



END CHEAP LABOUR SYSTEM

The living wage campaign is a fundamental challenge to capitalism in South Africa. The struggle for a national minimum living wage will strike at the heart of the oppressors and exploiters system.

APARTHEID CAPITALISM

For apartheid capitalism is built upon ultra-cheap, ultra-exploitable and ultra-controlled labour. The controls over the African working class began to be developed one hundred years ago. Apartheid - as these controls came to be known - was created to help the bosses make profits in the gold mining industry, which was the real base for the development of industrial capitalism in South Africa.

Profitability of the gold mines was limited because the gold rock was very deep and very low grade. Machinery to get the rock out of the mines was imported and expensive. These high costs could not be passed on to the consumer because the price of gold was fixed.

CHEAP LABOUR

So the bosses believed the only way they could make a very high profit was by getting ultra-cheap labour - by exploiting workers far more than in other parts of the capitalist world.

After a long struggle the mining capitalists managed to force workers to work for very low wages.

This was made possible by forcing Africans to depend on wages for their survival (by taking away their land through the 1913 Land Act and through imposing taxes); by controlling workers movement (through the compound system and the pass laws) and their access to jobs (through the migrant labour system and the labour bureaux); by controlling where the



workers could stay (through Group Areas, the pass laws); and by maintaining a huge reserve army of unemployed who would always compete for jobs and keep wages down.

In the beginning this system of ultra-exploitation was created for the mines. But other capitalists involved in manufacture, farming and so on also took advantage of the controls over the working class. They, too, founded their businesses and profits on the base of ultra-controlled, ultra-exploited workers.

It has been the task of the government to maintain this system of exploitation and oppression to this day.

For the past century successive governments have been dutifully keeping the working class under the thumb of the ruling class.

They have been keeping, and modifying the apartheid controls that exist to ensure high levels of exploitation.

The economy of today has thus been built upon the labours of many generations of ultra-exploited workers. Capitalist profit in South Africa has always depended on high exploitation. And what is high exploitation but returning as little as possible of the wealth workers produce back to them?

SOCIALIST DIRECTION

Basing an economy on such high levels of control and exploitation has brought its own political problems as well. While the few capitalists have reaped benefits, they also have created the seeds for their own destruction.

More than ever before, the working class is now organising around, and struggling for, a program to transform society in a socialist direction.

There is an economic cost to apartheid capitalism as well. Paying very low wages has led to high profits. But it has also meant that there is a vast worker consumer market with many needs - for housing, food, clothing and so on - but with no money to buy those needs.

Because of low wages, the working class and the poor which form the majority of the population, have little money to spend. Which means small demand for goods and services. Which means that industry is limited to providing very little for the working class. Which means that there is a smaller manufacturing sector than there could be.

Which means less economic growth in South Africa as a whole. Which means fewer jobs.

So, in trying to get high profits through paying starvation wages, the capitalists end up with getting less profits because they pay little wages.

ECONOMIC CRISIS

Instead of a growing economy which is able to provide for workers' needs, there is a shrinking economy which provides retrenchments and poverty.

This is a problem which the capitalists cannot solve. Their logic tells them to pay more so that more money is available to be spent on consumer items which could lead to higher profits.

But their logic is opposed by their greed. Their greed tells them that the more wages they pay,

the less profits they get in return. Being capitalists, their greed outweighs their logic. And the whole economy suffers as a result: the manufacturing sector remains small, there is very little economic growth, and so too few new jobs are created each year to overcome unemployment.

If the bosses were forced to pay higher wages, they would worry that there would be a fall in their profits because of increased labour costs. If they then were allowed to pass on the increased labour costs to the consumer by putting up their prices, inflation would go up. Which would mean that goods would be more expensive. Which, in turn, would mean that even with bigger pay packets workers would not be able to afford to buy what they wish. So, even with bigger pay packets, workers and the economy would be back to where they started. That is, so long as the bosses are allowed simply to put up the cost of goods to keep their profits up.

WORKERS MUST CONTROL

The solution to this problem cannot be left in the hands of the capitalists. Workers and their organisations must seize the initiative and build control over the economy. Increasing workers pay packets will go a long way towards bettering the position of the economy. With more money in workers' pockets, there will be more demand for goods and services. That will lead to growth and the creation of new jobs.

