

WORKERS WORLD NEWS



ALTERNATIVES TO GLOBALISATION

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THE ONGOING WAVE OF LAND OCCUPATION STRUGGLES



Photo: People from Freedom Park try for the third time to occupy adjacent unused land, May 2017 **Credit: Lekhetho Mtetwa**

Land occupations across the country are an indication of the ongoing attacks on the living standards of the working class. The recent wave of occupations started in April/May 2017 in Gauteng, in townships south of Johannesburg such as Eldorado Park and Freedom Park, and quickly inspired occupations in surrounding areas.

The inspiration spread to other regions, leading to land occupations in Cape Town at Mandela Park, Town Two and Makhaza. We also witnessed land occupations in Port Elizabeth, King William's Town, Durban, Free State and elsewhere.

At the beginning of 2018, South Africa continued to witness land occupation struggles with occupations in Waterfall in Midrand, Marlboro, Ennerdale, Finetown, Blue Hills, Weilers Farm, Alexandra and Zandspruit.

The occupations continue to spread to a number of municipalities in the Gauteng region, such as

in Olivenhoutbosch and other areas in the City of Tshwane. At the same time, in the Western Cape, Zwelihle residents in Hermanus occupied vacant land with dozens arrested. Occupations spread to Gugulethu, Philippi, Mfuleni, Delft, Makhaza and Kraaifontein in Cape Town.

In all of these land occupations there is one important trend: the occupiers are mainly backyarders, unemployed women and men, young and old, who are tired of empty promises and corruption by the ANC government. These are backyard dwellers tired of staying with their parents or paying rent to neighbourhood landlords.

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Photo: People from Freedom Park try for the third time to occupy adjacent unused land, May 2017 Credit: Lekhetho Mtetwa

The major difference between community revolts in the past and recent land occupations is that in the past struggles were not linked to each other and there was little or no joint or self-coordination of struggles. The present land occupations started to do a linking-up between the struggling communities.

Through their linkages land occupation communities began to organically coordinate their struggles. In Gauteng, 2017, struggling township communities south of Johannesburg started to coordinate their struggles through joint actions. It was not only coordination of struggles and joint actions but joint community meetings drawing up a set of joint demands and taking joint decisions.

Joint coordination of struggles was tried in Cape Town in 2017 but didn't function well partly due to government interventions.

In Gauteng, community links and joint coordination is developing, especially between areas such as Thembelihle, Freedom Park and parts of Soweto.

The attempt to link-up land occupation communities has been tried again in 2018

between Gugulethu backyard dwellers. This is still being experimented with between four land occupation communities; Gugulethu Seven Backyarders (NY 112), Uluntu Backyarders (NY 108), NY 43 land occupiers, NY 50, Station Park land occupiers and What's-up land occupiers (NY 4).

Residents are building their shacks slowly after being demolished by the City. The strength here is the fact that all of these areas have their own central house where they all sleep, take turns to cook, share meals and watch TV. Decisions and actions are taken jointly in an effort to unite these communities.

Millions of people in black working class communities still live in informal settlements and backyard dwellings with no hope of ever getting or owning a house of their own. Many backyard and informal settlement residents are over sixty years old. This tells us that people are tired of decades of unfulfilled promises and continuing corruption.

In all of these occupations the government responded by criminalising land occupation struggles in the mainstream media. In many instances the government responded by sending law enforcement to destroy occupiers' shacks and confiscate their building materials.

In response to the land occupation in Olivenhoutbosch, Cyril Ramaphosa warned

that those who invaded land would feel the full might of the law and that allowing illegal land occupations would set a bad precedent as invading land is a sign of disorder and violation of law. This shows that the Ramaphosa regime is going to continue to crush the struggles of the poor.

Given the continuing lack of access to housing, land and the increasing rate of unemployment in the country land occupation protests will increase in coming years. Furthermore, the joint coordination of struggles displayed by current land occupations suggest that the land occupation struggles are here to stay and are getting stronger.

The current wave of land occupations around the country tells us that the poor people in South Africa had enough of the ruling ANC and its empty promises. Again these land occupation struggles show the world that poor working class people are tired of corruption and rich people paying themselves big salaries while poor people are suffering.

In all of these struggles people complain about not having a house and the only option is to occupy vacant land. Coordinating struggles locally is an attempt by communities to consolidate their struggles locally with no intention to create an artificial national character. This is one of the major advances and a lesson that can be drawn for future battles.

WORKERS' POWER NOT BUREAUCRATS' POWER:

LESSONS FROM ARGENTINA



Around the world the ruling class (capitalists, politicians and state managers) is trying to restore its profits by making the working class pay for the economic crisis. One way capitalists do this is by retrenching workers and making the remaining workers work harder to meet production targets, as well as by attacking wages, working conditions and benefits.

States help capitalists do this, among other things, by increasing interest rates while giving corporations tax cuts, commercialising and privatising state owned enterprises and outsourcing the provision of basic services. States also help capitalists by undermining workers' rights, such as the right to strike, in order to make it more difficult for workers to resist these attacks.

