

Special Edition



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## Voice of the Proletariat

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ANC



COSATU

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# SOCIALISM IS THE FUTURE, BUILD IT NOW!

# #FeesMust

## Fall2015 by Chris Matlhako



For what its worth, a class analysis of the recent students protests at the countries' universities, is both pertinent and necessary. The #FeesMustFall protests captured the imagination of many (including internationally) and evoked the historic student mass actions of the 1970s and 80s, in their widespread nature and support. The protests, which started and were concentrated, mainly in the former white universities spread across the entire university sector in the country in no time, with the mass participation of students. Importantly, the student protests were spontaneous and seemed to be leaderless (with no real political and ideological outlook underpinning the demands and mobilisation, except for the #FeesMustFall slogan) though the African National Congress-allied Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA) structure, made up of South African Students Congress (SASCO), the ANC Youth League and the Young Communist League - South Africa (YCL-SA), were the leading forces, who led almost all of the student representative councils (SRCs) in the coun-

try's universities.

It must also be said that there existed numerous shades of interpretations of the protests regarding the significance and meaning of the protests, including an attempt by some to try and pull the rug from under the feet of the students and progressive forces in particular. Behind the barricades and the smokes, there also existed an

### ***What does all this mean in the context of struggle for the de-commodification***

attempt by 'speculative leftists' and ultra-leftist forces to generate a 'South African Spring', thus slogans such as #ANCMustFall were bandied about. In Cape Town in particular, there was an attempt by ultra-leftist forces to stage-manage, what they called a 'revolutionary moment' and sponsored acts of anarchy and chaos. The Workers Socialist Party (WASP) remarked: "The ANC government are the ones that we are fighting AGAINST."

The hashtag (#) moment was also fueled by social media and other platforms which buttressed these protests. A key feature of the university protests mobilisation, was its distinctly amorphous nature and ideologically unclear character. Starting in and concentrated in the previously white universities such as Wits, Rhodes and Cape Town, which ironically, receive by percentage, the highest private sector support and command huge reserves, including sky high remuneration packages for their vice chancellors, which rival private sector enterprise chief executives' remuneration packages.

What does all this mean in the context of struggle for the de-commodification of basic services such as health, education, social services and others? What is the link, if any with a thorough-going trajectory to undercut the neoliberal basis of user-fees and its values to exclusion, whilst simultaneously cajoling all society? A class analysis is required, if not imperative, if we are to fully comprehend both the actions and consequences of the protests.

There abound various hues of

analysis which unfortunately pander to immediacy and avoid the class nature and factors that find expression in the protest action, its composition and demands. WASP said; “[S]alute the uprising of tertiary education students! Like the 1976 generation, students have lifted the lid on the pressure cooker of boiling working class discontent. Since the dawn of democracy, the capitalist class and their willing accomplices in the ANC government have carried out a total onslaught on working people. The outrageous increases in registration, tuition and accommodation fees are merely the straw that has broken the back of the camel of working class patience.”

## **International 'no-fees' experiences**

Others have also drawn parallels with similar actions and in some instances achievements such in Germany where student protests yielded a 'no fee' position from the federal government of Germany.

The Chilean students uprising and protests are probably the most important example of class struggles waged by students, whose demands tied to societal demands for fundamental change of not just the education system but also the de-commodification of basic social services.

The 2011 – 2013 Chilean protests known as the Chilean Winter (in particular reference to the massive protests of August 2011) or the Chilean Education Conflict (as labelled in Chilean media) — were a series of student-led protests across Chile, demanding a new framework for education in the country, including more direct

state participation in secondary education and an end to the existence of profit in higher education. During the Chilean Winter students and youth demonstrated in Santiago and other major cities in Chile in October 2011, to commemorate the 38th anniversary of the CIA-backed coup that overthrew the government of Salvador Allende and ushered in 17 years of a brutal military dictatorship headed by General Augusto Pinochet.

