THE RED ALERT

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Vote SACP on Wednesday, 4 November 2026



Tomorrow is election day. Vote SACP.

The SACP has no interests separate and apart from those of the immense majority of South Africans. For the SACP, this election concerns your life.

This is about the right of all to work. It is about safe water that meets health and safety standards, for drinking, cooking, washing and food production. Not water that makes children or older people ill, and not the corrupt water tankers, but public water infrastructure expansion and maintenance.

This election is about ever-cheaper access to reliable electricity. Not exorbitant electricity price increases that make it unaffordable, not to speak of the workers and poor, but even for sections of the middle class in suburbs, and for industrial production and agriculture. This election is about ending power outages caused by load shedding in affected communities, theft of components and taxpayers' money, and corrupt tenders and procurement. It is about whether public money serves the people or enriches a few.

Tomorrow's election is about free access to water and electricity through indigent programmes for the unemployed and poor who cannot afford. It is against the budget cuts that limit access to indigent programmes or render their relief worthless.

Tomorrow's election is therefore also about a new beginning in the struggle to end wrong policy choices, most of which are designed to enrich a few through outsourcing and privatisation. The SACP's independent election contest forms a crucial pillar of the struggle, a "Vote SACP campaign with and for the workers and poor", the great majority of our people. This is a campaign against hunger, poverty and inequality, a campaign for working-class power. It is a campaign that speaks equally to middle-class families, including those living in suburbs, whose livelihoods are also being eroded by the ever-rising cost-of-living crisis.

Tomorrow's election is about paved and safe roads for all districts and localities, including paved village access roads. It is about land for homes, integrated settlements with community sport and cultural facilities, and for food production. This election is about safety, against crime, and against violence against women and girls.

These are some of the core issues the SACP raised during its election and Red October campaigns because they reflect the aspirations of the people in their majority.

For too long, working-class people, including professionals at different levels of the division of work, have carried the country on their backs while wealth remains concentrated in a few hands. Millions work hard, look for work or struggle to survive, yet the benefits of the economy do not reach the majority: they are concentrated in the hands of a tiny minority of dominant capitalists. The result is unemployment, poverty, inequality and failing or collapsing services.

The SACP says public money must serve public needs.

We say corruption must be stopped and every rand of public money must be accounted for.

We say municipalities must build and repair infrastructure, maintain services and respond quickly when communities report problems.

We say councillors must answer to the people and not disappear after elections.

The SACP is not asking people to vote and then sit back. A vote is important, but organised people are stronger than any individual politician. Real change comes when workers, unemployed people, women, youth, rural communities and all working people and progressive sections of the middle class organise and act together to build people's power where they live.

The choice is clear: On Wednesday, 4 November 2026, make your mark count. **Look for the SACP logo:** a bold black five-pointed star bearing a gold hammer and sickle at its centre, set against a scarlet red background, with the letters SACP beneath the star: **Vote SACP**.

Unbundling, privatisation

Stop the assault, advance democratic public ownership and control

Abstract

This intervention argues that the structural reforms adopted by the government, now coordinating the measures through Operation Vulindlela and supported by World Bank loans from 2022, constitute neo-liberal restructuring, including, notably, privatisation in

substance even where the state retains, or may ultimately retain, legal ownership of fixed assets. Drawing on Volume II of Marx's *Capital*,[1] as well as Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession, this intervention examines the unbundling of public ownership and the associated operations privatisation, driven as "private participation and competition". The analysis extends to the corporatisation of the ports authority, privatisation of the high-demand radio frequency spectrum through an auction and Home Affairs functions through outsourcing. The officialdom argues that the build, operate and transfer model it has chosen does not involve or amount to privatisation. This is exposed as misleading when examined through the full circuit of capital. Prescriptions from imperialist-controlled foreign networks or establishments emerge as a typical external policy blueprint that the government has embraced and transmitted into the domestic policy space. What is the way forward? A call to action for shared prosperity, a better life for all.