Unions have failed to defend workers from the immediate threat of these attacks (by preventing dismissals and defending jobs, wages and conditions), as well as to mount an effective resistance that can prevent further attacks and begin to roll back the devastating effects of neoliberalism. Moreover, union bureaucrats are often complicit in these attacks through deals they make with governments and bosses. A recent example in South Africa is the National Minimum Wage and amendments to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act and Labour Relations Amendment Bill – all of which represent an attack on workers yet were agreed to at Nedlac by the leaders of the three main federations: Nactu, Fedusa and Cosatu.

Faced with this ruling class threat and with union bureaucracies that are either complicit or unwilling to fight, workers in Argentina have begun a process to build unity in struggle and

a democratic worker-controlled alternative “so that the working class doesn't pay for the crisis caused by busi-nessmen and the government”.

In July 2017, workers at a PepsiCo factory in Buenos Aires arrived at work to find a sign posted on the factory entrance announcing its closure and the dismissal of over 600 workers. Production would be moved to another plant – where workers would be expected to work harder and longer to make up for production lost by the closure of the Buenos Aires factory.

Left to their fate by union leaders that could or tried to do little to help, workers had no hope but to try defend their jobs through direct action. They collectively decided to occupy the factory to pre-vent its closure and keep their jobs. The occupation was violently evicted by a massive police op-eration after a few weeks; but the dismissed workers continued to fight for their jobs. They organ-ised working class cultural ‘festivals of resistance’ to build solidarity, had mass marches and demonstrations, blockaded roads and even camped in tents in front of Argentina's legislature to keep their struggle visible.

At this camp the PepsiCo workers made an open call to all organisations that wanted to join them in building an independent pole of worker organisation and resistance. In contrast to the union bu-reaucrats, this initiative would be based on democratic decision-making by workers themselves in open assemblies, and combative class struggle in opposition to years of conciliation by union bu-reaucrats that try to make workers believe they have something in common with the bosses and government. Instead of being bought off, they chose to rely on their own collective strength; and they took it beyond their won struggles to fight for other demands. Thus they turned their struggle into an example for the entire Argentine working class.

One group that heard the call, at a meeting in February, was that of 122 workers dismissed at the beginning of 2018 from the Posadas Hospital. As a dismissed nurse put it, “We are dismissed workers from different companies and establishments. The leaders of the big unions and federa-tions have left us to fight alone. We

have had strikes, blockades and mobilisations. Now we are uniting to fight, no matter what province or union we are from. We all struggle together and demand a national plan of action so that we can get our jobs back.”

Another step was on 11 April when mineworkers from Río Turbio, dismissed PepsiCo and Posadas Hospital workers, workers from ‘recovered’ (de-bureaucratized) sections of the education workers' union, outsourced aeronautical and rail workers, drivers, call-centre operators, dockworkers and others shut down a main avenue in the centre of Buenos Aires – demonstrating the possibility of coordinating struggles and building unity from below. They demanded an end to the stillness of the union leadership and raised the need for a national general strike and a real plan of action.

This action was followed two days later by a general meeting where workers agreed that the central problem confronting them is the role of the bureaucratic union leaders that are either complicit in attacking workers, turn a blind eye or do everything they can to encourage conciliation and com-promise. In opposition to this the meeting decided to continue the call for a national general strike and a plan of action; but also to develop a plan of action now specific to the various sectors in struggle, from below, through general assemblies of affected workers.

The PepsiCo workers' call responded to an urgent need – in South Africa as much as in Argentina – for workers to exchange experiences, discuss strategies, tactics and ideas and decide collectively how to build genuine unity and coordination of struggles from below. To take immediate steps to strengthen each local conflict, but also to take steps towards formulating a joint plan of action and compelling the leaders of all the union federations both to adopt the joint plan of action and call a national general strike.



EXPROPRIATING LAND WITHOUT COMPENSATION: SHACK-DWELLERS HAVE THEIR SAY



Nowongile Swebe moved to Cape Town from the Eastern Cape in 1989. Credit: Peter Luhanga, Groundup.org.za

Nowongile Swebe left her rural village in the Eastern Cape in 1989 to settle in Cape Town. She was hoping for better living conditions and more economic opportunities.

She settled at what was then the Frankdale informal settlement on the periphery of the Visserhok landfill site, about 20km north of the city centre.

In June 2015 the City of Cape Town needed to expand the landfill site. The residents of Frankdale, including Swebe, were moved to Wolwerivier, about 5km further north and further away from the city centre. Wolwerivier falls under ward 104 which includes Dunoon.

Here, Swebe lives with her five children and seven grandchildren in a one-room house, she says. She has used a cupboard to divide the room.

Back home, she says, her father owns a big piece of rural land, which he shares with his three wives and children.