The protest followed three months of demonstrations by

***Since the dawn of democracy, the capitalist class and their willing accomplices in the ANC government have carried out a total onslaught on working people.***

high school and university students demanding an end to for-profit education and free higher education for all Chileans. The movement steadily escalated into a confrontation with the right-wing government of President Sebastian Piñera and has raised the demand for the re-writing of the constitution approved under the Pinochet dictatorship. This constitution arose out of Chile's 1973 military coup, one of the bloodiest and most tragic defeats suffered by the international working class. It instituted a series

of capitalist counter-reforms to reverse reformist measures implemented under Allende's Popular Unity government and pointed in the direction of a new order, with education and health subordinated to profit, pensions privatised, etc.

Currently in Chile, only 45% of high school students study in traditional public schools and most universities are also private. No new public universities have been built since the end of the Chilean transition to democracy in 1990, even though the number of university students has swelled. Beyond the specific demands regarding education, there is a feeling that the protests reflect a 'deep discontent' among some parts of society with Chile's high level of inequality. The CONFECH's (Confederation of Chilean Student Federations a national body made up of student governments at Chilean universities) proposal, known as the 'Social Agreement for Chilean Education' demands were:

- Increased state support for public universities, which currently finance their activities mostly through tuition.
- More equitable admissions process to prestigious universities, with less emphasis on the *Prueba de Selección Universitaria* standardised test.
- Free public education, so access to higher education doesn't depend on families' economic situation.
- Creation of a government agency to apply the law against profit in higher education and prosecute those universities that are

allegedly using loopholes to profit. The students oppose direct (fellowship and voucher) and indirect government aid (government-backed loans) to for-profit schools.

- A more serious accreditation process to improve quality and end indirect state support for poor quality institutions.
- Creation of an 'intercultural university' that meets the unique demands of Mapuche students.
- Repeal of laws forbidding student participation in university governance.

President Michelle Bachelet, member of the Chilean Socialist Party and candidate for a broad center-left coalition, won the presidential elections in 2013 stating that a principal objective of the New Majority (*Nueva Mayoría*) coalition will be to achieve and establish a system of universal and free access to higher education within a *time frame of six (6) years*. Meanwhile in the elections for the Chilean parliament two ex main leaders of the protests, Camila Vallejo and Gabriel Boric became elected as members of parliament, one for the Chilean Communist Party and the other for the Autonomous Left party respectively.

## The way forward

The South African university students protest movement, even though it articulated the demand of the fees must fall (no fees increase for the 2016 academic year), it failed (was not clear) to make the dialectical relationship with free edu-

cation and not for-profit higher education demand until leftist PYA formations inserted the demand later on in the protests. The sloganeering which characterised the protest suggested that it was the immediate demand of fees and nothing beyond and linked to the political-ideological struggles in society broadly. At the University of Cape Town, there was at least the attempt to insert the demands on in-sourcing of services and other labour-related matters (against privatisation in particular) in favour of advancing leftist demands. Due to the

***The government's rethink on these matter will no doubt provoke an outcry among the leadership of these institutions, academics and those who support them.***

amorphous nature of the protest movement, various political formations tried to curry favour with the students and attempted to make celebrity appearances at the various points of protest, but were immediately told to back off.

The ANC's 52nd National Conference resolved to 'progressively introduce free education for the poor until undergraduate level'. The majority of higher education institutions have used autonomy and academic freedom to pay lip service to the challenge of fundamental transformation and the

students have been the ones to expose this situation and bring it out into the public discourse. Historically, liberal universities have guarded their autonomy with great vigor, regardless of the fact that they are recipients of government funding. Funding is paid for by taxpayers, many of whom would like to see their children benefit from free or less expensive higher education. Institutional autonomy and academic freedom have been used to further entrench the neoliberal paradigm in the post-apartheid SA.

So, with the whole notion of academic freedom comes huge responsibilities that our institutions of higher learning must take seriously, not least of these is to ensure that poor people can access quality education. If the universities cannot do that then they must face censure and government intervention. They do not exist as islands, fenced off from the societies that they operate in.