Keywords: neo-liberal(ism), privatisation, Marxism, *Capital* Volume II, South Africa, Eskom, Transnet, PRASA, spectrum, Home Affairs, World Bank, OECD, build operate transfer

Introduction

The structural reform agenda enforced by the government, now co-ordinated or even expanded through Operation Vulindlela, has received support from the World Bank through a Development Policy Loan series that began in 2022 and reached US$1.5 billion in 2026.[2] Internationally, neo-liberal reforms were, notably, prescribed as policy recommendations by the imperialist-dominated Paris-based Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2017.[3] This agenda was increasingly advanced through imperialist-controlled institutions in the wake of the 2008 global economic crisis, as capital sought new avenues for private wealth accumulation, including opening up the state and converting targeted public sectors into new fields of accumulation. By the end of the 2010s, its blueprint of prescriptions for conformist governments was largely complete through "recommendations".

The imperialist-controlled Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, as well as Western credit-rating agencies, have been driving the policy reforms, which are neo-liberal. Imperialist intervention undermines domestic policy sovereignty in pursuit of global finance-capital interests, among other beneficiaries, with the Western credit-rating agencies also serving as instruments of their foreign-policy influence. Conformist governments, backed by dominant private-sector interests, domestic and foreign, often serve as transmission belts for the neo-liberal reform agenda.

The policy reforms cover electricity, freight logistics, ports, water, visas and the regulatory environment for business.[4] This intervention argues that these reforms constitute neo-liberal restructuring, including privatisation in substance even where the state retains or may retain legal ownership of fixed assets as part of the constant capital required to support value chain or production network operations.

Methodological approach

The circuit of capital and accumulation by dispossession

The analytical anchor in this article is Volume II of Marx's *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. The circuit M—C…P…C^{I}—M^{I} distinguishes fixed capital, whose value passes gradually from the operational moment in which surplus value is produced and realised. The circuit of industrial capital begins with money capital (M) advanced to purchase commodities (C) comprising means of production and labour power, which are set in motion in the production process (P), to generate surplus value, yielding expanded commodity capital (C^{I}) that is realised on sale as expanded money capital (M^{I}), equal to the original advance plus the surplus value generated socially but appropriated as capitalist private property.

When the state retains the grid, tracks or port land but transfers part of, or entire operations to private companies, it retains the cost-bearing element and transfers the value-capturing element. The value appropriated by private capital as profits is an extraction of what would otherwise accrue to the public. Harvey's concept of accumulation by dispossession captures the process by which public assets and functions are transferred to private capital through state action.

The reforms analysed in this intervention include a contemporary example. While some involve outright privatisation, such as the high-frequency radio spectrum that has been auctioned to the highest bidders, with the duopoly of Vodacom and MTN capturing the lion's share,[i] others involve the capture of new productive capacity establishment and expansion or a leading role in it by private capital, such as the space created for private power producers, called "independent power producers"[ii]. In other cases, legal title remains with the state, while part of, or entire operations are transferred to capital for its control and value extraction.

A central claim of defenders of the neo-liberal reform agenda is that the build, operate and transfer model they have chosen does not constitute privatisation because the underlying asset ultimately returns to the state. However, it is not clear from available

[i] The drive to auction high-demand radio frequency spectrum in South Africa was motivated by the liberal and neo-liberal argument that private-sector participation and competition would benefit consumers by significantly reducing the cost of communications services and data, with the 2022 spectrum auction by no means being the first. However, evidence contains contradictory elements worth noting. For instance, although prices are considered to have moderated in recent years, the dominant reality is that South Africa continues to face relatively high communication and mobile data costs by international standards. Also, during the 2022 auction, Vodacom and MTN captured the largest spectrum allocations, each spending more than R5 billion and acquiring substantial holdings in key spectrum bands, while the working class, being poor and having no such resources, were locked out completely. The auction largely reinforced the position of the two dominant operators, recognised as the duopoly in this industry, rather than fundamentally delivering de-monopolisation. While other firms also obtained spectrum, Vodacom and MTN remained the principal, dominant beneficiaries of the auction process. In addition, internet service providers that rely on existing network infrastructure generally gain access only on commercial terms set by the owners and operators of that infrastructure, whose primary objective is profit-making and maximisation.

[ii] Rather than being independent, these producers remain dependent on the Eskom transmission network, power-purchases and associated power-purchase agreements made for them by the government.

information when exactly will some be returned to the state. The President and the Minister of Monitoring and Evaluation have advanced the “return to the state” argument.[5] This article addresses this, among other topics, including privatisation in network infrastructure such as electricity, rail and ports, as well as in Home Affairs functions.