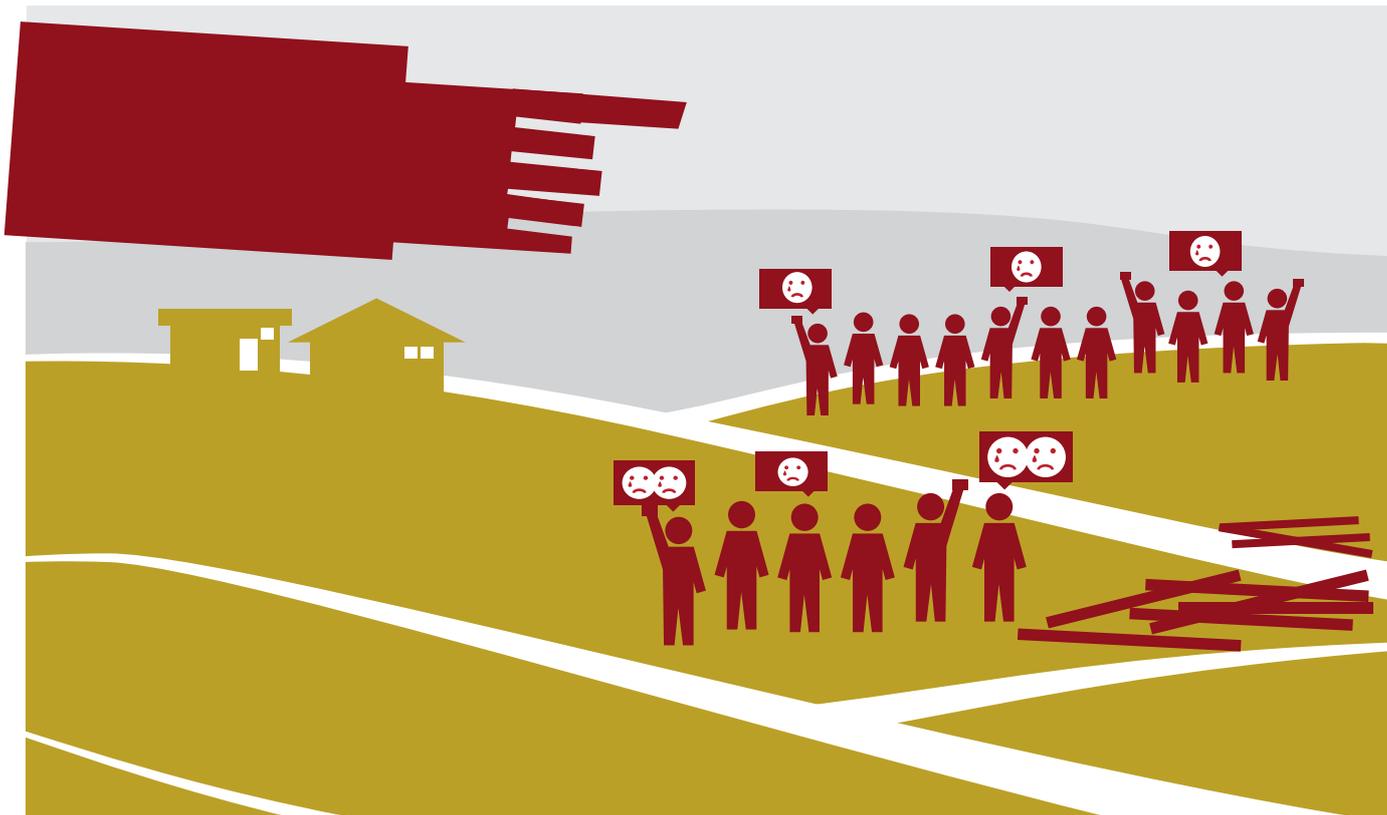
Even though she was looking for improved living conditions, her dreams of achieving this faded over the years as she still lives in an overcrowded home.

Swebe and other people shared their stories with several community leaders from Dunoon, Doornbach informal settlement and Wolwerivier on Saturday. They had gathered at the Dunoon Nasqshbandi Muhammadi Mosque where the Claremont Main Road Mosque was holding workshop on land expropriation without compensation, in conjunction with the Institute for Healing of Memories. The workshop follows a spate of land occupations in the area.

WE LIVE LIKE RATS. THAT IS WHY WE TOYI-TOYI. HENCE WE NEED TO GET BACK THE LAND. WHY IS IT THAT PEOPLE WHO HAVE LAND RESPECT DOGS MORE THAN HUMANS? WE NEED OUR LAND BACK

“This discussion [on expropriation without compensation] is eye-opening. We live like rats. That is why we toyi-toyi. Hence we need to get back the land. ... Why is it that people who have land respect dogs more than humans? We need our land back,” said Swebe.

At Wolwerivier, she said there was no school, police station or clinic. To bury dead family members, residents go to the cemetery in Atlantis.



“My father is a farmer and we don’t buy food back in the Eastern Cape. And if we get land, even if it’s agricultural land we will be able to utilise it just the same as the current owners,” she said.

Asked why she didn’t stay with her father, Swebe replied that she had come to Cape Town to find better living conditions.

However, one Dunoon resident had different views. Eliot Nkohla, who lives in Dunoon’s section 31, said if land was repossessed without compensation it would create economic chaos.