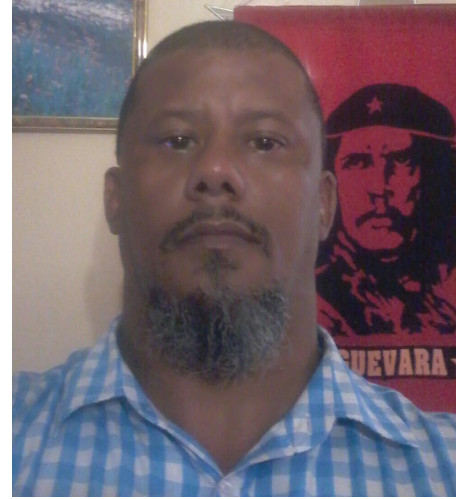
They have to demonstrated their relevance to the ideals that have transformed our country from the narrowness and oppressiveness of our past and show us that they are responsible to those ideals and not to some outdated notion that seeks to perpetuate western cultural supremacy and the kind of meritocracy that promotes the needs of the wealthy above the needs of the masses. The government's rethink on these matter will no doubt provoke an outcry among the leadership of these institutions, academics and those who support them.

***Cde Chris Matlhako is a Central Committee and Politburo Member of the SACP***

# Consumer

# Education

by Allister Jack



**C**onsumer Education for communities.

In South Africa, consumers from disadvantaged communities were previously excluded from fair business transactions. Also, the low literacy levels of consumers, especially from these communities, resulted in them being seriously disadvantaged when it came to understanding the content and effect of business contracts. In addition, the terms included in “standard form” contracts, generally favoured business or were unfair or unreasonable to the consumer.

The Consumer Protection Act (CPA) (Republic of South Africa, 2008) therefore aims to promote a fair and accessible marketplace for consumer products and services; prohibit unfair marketing and business practices; promote full participation of the disadvantaged communities as consumers and protect consumers from unfair, unreasonable and unjust business practices. Many countries have adopted legislation to control unfairness in business contracts (such as the Unfair Contract terms Act 1977 in the UK). Until recently, consumer protection was unclear and not codified in South Africa. There

were certain common law rights for consumers generally and legislation did provide limited protection to the customer in terms of legislation. The CPA of 2008 was signed into law on

***In South Africa, consumers from disadvantaged communities were previously excluded from fair business transactions.***

24 April 2009. Certain sections were applicable twelve months later (April, 2010) and the general effective date when all provisions were to be implemented, was 18 months later (September 2010). However, the general effective date was postponed to April 2011 to give businesses more time to prepare for the implementation of the Act. The CPA replaces the Consumer Affairs (unfair business practices) Act of 1988, which provided for the prohibition and control of unfair business practices.

This article uses a descriptive approach to reveal the social responsibility of business in a transforming society as far as consumer rights are concerned. It first examines the significance of ethical business practices and unfolds the role of business in transformation in South Africa. Secondly, it examines specific fundamental rights of the consumer set out in the CPA. Thirdly, it focuses on the right to information in plain and understandable language.

Business has a broader social role to play. They have to report on their activities with regard to social and economic development, as well as the promotion of equality and development of the communities in which they operate.

Ethical and socially responsible actions are important contributors for long term growth and profitability of business. The external focus of ethical practices relates to the relationship that business establishes with consumers. “Consumerism” are defined as a set of activities on the part of independent organizations, government, and business organizations, designed to protect the consumer.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has evolved into three

areas of the triple bottom line, namely, economic, social and environmental. While the economic dimension is about profitability, the social dimension means that companies have to go beyond fulfilling their legal responsibilities and invest in human capital, as well as take actions to contribute to the welfare and interests of the staff and community. In South Africa, the social aspect of CSR contributes toward the upliftment of society. The equality clause in the South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996, Section 9) provides for the equal protection and benefit of all persons and allows for legislative or other measures that are designed to advance or protect persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination.

The CPA therefore lays the foundation in this respect for the consumer. The CPA is the first piece of legislation to set out the rights of consumers and the responsibilities of suppliers. This Act will develop a means to protect the interests of all consumers, more specifically the disadvantaged consumer. Business therefore has a socially responsible role to play as far as consumer protection and transformation of historically disadvantaged societies in South Africa are concerned. Armed with information, customers are becoming more sophisticated and demanding, and this makes business realise the need for trust and commitment as a means to developing customer loyalty.

