusive relationships, (ii) an increase in the child support grant, (iii) free, accessible, secure and high-quality pre-school child-care and

elderly-care centres to relieve the domestic burden on women, (iv) free, accessible and high-quality sexual health and family planning services to allow women genuine choice over if, and when, to have children, (v) dismiss all police officers, magistrates and judges guilty of victim blaming in cases of gender-based violence and LGBT+ hate crimes. Scrap the discriminatory anti-woman Traditional Courts Bill.

Publicly funded, free, accessible and high-quality education from nursery to tertiary.

For a massive programme of investment in school and TVET infrastructure.

- For the full implementation of the SA Schools Act: Minimum Uniform Norms and Standards for School Infrastructure. Every school must have basic services like running water, flushing toilets, ablution facilities and electricity. All schools must have functioning classrooms with an adequate number of desks and chairs, smartboards or blackboards in each classroom. Fully equipped libraries and laboratories, including free Wi-Fi and sports facilities and support for the arts.
- Insource school feeding schemes, cooks and cleaning staff.
- Reduce the teacher-pupil ratio to 30 students through employing all unemployed teachers and funding a massive increase in teacher training. Re-establish parent-teacher-learner committees to place schools under democratic community control.
- Cancel all student debt and end financial and academic exclusions. Abolish NSFAS! All students to receive cost of living grants.
- Replace dysfunctional or collapsing municipalities by democratically elected councillors on the basis that they are directly accountable and recallable by the community that elected them – for a socialist local municipality.

CRIME & CORRUPTION

The struggle against crime is a class struggle

This is especially important on issues of crime and policing. The methods of the class struggle must also be used to deal with it, in mass community mobilisations against, for example, gangs, organised crime and xenophobic mobs. Communities expect the state, police and the courts to be the frontline in fighting crime. But the state is firstly and foremostly the armed guardian of the capitalist system. The capitalist class that controls the state requires that the police and courts enforce anti-working class laws limiting strikes, picket-lines and protests. Therefore, any additional powers and resources given to the police and courts to deal with crime will also be used against worker and community organisations. It is crucial that community organisations fight for democratic control of the police and police resources.

- Struggle for socialism! End the class foundations of criminality in massive inequality and poverty.
- Make communities safe! Organise against crime, drugs and gangsterism.
- Organise community watch programmes in every community, including patrols of crime 'hot spots.' Report all drug dealers and other criminals to the police and campaign for their removal from the community.
- Mass community mobilisations against gangsterism and organised crime. Campaign for free, accessible and high-quality community drug rehabilitation programmes linked to guaranteed jobs for recovering addicts.
- Campaign against gender-based violence, LGBT+ hate crimes and xenophobia. Trade unions and community organisations to initiate such campaigns taking up the defence of women, LGBT+ people and foreign residents in workplaces and communities with their full involvement.
- For community-controlled policing! Struggle for working class oversight and control of policing through organised community and

trade union participation in Community Policing Forums (CPFs), including representatives of community organisations and worker-representatives of police unions and private security unions.

- Campaign for an expanded role for democratic and community-controlled CPFs, including the power to recruit additional police officers to focus exclusively on community-level crime and crime-prevention, under the exclusive democratic control of the CPF.
- Campaign for the election of station commanders, district and provincial commissioners and magistrates and judges.
- Campaign for community control of hiring and firing in SAPS to combat corruption and the waste of police resources. Dismiss all perpetrators of bribery, harassment, rape and torture.
- Campaign for full trade union rights for all police officers and civilian personnel. Scrap the “essential service” provisions in the Labour Relations Act – workers and communities will democratically decide the level and organisation of emergency cover during strikes.
- Campaign against politicised policing! Demand the abolition of the State Security Agency (SSA) and the militarised tactical and public order policing units used to suppress working class protests.
- Campaign for a massive extension of prison rehabilitation programmes and psycho-social support for ex-prisoner convicted of “crimes of poverty” and addiction.
- Struggle against corruption! Recover the stolen R-billions! Organise a worker, community and trade union-led commission to investigate the findings of the Zondo Commission and direct which cases and individuals to prosecute. Provide resources to protect whistleblowers to ensure their safety from victimisation, harassment and assassination.

- Democratic oversight
- Community organisations to scrutinise the work of local councillors and councils.
- Delegates from community structures to observe all council meetings and report back; organise lobbies and protests outside meetings raising the community’s demands.
- Campaign to end state salaries for traditional leaders and to abolish the traditional authorities. Put all taxes and royalties currently paid to traditional leaders by mining companies under the democratic control of elected and accountable community structures to spend on social development.

CREATE JOBS, SHARE OUT THE WORK FAIRLY

Campaign and fight for:

- A fully enforced R15 000 p/m minimum wage for all full-time workers! Back this up with a rigorous regime of workplace inspections under the democratic control of workers’ representatives.
- Nationalisation of non-complying big business. Based on proven unaffordability, subsidies and tax relief to small and family businesses adequate for minimum wage.
- As a step toward R15,000 community organisations to campaign for the voluntary adoption by local businesses of community-wide minimum wages.
- Jobs for all! Campaign for a mass job creation programme so that everyone who wants a job can have one, and a mass apprenticeship programme with a guaranteed job at the end to tackle youth unemployment. Municipal budgets to make provision for education and training programmes and apprenticeships for youth to be trained as electricians, plumbers, IT technicians etc.
- End slave labour! Organise all EPWP, CWP, CHW, ECD etc. workers into the trade unions and campaign for permanent jobs.

- No one shall go to bed hungry! Campaign and fight for a Basic Income Grant of R6,500 p/m linked to inflation.
 - Unemployed must not mean unorganised! Organise community labour desks to:
 - Campaign for the trade unions to adopt a policy of "once a member, always a member." Retrenched workers to retain union membership and full democratic rights in union structures. Organise the chronically unemployed under the leadership of the trade union movement – build unemployed-workers and unemployed-youth locals in communities.
 - Draw-up registers of the unemployed and their skills to match job vacancies with workers and campaign for local businesses to employ from the registers. Registers to be regularly inspected by representatives of the community to protect against corruption.
 - Stop greedy bosses abusing foreign workers and undercutting wages! Campaign for trade unions to organise foreign workers.
- health and safety controls and guaranteed markets.

SMALL BUSINESSES

Campaign and fight against:

- Harassment of street traders! License all street traders without discrimination. Campaign for the development of adequate market space, stands and other infrastructure necessary for street traders to engage in business. Encourage unity amongst traders against exploitation and discrimination by banks and shopping malls.
- Big business price gouging! Campaign for state supported cooperatives of small farmers and small businesses; a public wholesale goods network to provide cheap bulk supplies; provision of affordable credit to existing small businesses and those wishing to open a small business; price and