“We are claiming that we can go back to the olden days, [before] white people took our land from our forefathers without paying for it. If we take land from white farmers and not pay for it, it will be a big problem. This country will be bankrupt. Expropriating land without compensation will be disastrous,” said Nkohla.

Another Dunoon resident, Busi Ganjana, said that the government should develop, and invest in, provinces experiencing a mass exodus of people. These provinces lacked economic opportunities but had plenty of land.

Babalwa Mpambani, a representative of the Institute for Healing of Memories, said that in Khayelitsha there was no vacant land available and when people died, they were buried in

already used graves. Bodies were piled on top of each other in the grave.

“For us it’s indecent to bury our deceased on top of another person who is not related. Back in the Eastern Cape we don’t buy a grave, but here in the Western Cape we buy a grave. But even if you buy the grave, your deceased family member gets buried on top of another deceased person, not related,” said Mpambani.

The workshop, said Rashied Omar, imam at the Claremont Main Road Mosque, was an opportunity to hear what people on the ground were saying about the critical issue facing “our nation and people on land expropriation and redistribution”.

“Often it’s the elites that give their views around this issue. ... The marginalised rarely get an opportunity to be heard about what they think on important issues,” said Omar.

He said the workshop was hosted as part of the annual distribution of food hampers to needy residents.

“Instead of just doing charity we also want to do empowerment and show solidarity with marginalised communities like Dunoon. We will compile the workshop group discussions and submit to Parliament what people in Dunoon think about land expropriation without compensation,” he said.

Fatima Swartz of the Institute for Healing of Memories said the wounds and pain experienced by people during colonialism and apartheid were connected to land. This was why there was so much rage, she said.

PEOPLE DO NOT WANT TO GO AND GRAB LAND...

PEOPLE JUST WANT DECENT HOMES. THEY ARE NOT ASKING FOR PALACES.

“Part of addressing the past injustices is for people to understand the damage that was done to them, [such as being] forcibly removed from their own land,” she said.

“People do not want to go and grab land ... People just want decent homes. They are not asking for palaces.”

Originally published by GroundUp at: <https://www.groundup.org.za/article/informal-settlement-residents-give-their-views-expropriation-without-compensation/>



CLIMATE CHANGE, CAPITALISM AND CLASS WAR

THE WORLD'S CLIMATE IS CHANGING

- Around the whole world the climate is changing dramatically
- Already the world has warmed on average by one degree celsius since 1800 and credible scientists say it could rise between 2 degrees and 7 degrees by 2100
- Ice sheets are melting in the North and South Pole
- As the climate changes more and more and global average temperatures rise some places, like South Africa, will become a lot hotter
- Because warming winds from the tropics will stop going north as ocean temperatures rise other places, like Europe, may become colder
- Extreme weather like droughts or massive flooding will happen a lot more and cyclones will become bigger, hitting more areas
- If climate change is not stopped crops in many parts of the world will fail in the future, low lying cities – like Cape Town, Durban and Port Elizabeth – will be under

DROUGHT HITS THE WESTERN CAPE

- Over the last few years the Western Cape has experienced severe drought
- 2017 had the lowest rainfall in the history of record keeping
- Scientists say that the drought is due to climate change
- They say that under climate change places such as the Western Cape will become hotter and drier, and extended droughts will be a feature of the province
- In the rest of South Africa it is predicted that the country will become wetter and warmer, leading to increased instances of flooding

water in 150 years and some island countries will disappear completely

- Already in places like Syria, due partly to drought and climate change, wars have broken out and millions of people have been forced to migrate
- It is questionable whether civilisation itself could survive if the world's climate warms as much as some of the predictions of 7 degrees celsius in 100 years

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CO₂

- The reason why climate change is happening is because since 1800, and the First Industrial Revolution, the amount of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) in the atmosphere has shot up from 275 parts per million to 406 parts per million today
- It is still rising fast and it is predicted that, at the current rate, there will be 550 parts of CO₂ per million in 2050
- The reason why climate change is happening and average temperatures are rising is because the more CO₂ is in the atmosphere, the more heat is retained – as it gets trapped and doesn't escape into space

- The cause of greater CO₂ in the atmosphere is the burning of fossil fuels like coal, gas, petrol and oil
- What is now happening is that the forests and jungles – like the Amazon – that used to absorb CO₂ are also being killed off by droughts associated with climate change and logging, making things worse
- Likewise, oceans in the past absorbed CO₂ but they are now so polluted and saturated with CO₂ that they can no longer do this, again making things worse
- Most respected scientists say that the only way to stop runaway climate change is to dramatically reduce the use of fossil fuels immediately – something that is not happening. Indeed the use of fossil fuel is still increasing

WHY IS SO MUCH CO₂ BEING PRODUCED?

