



Taking over the streets of Joburg: Public sector strikers march during the massive 13 June protest action



Cosatu Free State leader Cde Sam Mashinini (with bandana) on the forefront of a march in Bloemfontein

Gear is at the root of the strike – and of its scale

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tion. Or that the imperatives of governance for a national liberation movement tend to put a strain on alliances forged during the era of the national liberation struggles. To pose these questions does not mean that in post-colonial situations there are no legitimate differences between 'employers and employees'. Nor does it mean that governments of former national liberation movements should always accept all or any of worker demands.

The SACP has correctly come out in support of this strike. This does not mean that the SACP supports any or every strike by virtue of it being a workers' strike. We have firmly supported this

strike because we believe a lot has to be done to improve the wages and conditions of service of public sector workers in this country 13 years into our democracy. The working conditions of many of the public service workers still remain appalling (teachers without classrooms, without the most basic of facilities; hospitals without basic services and support staff, failure to close the apartheid wage gap, etc).

While many of these conditions were inherited from apartheid, we believe that there have been unsatisfactory responses to these mainly because of the contradictory economic policies followed by government since 1996. While we have been told that the earlier Gear-inspired gov-

ernment savings are now bearing fruit since we have more money to spend, the effect of those earlier savings completely undermined government capacity to spend. Building a 'lean and mean', 'downsized and right sized' state severely compromised the capacity of the public sector to drive a developmental agenda. It is extremely problematic that a country with such massive developmental challenges boasts a budget surplus, while simultaneously giving billions of Rands to big business in terms of tax cuts. There is no debate within our broader movement on how this surplus is to be used to address our developmental challenges.

The roots of this strike therefore, espe-

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