Ethics in business:

Do customers care about ethics? Can doing good help businesses do better? Results from a recent study suggest that ethical behaviour helps the bottom

line of a company. Increased sensitivity to ethical reputation is a major advantage in South Africa and businesses are realizing that good ethics and social responsibility are good business practices which will contribute to profitability and growth. Ethical reputation and customer satisfaction and loyalty are critical predictors for South African business and provide an edge over the competition.

What are business ethics?

Ethical business practice means "doing the right thing" as far as consumer demands are concerned. Increased sensitivity to ethical reputation is a major advantage, and it deter-

## ***In South Africa, the social aspect of CSR contributes toward the upliftment of society.***

mines the conduct of businesses when dealing with customers, from individuals to corporate clients.

Business ethics has an external emphasis considering the gap between organizations' ethical actions and behaviour in ongoing business practices, and the marketplace's or society's perceptions of the organization's ethical actions and behaviour in their business practices.

They maintain that "corporate ethics", on the other hand, has an internal emphasis considering the gap between the management's ethical actions and behaviour and the staff's perception of the management's ethical actions and behaviour in

on-going business practices. Unethical business practices, as far as consumers are concerned, include: discrimination against customers on the grounds of race; standard form contracts that are one-sided and over-protective of business; misleading or deceptive advertising (for instance, requiring the consumer to pay a higher price than the displayed price, or enticing young consumers who do not fully understand the consequences of acting on misleading advertising); contracts that contain onerous clauses in fine print and unintelligible language, and disclaimers which unfairly exclude or limit the liability of business.

Why should business engage in ethical business practices?

What's in it for business?

Society and marketplace stakeholders no longer judge an organization's performance on profit alone. Consideration of the ethical and socially responsible actions underlying profitability, should lead organizations to aspire to being better corporate citizens in order to achieve ethically long term profit. As the social conscience of many in the developed world became more acute in the latter years of the twentieth century, there was a corresponding rise in the expectations of organizations to be better corporate citizens and to invest in making the society a better place. Do the ethical structures and processes in place assist the bottom line of an organization?

Today it would appear that the stakeholders of first world economies look more deeply at such profit declarations. The declaration of a profit or a loss is only the first of a set of criteria upon which the marketplace and society evaluates the per-

formance of the organization. This is where ethical business practices become crucial and may benefit the organization in both the short and the long term. It is also important for customers and other stakeholders, who are seen as partners in the process of developing organizational wealth, to be informed about the organization's code. Many suppliers rely extensively on the continued goodwill of the organization. The power in the relationship usually resides with the organization. In most industries, a range of alternate suppliers can be sourced. This organiza-

tional flexibility places pressure upon the incumbent supplier to abide by the rules of the employing organization. They should be seen as partners in a mutually inclusive mission to create value for everyone across organizations. It is advisable to get suppliers to embrace and contribute to the organization's values and ethical viewpoints – in extension, ethical business practices. The sentiments and views of other stakeholders are important to any organization as they may be affected by the success and/or failure of the organization. Good organiza-

tions do not differentiate between institutional stakeholders and other stakeholders in the marketplace and society. The welfare of all stakeholders should be treated equally regardless of the monetary value that they represent to the organization. Ultimately, all stakeholders of the organization are important and should be considered when developing, managing and monitoring ethical business practices.

*Cde Allister Jack is the SACP Northern Cape 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Provincial Secretary*

## The Alliance by OJ Fourie



**T**he key to building a united, democratic, non-racist, non-sexist and prosperous South Africa is a strong and united tripartite alliance. The workings of the alliance can be explained by using the analogy of a football team. Within a football team the players in the team have their specific role to play in order to ensure that the team perform at its best. The talents and skills therefore required by each player will therefore be different from each other as there

are different positions to play in, in the team. Besides the different positions of players they also play mainly in different parts of the field. The success of the team depends on the performance of all players, irrespective of their skills that they possess or the positions in which they play. In the end all players in the team have only one goal in mind and that is to win! Within the alliance, the alliance partners are playing in the same team but only wearing different jerseys. The different

positions that players are playing cause for them to have different strategy & tactics whilst playing in the game. Each of the alliance partners also have their specific role to play in the National Democratic Revolution and therefore alliance partners have their strategy & tactics in order to give effect to their role. But all alliance members have the same goal in mind and that is to overcome unemployment, poverty and inequality. The positions within a football team is basically the: defend-

ers, midfielders and the forwards. In the case of the analogy of the alliance the defenders could be used to represent the SACP, the midfielders could be used to represent COSATU and the forwards could be used to represent the ANC.