- Some rightwing and even liberal commentators argue that it is in human nature for people to use the Earth and it has been happening for a long time
- They argue people using oil and coal today in large quantities is just part of this – its human nature they say, and as populations grow so we as humans consume more and more
- But this is not true
- Before capitalism, people mostly used Earth's resources in a sustainable way
- It is only with the advent of capitalism – and its goal of more and more profits – that the burning of oil and coal has shot up so much
- Capitalism exploits both humans and nature at an increasing rate as

big corporations use more and more natural resources – which they see as being for free – to make more and more money

- So capitalists' drive to make more and more money lies at the heart of more and more CO₂ being produced
- To produce energy, there are other options besides fossil fuels – like solar, wind and oceans – but capitalists are reluctant to use these as they are not yet profitable and the infrastructure for them – to become profitable – does not exist
- It is also not all human beings that pollute equally
- Just 100 of the biggest corporations – which includes the state-owned Eskom (which is the 12th biggest polluter in the world) – account for over 70% of all CO₂ emissions in their drive to make huge profits
- They externalise the costs of production through polluting and it is generally working class areas they pollute
- For example, Eskom's power stations in Mpumalanga are located close to townships and poorer neighbourhoods and these areas are some of the most polluted in the world in terms of air
- Likewise, the ruling class (capitalists and top state officials) are individually responsible for far more CO₂ emissions when compared to the working class (workers and the unemployed)
- In the case of Eskom it is big companies that use most of the energy produced - all households in South Africa combined only consume 20% of the electricity produced by Eskom

CAPITALISTS USE DISASTERS FROM CLIMATE CHANGE TO PROFIT

- Capitalists use the disasters associated with climate change to make profits and attack the working class
- With the drought in Cape Town there is talk that big corporations will receive contracts worth billions of rands to build desalination plants
- Talk of the further privatisation of water services in Cape Town is increasing and the drought is used as an excuse
- The drought is also being used by the state to attack the working class by rolling out water-management devices
- This follows a similar pattern to other parts of the world, where floods or cyclones – associated with climate change – are used as an excuse to privatise services, like water, for the benefit of corporations



REVISITING 1936: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SPANISH REVOLUTION

In this edition of the Education Series we look at one of the greatest experiments with an alternative to capitalism: the 1936 Spanish Revolution. People today seeking a democratic socialist and egalitarian society can draw lessons from both its successes and failures.

The Spanish Revolution occurred in the context of a civil war, but even so for a short period of time social relations changed – bosses were fired; workers practiced direct democracy in the fields and factories; greater gender equality was won; and socialism from below looked like a possibility.

But the Revolution never ran its full course. The situation in Spain during the Revolution and linked Civil War - was complicated. During the height of the Revolution workers in many parts of Spain, like Barcelona, controlled the factories in two thirds of the country – although the state continued to exist and one third of Spain was controlled by fascists. The main reason the Revolution stalled is that the state – controlled by the Stalinists and Socialist Party – was not overthrown by the working class.

THE ACHIEVEMENTS

Prior to July 1936 Spain was tense. Members of the country's largest trade union, the

anarchist National Confederation of Labour (CNT), had been holding general strikes as part of their intention to carry out a revolution. For the CNT the revolution involved smashing capitalism and the state and replacing these with federated worker, peasant and community councils.

Fascists had also been preparing and on 19 July 1936 they launched a coup under the leadership of General Franco to stop the expected revolution.

The state – then headed up by the Socialist Party and later Stalinists – failed to prevent the coup. Members of the CNT, however, were prepared. In one of the CNT's strongholds, Barcelona, they expropriated 30 000 rifles from a military base and distributed them to workers. With the arrival of the coup in Barcelona, the CNT fought the fascist troops; defeating them.

With news that the coup had been defeated in Barcelona workers and peasants across Spain rose up and the fascists could only gain control of one third of the country. In the other areas workers began seizing factories and collectivising them. In Barcelona over 3000 factories were seized and workers began operating them on the basis of direct democracy and worker self-management.

In the countryside farm workers collectivised land with over 15 million acres being expropriated from rural capitalists. Over 2000 self-managed rural collectives were established, in which 7 million people participated. These

DURING THE REVOLUTION, WOMEN ACHIEVED MORE FREEDOM. MARRIAGE WAS REPLACED BY RELATIONSHIPS BASED ON FREE CONSENT.

proved that there was, and is, an alternative – based on the libertarian socialist (also known as anarchist) principles of federated direct democracy – to centralised bureaucratized state planning.

During the Revolution, women achieved more freedom. Marriage was replaced by relationships based on free consent. For the first time abortion and contraception became available. Women entered the workplace on a massive scale and many were involved in the workers' militias that fought the fascists.

THE FAILINGS

Before 1936, libertarian socialists (anarchists), mainly through the 1.8 million strong CNT, had been preparing for a revolution. Two months before the Revolution, in May 1936, the CNT held a congress in Zaragoza. There, plans were made to smash capitalism and replace it with self-management, socialism and working class self-governance – instead of a state – using federated workers' and community councils.

When the Revolution broke out the plan of the CNT Zaragoza Congress was unbelievably not



put into practice – and this eventually saw the Revolution defeated.

Indeed, following July 19, the state in some provinces collapsed. The CNT held power on the streets of cities like Barcelona, but the fragments of the state remained in other parts of Spain. The state's representatives contacted the CNT and proposed that a joint Anti-fascist Militia Committee (AMC) – made up of representatives of the Liberal, Stalinist and Socialist parties along with delegates from the CNT – be established to take charge of the military effort to defeat the remaining fascist forces. Importantly, as part of this proposal, the existing state would be left untouched and would supposedly lead the fight against the fascists.