The demand for a living wage could have positive effects leading to economic growth, providing more jobs, and providing a better quality of life for the working class.

But so long as bosses are allowed to put their interests first (their interest in high profits) this is unlikely to happen. Either they will resist wage increases or they will put up prices. Neither situation will benefit workers or the economy.

UNITE AND FIGHT FOR A LIVING WAGE



SUBMIT OR FIGHT



Fighting for a living wage is, like most issues, a question of power.

The government has the power to cut the bread subsidy or raise the price of wheat, electricity or sugar. The government has the power to impose General Sales Tax and increase UIF contributions.

The bosses have the power to increase the price of goods and pass on increased costs to the consumer.

When times are difficult for the government, they can, for example, simply increase taxes.

To prevent their profits falling because of the increase in taxes, the bosses can pass on the cost

to us as consumers by putting up the prices of the goods.

But the consumers (the majority of whom are working class) have no-one to whom they can pass their increased costs. We are the end of the line and we have got nothing in our pockets already.

When we are faced by starvation wages and increasing costs we have one choice: submit or fight. Submission needs no organisation at all. Fighting to win a living wage needs powerful organisation and mobilisation. COSATU needs to mobilise, not only our own members, but all workers and youth who are suffering the poverty and

STRUCTURE OF COSATU

STRUCTURE OF LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

MEMBERS: THE WORKERS WHO FORM THE AFFILIATED UNIONS.

UNIONS: BY JUNE EACH INDUSTRY WILL HAVE ONE UNION REPRESENTING THE WORKERS.

AFFILIATED INDUSTRIAL UNIONS



EACH UNION HAS ITS OWN STRUCTURE TO CO-ORDINATE THE LIVING WAGE CAMPAIGN

MINES METAL FOOD PAPER CONSTRUCTION CHEMICAL COMMERCIAL CATERING TRANSPORT DOMESTIC MUNICIPAL PUBLIC SECTOR FARM TEXTILE UNEMPLOYED



SHOP STEWARDS COUNCIL



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ALL MEMBERS OF SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEES IN A LOCAL MEET IN THE SHOP STEWARDS COUNCILS TO CO-ORDINATE THE LOCAL

EACH LOCAL UNION ELECTS ITS OWN LOCAL SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- LIMITED POWER: ASSISTS THE GENERAL SECRETARY
- MEETS ONCE BETWEEN MEETINGS OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
- CANNOT MAKE POLICY OR AMEND ANY POLICY DECISION OF THE FEDERATION
- FOUR ADDITIONAL MEMBERS OF THE CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE: NO MORE THAN THREE MEMBERS FROM ONE REGION, AND NO MORE THAN TWO MEMBERS FROM ONE AFFILIATED UNION
- PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, SECOND VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL SECRETARY, ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY

EACH UNION IS REPRESENTED IN THE REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND IN THE REGIONAL CONGRESS BY TWO DELEGATES FOR UNIONS WITH UNDER 1000 MEMBERS AND 4 DELEGATES FOR UNIONS WITH MORE THAN 1000 MEMBERS

REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



- ADMINISTERS THE REGION BETWEEN MEETINGS OF THE REGIONAL CONGRESS
- REGIONAL CHAIR, VICE CHAIR, TREASURER AND REGIONAL SECRETARY

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



- MANAGES THE AFFAIRS OF THE FEDERATION BETWEEN MEETINGS OF THE NATIONAL CONGRESS
- MEETS ONCE EVERY THREE MONTHS
- TWO REPRESENTATIVES FOR EACH AFFILIATED UNION WITH UNDER 15 000 MEMBERS (ONE MUST BE A WORKER) FOUR REPRESENTATIVES FOR UNIONS OVER 15 000
- CHAIRPERSON OF EACH REGION HAS SPEAKING BUT NO VOTING RIGHTS
- PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, SECOND VICE PRESIDENT, TREASURER, GENERAL SECRETARY OF NC HOLD SAME POSITION NO VOTING RIGHTS

REGIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE



- TWO DELEGATES FROM EACH AFFILIATE WITH UNDER 1000 MEMBERS AND 4 DELEGATES FROM UNIONS WITH MORE THAN 1000 MEMBERS

REGIONAL CONGRESS



- CARRIES OUT DECISIONS OF THE NC AND THE CEC
- EACH AFFILIATE WITH A BRANCH IN THE REGION ELECTS 5 REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE FIRST 1 000 MEMBERS AND THEN ONE REPRESENTATIVE FOR EVERY 250 MEMBERS

REGIONAL CONGRESS



- ELECTS A REGIONAL CHAIRPERSON, REGIONAL VICE-CHAIR, TREASURER, AND REGIONAL SECRETARY
- SUBORDINATE BODY TO THE CEC. DECISIONS OF THE REGIONAL CONGRESS MAY BE CONFIRMED, AMENDED OR REVERSED BY THE CEC

NATIONAL CONGRESS



- HIGHEST CONTROLLING BODY OF THE FEDERATION
- MEETS AT LEAST ONCE EVERY TWO YEARS
- ADOPTS GENERAL AND SPECIFIC POLICY BY MEANS OF RESOLUTIONS
- ELECTS THE PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, SECOND VICE PRESIDENT, GENERAL SECRETARY AND ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY
- NO OFFICIAL OF THE FEDERATION OR ITS AFFILIATES SHALL BE ELIGIBLE FOR THE POSITION OF PRESIDENT, FIRST VICE PRESIDENT, SECOND VICE PRESIDENT OR TREASURER
- EACH AFFILIATE HAS ONE DELEGATE PER 500 MEMBERS - WORKERS MUST BE IN THE MAJORITY OF THE DELEGATION

THERE WILL BE A SUB-COMMITTEE TO CO-ORDINATE THE CAMPAIGN WITH MASS-BASED PROGRESSIVE ORGANISATIONS

hardship forced on us by starvation wages.

Already COSATU, together with the UDF and NECC, is committed to a campaign of national unity and united action. Every mass-based youth, political and womens organisation supports the struggle for a living wage. Together, under the leadership of organised workers in COSATU, millions of people will stand and fight for a living wage and a decent life.

In our struggle, we have a choice: to fight the increases themselves (through, for example, boycotting buses after fares go up) or fighting those

increases as well as the cause of the increase.

LIVING WAGE

This is what the living wage campaign is about. We do not wish to fight every individual increase in prices. We want guarantees that every worker and worker's family is secure and living a decent life. We want guarantees against the bosses cutting our wages, and against inflation eating into our wages.

This is also why we need strong organisation - both within Cosatu and our unions as well as between Cosatu and community, student and youth groups.

To maximize our power

Cosatu has worked out a structure which would assist in organising, mobilising and educating all members and all unions.

This is how it will work: The living wage campaign will have a National Co-ordinating Committee (NCC) and Regional Co-ordinating Committees.

CAMPAIGN STRUCTURE

Each union will also elect a co-ordinating committee which will be represented in the NCC (2 delegates for unions with more than 15000 members and 1 for unions with less than 15000 members nationally plus national office bearers

of COSATU) and the RCC (2 delegates for unions with more than 8000 members and 1 for unions with less than 8000 members regionally plus regional office bearers of COSATU). Locals must play a very important role through local living wage committees in mobilising, educating through distributing publicity material and holding general meetings. Educational work is to be co-ordinated through the education sub-committees.

The NCC is to set up a sub-committee to co-ordinate with mass based community, worker student and youth groups.

FORWARD TOGETHER

At the centre of the campaign will be unions affiliated to Cosatu. Co-ordination will be essential to the success of our campaign. It will make sure that workers in all unions and regions, as well as people in the mass democratic organisations, are aware of the victories, difficulties and struggles of other workers.

Every wage struggle; every struggle against increased costs; every fight for shorter hours and paid maternity leave and job security; our struggle for May Day, June 16th and

Sharpeville Day; our struggles for decent education and training; for an end to tax deductions and the hostel system - all are part of our struggle for a living wage.

All are needs that millions and millions of workers and youth have. All could be fought together - instead of some us fighting on our own in isolation from our mass class strength. Our living wage campaign is the place to put all our struggle together; to put all our strength together; to put all our solidarity together; to put all our energy together to say with one voice "UNITE AND FIGHT FOR A LIVING WAGE".