In short we can look at the Revolutionary Football Team as follows:



The defenders – SACP

It has always been the revolutionary role of the Party to defend the ANC and to defend the working class in society. When the ANC was banned in 1960 and were forced to move its operations underground, the ANC was received safely in the hands of the Party who has by then already been operating underground for almost 10 years. The Party could ensure to continuous operations of the ANC moving underground. When the ANC considered to only have membership for black Africans in particular, it was the Party that intervened to make sure that the ANC remained an organisation opened for all South Africans that want to realise democracy and freedom for all. So the Party has proved its role as defenders within the alliance and continues to do so. The role of defenders, including the goal keeper, is crucial as it prevents the opposition from scoring and thereby preventing the opposi-

tion from achieving its goal.



## COSATU

The midfielders – COSATU

The midfielders in any football team are known for being the playmakers and ensuring that the team play in an organised manner. In many instances the midfielders determine the tempo at which the game is being played. Within the alliance COSATU remains the banner under which all workers are organised in the workplace. COSATU affiliates have huge memberships and can mobilise huge numbers of the working class to be involved in any campaign or programme of the alliance. It remains the organised workers on the ground that are the motive force behind the National Democratic Revolution.



The forwards – ANC

In any team it is usually the forwards, better known as strikers, that usually gets the limelight as it are they that score the majority of goals that gives the victory in any football match. Importantly to note no team will ever be a successful team if it is only a team consisting of 11 strikers! The ANC is the leader within the alliance and therefore are mostly in the public limelight. The policies of the ANC are crucial as it gives directive to the work of government. When we go to vote we don't vote for the Party or Cosatu but we vote for the ANC. Members of the alliance that are deployed to government are deployed under the banner of the ANC within government and in parliament. Noting the above, it is clear that the ANC is continuously in the limelight of the public and therefore also are mostly under scrutiny from the opposition.

Within any successful and world-class football team one will find that the defenders, midfielders and forwards are all world-class players. A team cannot be a highly successful team if it struggles in any of the three main positions of the team. All players needs to know their role and execute it perfectly during any match in order to ensure that the team wins as often as possible.

The alliance is truly a unique revolutionary force in South Africa and also very unique compared to others in the world. In many ways South Africa is indeed blessed to have such an all-round political force that collectively serves as the ruling party in order to serve the people of the country better. In deed all members of the alliance needs to play their role in order to give effect to the Na-

tional Democratic Revolution. In order to overcome poverty, unemployment and inequality and to deliver world-class services to our people we need a united and strong alliance.

Anyone that considers that each of the alliance members are to dislodge themselves from the alliance and thereby be able to contest the elections, do not know what the strength and essence of the alliance is and they only see the alliance partners as any other political party, that is to be used to canvas for votes and get seats in parliament.

The ANC, SACP and COSATU is set to loose (weakened) if the alliance would break. There won't be one winner and two losers or even two winners and one loser. All three alliance partners will be severely

weakened and it is only the position that will win from an alliance breakup. It therefore remains critical for all

***The alliance is the embodiment of South Africans it is the vehicle through which the ideals and aspirations of a nation can be materialised.***

members to continuously work on building the alliance and not weakening the alliance through any particular behaviour. Let's what we do build the alliance, and not what we do break the

alliance.

Those who use the alliance to settle political scores, even if it's done by former presidents, are gambling with the future of this country.

The alliance is the embodiment of South Africans it is the vehicle through which the ideals and aspirations of a nation can be materialised. The alliance is the organ that ensures that we can have democracy and freedom. The alliance paves the way for a non-racist and non-sexist society. The alliance gave birth to a united South Africa. The alliance, and only the alliance, will ensure a better future for all.

*OJ Fourie is the SACP Kimberley District Deputy District Secretary and a former YCLSA National Committee Member*



## Revolutionary Editorial Team

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