Within the CNT a debate took place regarding the proposal. A section of the CNT, along with the Anarchist Youth Movement, argued the CNT should reject the proposal and that the Revolution must be carried out according to the plans of the Zaragoza Congress. Countering this was a group that argued a Popular Front with Socialists, Liberals and Stalinists was needed to defeat fascism before even thinking about completing the Revolution. Consequently they argued the CNT should enter the AMC, saying that if the CNT smashed the state the war effort against the fascists would collapse. Ultimately the group arguing for the Popular Front won the majority of votes and the CNT

joined the AMC. A large minority, however, remained opposed to this.

In fact, the decision to join the AMC had very bad consequences for the CNT and the Revolution. With the state left intact the Communists and Socialists used it as a base to build their power (they were not interested in socialism but wanted to use the state to increase their own power and gain control over the economy through nationalisation). The Stalinists and Socialist Party, when powerful enough, used the state and its power against the CNT and the Revolution. In choosing to align with the state, the CNT ceased to be anarchist or libertarian socialist. Eventually two members of the CNT even became Ministers in the state. The consequences were that these Ministers began identifying with the state's positions. The libertarian socialist/anarchist analysis that entering into state power changed the nature of parties/unions – and not the other way round – proved correct.

By 1937, the Socialists and Stalinists had used their control of the state to increase their power. These two parties feared stateless socialism far more than they did the fascists. By May 1937, the Socialists and Stalinists felt comfortable enough to openly attack the anarchists and wider working class. The confrontation came in Barcelona when the military was sent against CNT/anarchist workers. In the fighting that followed the

CNT and workers beat the Stalinists and Socialists. Sickeningly, the two CNT Ministers appealed to the CNT militants and workers to lay down their weapons. Again a majority, with reluctance, listened. In the aftermath the Communists arrested and tortured thousands of anarchist workers and sympathetic leftists. With this the power of the CNT was broken. The self-managed factories and fields were confiscated from workers by the state and run by bureaucrats or the former owners.

Following the events of May 1937, the Stalinist-led state lost battle after battle against the fascists. In early 1939, the state surrendered and Franco was installed as fascist dictator. By then, the revolution was long dead – killed by the Stalinists, Socialist Party and the tactical blunders of the CNT in July 1936.

CONCLUSION

The Spanish Revolution, although incomplete, showed socialism could be built from below. But it also proved that in a revolution the working class can't just take over production; it also needs to get rid of the state and replace it with a new system based on federated workers' and community councils. If this does not happen, Spain shows politicians in the state will smother the revolution in their own interests.



Comrade! Work and fight for the Revolution
Source: CNT-FAI



CNT workers' militia, 1936



A CRISIS FOR WHO?



SOCIAL REPRODUCTION AND THE SOCIAL RELATIONS OF THE CAPE TOWN WATER CRISIS

After years of drought, water levels in reservoirs and dams supplying Cape Town reached critically low levels in late 2017 and the City warned it could run out of water, or reach “Day Zero”, in early 2018. More recently, the South African National Disaster Management Centre declared the crisis a ‘national state of disaster’. Initially set for mid-March of this year, dramatic reductions in water usage and measures to increase supply have pushed “Day Zero” predictions back such that, given adequate winter rainfall, the City now predicts it will avoid running out of water in 2018.

The dramatic reductions in water consumption, down to 500 million litres per day (MLD) in February 2018 from 900 MLD during February 2017, were achieved primarily through household conservation, pressure reduction, installation of water management devices (WMDs) and punitive tariffs. All households were instructed to reduce consumption to below 6000 litres per month or 50 litres per person per day based on a 4-person household. If usage exceeds 10 500 litres per month (87.5 litres per person per day) households face installation of a WMD to manage and cut-off the water flow. Moreover, escalating tariffs were introduced in January 2017 which ramp up after 6000 litres per month (indigent households still receive this for free provided they stay below the 10 500 litre limit) to which yet another dramatic increase of 26.9% (with the same increase for sanitation) was announced in March 2018.

Paradoxically—given several state reports predicted the current crisis as far back as the early 2000s, urging various levels of government to address the problem far in advance of the one faced today—the City insists it was caught off guard by the crisis, shifting the blame firmly onto residents’ shoulders. In a January press release the City admonished residents, which it characterized as careless and unwilling to save water, that it would force wasteful Capetonians to comply with water restrictions through the above measures. As one city councillor and former executive deputy mayor pointed out in a speech to City Council, the City’s claim that the crisis came as a surprise is “complete nonsense.” This is particularly infuriating for working-

class Capetonians, who use disproportionately less water than more wealthy residents. For example, informal settlements account for only 4% of Cape Town’s water consumption despite making up some 14% of the city’s population.

THE GREAT LEVELLER?

When it comes to the sharing of blame and general lack of water some argue that Capetonians are all in the same boat. As a small hotel owner in Rondebosch put it, “It’s a leveller, we’re all the same now. If there’s no water, nobody’s got water”. But as the late geographer Neil Smith argued in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, “There’s No Such Thing as a Natural Disaster”. Drawing attention to the uneven social relations of ‘natural disasters’, the impacts and effects of which are mediated by the contours of race and class—to which I add and emphasize gender—Smith’s words beg for renewed consideration in light of the polarized impacts of the crisis and the City’s thoroughly neoliberal response.

In Cape Town the contours of race, class and gender are remarkably uneven. The city remains deeply divided along racial lines, bearing the imprint of South Africa’s apartheid past which has only been made worse by the economic trajectory adopted post-apartheid. The country remains the most unequal in the world, the majority of its black citizens mired in poverty, with the material conditions of the majority having worsened in the past 20-odd years. South Africans now find that, despite access to services like water being extended, it is increasingly mediated by the market and their ability to pay. In a society characterized by spiralling inequality and ‘jobless growth’, more and more working-class South Africans are unable to pay for services, eking out an existence on what little the state provides free of charge.

What’s more, the water crisis disproportionately impacts those who do the majority of household and community labour—key to social reproduction: the process of (re) producing and maintaining people today and into the future—women! The reality is that working-class women bear the brunt of the

crisis, as they are forced to manage escalating restrictions on water use in a situation already characterized by inadequate access to water. Water that is cut off every day by a WMD after 360 litres has been dispensed; water that must be fetched from standpipes several hundred metres away; water that must be negotiated for with the landlord; water that must be recycled over and over and used for many tasks; water that must be conserved so children are told to not wash their hands or flush the toilet.

THE SOCIAL CHARACTER OF DISASTER AND CRISIS

What claims to the great levelling impact of the crisis and efforts to respond to it miss, as Smith reminded us, “is that far from flattening the social differences, disaster [response and] reconstruction invariably cuts deeper the ruts and grooves of social oppression and exploitation”. The City’s strategy to cut back water usage has enormous implications for overcrowded working-class households in both the short-term, as they disproportionately suffer restricted access and escalating water bills as the shortage worsens, and in the longer-term as water commodification becomes normalized out of the “necessity” of managing the crisis through restrictions, rising rates and WMDs.

The deepening of inequality in Cape Town through the response to the water crisis is clear in the disproportionate installation of WMDs in working-class communities, the disproportionate impact of increases in water tariffs on working-class household budgets and the disproportionate impact of the crisis on the quality of working class life. But little has changed for wealthier residents. As one middle class Vredehoek resident told me, “I shower at the end of the day now, rather than at the beginning too.” Meanwhile, as many working-class women have noted, despite the fact of inadequate housing in which the majority of the working-class lives more not less water is needed to meet daily needs. Getting by on 50 litres a day is nothing new; the City’s response has just made it worse.



UNPAID BENEFITS CAMPAIGN

The Unpaid Benefits Campaign (UBC) was founded in early 2017 as a response to the corruption and malpractice surrounding the administration and regulation of pension and provident funds, to unite groups of workers already organising around the issue and to help workers access their benefits.

THE BILLIONS OWED TO WORKERS

At the end of 2016, pension and provident funds regulated and supervised by the registrar of pension funds were reportedly holding unclaimed benefits amounting to over R41-billion owed to about 4-million people. This money was generated by the labour of workers, both local and migrant. It is workers' money. Workers and dependants of deceased workers shouldn't be deprived of what's owed to them. Many excuses are given for why those entitled to this money cannot be found.

The truth is that there are people – financial institutions, banks and insurance companies – with vested interests in making sure beneficiaries do not get their money. Large financial institutions have established unclaimed benefit funds to hold benefits accumulated in pension and provident funds and they profit from this money by charging administration and other fees. The fewer beneficiaries they pay out the more they profit.

OUR DEMANDS

Pension and provident funds holding unclaimed benefits must:

STOP

- Abdicating responsibility for paying benefits by transferring them to unclaimed benefit funds;
- Deducting administration and tracing costs from benefits paid, and;

INSTEAD

- Take all reasonable steps to trace and pay each person entitled to such a benefit, whether R500 or R500 000;
- Ensure that benefits are increased by returns earned on their investment pending payment;
- Report regularly to the public on steps taken to achieve this and the results of their efforts.

Banks, insurers and other financial institutions holding unclaimed funds must:

- Take all reasonable steps to find and communicate with those people and pay those they owe money;
- Report regularly to the public on the steps taken to achieve this and the results of their efforts.

The State must help them do this more cost-effectively and must:

- Establish a central unclaimed benefits register secure against abuse by the corrupt;
- Obtain information about the likely whereabouts of those entitled to those benefits from the Department of Home Affairs, South African Social Security Agency (SASSA), foreign governments, RICA database and others;
- Facilitate easier and cheaper claims to, and payments of, unclaimed benefits by those who live in rural areas or in other countries;
- Conduct public information campaigns, including media campaigns and roadshows, to inform the public about how to claim their benefits and that they do not have to pay anyone to make claims for them;
- Subject tracing agents to regulation and supervision;
- Prosecute fraudsters who take advantage of vulnerable beneficiaries.

THE WHISTLE-BLOWERS

In 2014, when Rosemary Hunter was deputy-registrar of pension funds and deputy executive officer of the Financial Services Board (FSB), she blew the whistle on unlawful measures adopted by the registrar of pension funds and staff of the FSB – a Cancellations Project to close and cancel the registrations of approximately 4 600 pension and provident funds without checking their assets and liabilities. Hunter was offered a golden handshake of approximately R6 million to resign from the FSB. When she refused, she was subjected to disciplinary proceedings. These were withdrawn because the case against her was weak.

Hunter's three-year contract with the FSB expired in July 2016 and was not renewed. By then she had launched a court application asking the court to order the FSB to give her reports by Justice O'Regan and KPMG on the results of their investigations into aspects of the Cancellations Project so that she could try to fix the problems she had identified.

Hunter was contacted by Michelle Mitchley, an employee of Liberty Corporate, who told her that she had been victimised when she reported the improper conduct of Liberty employees to the FSB. When Liberty discovered that Mitchley and Hunter were talking, Mitchley was fired on trumped-up charges. She is challenging her dismissal in the Labour Court.

WE DEMAND THAT LIBERTY:

- Offer Mitchley reinstatement with retrospective effect to the date of her dismissal;

- Ensure that she is not victimized in the future;
- Compensate her for the hardships she has endured, and;
- Publicly apologise to her and praise her courageous conduct in defence of the rights of Liberty's clients to encourage other Liberty employees, regardless of rank, to act with integrity when fulfilling their duties.

WE DEMAND THAT THE MINISTER OF FINANCE:

- Offer Hunter reinstatement as deputy registrar of pension funds so that she can continue her good work with other FSB employees of integrity in trying to fix the problems relating to the Cancellations Project and to improve the regulation and supervision of pension and provident funds and their administrators, and;
- Publicly praise her courageous actions in defence of the integrity of the FSB and the rights of members of the public who rely on it to protect them so that all public officials will be encouraged to act with equal bravery and integrity in fulfilment of their duties.

WE DEMAND THAT THE FSB:

- Fulfill its constitutional duties by publishing on its website copies of all reports on the results of investigations into the conduct of the Cancellations Project, including Mort's Third Inspection Report;
- Procure the investigation by a properly qualified and equipped firm of forensic auditors of the effect of the way the project was conducted on the remaining funds (approximately 4100 of them) and on members, beneficiaries and others with interests in the funds;
- Remedy any prejudice to any of them that are found;
- Take action against all FSB officials and others responsible for the serious problems in the way that the Cancellations Project was conducted and for abusing their powers when trying to cover up those problems, and;
- Publish on its website regular reports on what it has done in compliance with these demands.

WE DEMAND THAT ALL THE FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS INVOLVED IN THE CANCELLATIONS PROJECT:

- Publicly account for their conduct in relation to it and what they are doing to fix any problems that they helped create.

DEAR TATA

BY KHUSTA taken from Freedom Warriors Vol 2 sos1.bandcamp.com

ndikhule ndimphakamisel utata
ndikhule ndimhloniph utata
ndizbona ndifana notata
ekhaya ndikhule ndibaliselwa ngotata imigudu nemisebenzi kata
yokukhulul umntomnyama
sonke ekhaya simsuportile utata
sonke simculele utata sisith uze notshintsho ekhaya
waqala ngoxolwaniso utata
kodwa umkile umhlaba
sabekhaya sissagquba kwindlala
wathi utata singawulweli umhlaba zimkele intlanga
noba imeeko apha ekhaya azintlanga
kunamhlanje umkhonto ugwaza ekhaya
sivuka silala sikhala
namaphupha ethu ayatshabalala
singamaxhoba kodwa ukhona utata
iimpula zikalujaca
ingaba utata ulithengisile ikhaya?
sohlala sisilwa sikhala
sohlala sizabalaza
obebhala ngunyana wakho uMkhululi igama

Grew looking up to dad
grew up respecting dad
I saw myself growing up to be just like you dad
everyone at home would tell tales of hard work of you dad
of freeing the black people [oppressed people]
all of us at home supported you dad
you started with reconciliation Dad
even though Land didn't return
all of us sang and praised you saying you brought change
even though we were drowning in poverty
Dad you said we shouldn't fight for the land
and we should welcome others
even though circumstances were bad
today the spear is killing its own army
wake up in oppression
we sleep in poverty,
our dreams of freedom are dying
we are victims in your presence Dad
We the poorest of the poor
Did our father sellout his own home?
we shall continue with the struggle and resisting
the struggle continues
the writer your son, uMkhululi is the name

**WE WANT
TO HEAR
FROM
YOU**

Our vision is to interact with our readers on the shape of things to come.

This is an appeal to you to join discussions on **Facebook: ILRIGSA** and Workers World News – as well as **Twitter: #ILRIG**.

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We have also set aside a page for poetry, songs, reviews and readers' comments. Please help us make this an inspiring space by sending us your contributions and views.

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