Sources and approach

The analysis draws on primary documents produced by the government, its agencies and multilateral institutions. These include Operation Vulindlela progress reports published by the Presidency and the National Treasury,[6] ministerial replies to parliamentary questions, National Treasury statements on loan agreements,[7] World Bank factsheets and project documents,[8] the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) publications,[9] Department of Home Affairs statements and publications,[10] Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa annual reports and parliamentary oversight reports,[11] the draft National Rail Master Plan,[12] the OECD’s *Economic Policy Reforms 2017* on South Africa,[13] IMF surveillance reports and statements and publications of the South African Communist Party (SACP)[14]. The article also engages with positions argued by capital, represented by Business Leadership South Africa and Business Unity South Africa in the business press.[15]

The methodological premise established by this intervention is that official documents are not neutral descriptions of technical policy. They are ideological texts that name class-interested measures in a universal language. The phrase “inclusive growth”, for example, appears in the title of the World Bank loan and in Operation Vulindlela reports.[16] The phrase “job creation” is attached to reforms that transfer operational control to capital. The OECD describes its recommendations as measures to “boost incomes and lift supply-side bottlenecks”.[17] A Marxist reading treats these formulations as masking fundamental class operations, those of the bourgeoisie in particular. The task of critique in this regard is to expose the class content that the language conceals.

Volume II of Capital and the circuit of value

This intervention’s theoretical anchor is Marx’s analysis in Volume II of *Capital* of the circuit of industrial capital: M—C…P…C^{l}—M^{l}.[18] Money capital is advanced to purchase means of production and labour power. These enter the production process, where capital not only produces but is itself produced and surplus value is generated. The resulting commodity capital is sold and the surplus value is realised in money form. Marx’s analysis distinguishes fixed capital, whose value passes into the product gradually over many turnovers, from circulating capital, whose value is transferred in a single turnover. It also analyses the role of money capital and interest-bearing capital in the circulation process.

The relevance to the public network infrastructure agenda of reforms driven by imperialist-dominated or controlled establishments and networks is direct. For instance, an electricity generation infrastructure and transmission grid, a rail network,

a port terminal, a block of high radio frequency spectrum, a national population register and a commuter rail corridor are fixed capital. Their value is realised through operation over extended periods. The state may own the fixed capital, but if production operations are transferred to private capital, then those private companies control labour process in which surplus value is produced and realised, even if the state may still derive some rent from their exploitation of the underlying infrastructure. They need not always purchase the fixed asset in order to exploit it and capture the ultimate revenue, surplus. They need only secure access to it on favourable terms that allow them to extract a return from, or as, the surplus, profits.

Marx's analysis of interest-bearing capital is also pertinent.[19] Rolling stock lessors, financial intermediaries that arrange debt and insurance, banks that host public service interfaces and foreign creditors that lend money capital do not operate trains, generate electricity or issue passports. They extract a share of the surplus value produced by those who do, by virtue of their control over the conditions of access to capital or to the service channel.

The OECD, one of notable external policy sources

The OECD's 2017 *Economic Policy Reforms: Going for Growth* provides one of the notable, externally determined policy blueprints for what the government calls structural reforms or its agenda.[20] The OECD's prescription recommended that South Africa remove barriers to private participation and competition and liberalise network industries, among other things.

By private participation, the OECD refers to privatised forms of participation arising from the privatisation of productive operations or functions, among other activities previously undertaken within the public economy through state-owned enterprises or public utilities. This includes electricity generation, rail freight and port operations. The underlying class agenda is capitalist in character. It aims to facilitate private value capture. The competition referred to in this context is therefore competition for capitalist profits and market advantage. This understanding applies to all subsequent references to private participation and competition, stripped of the neo-liberal ideological cover that conceals its underlying class character.

The OECD pushed the idea that private participation and competition would lower prices and increase access. The access referred to is not access for all people, but access for exclusive private capitalist interests that stand to capture and benefit from it. The OECD framed its recommendations as measures to boost incomes and lift supply-side bottlenecks. It is also clear that the incomes referred to are dominantly not those of the people as a whole but the profits of the private capitalist interests that stand to benefit. This makes another point worth highlighting. While the OECD recorded South Africa's Gini coefficient at 63.4, with the poorest 20% holding only 2.5% of national income, it neither questioned nor problematised the capitalist accumulation logic that produces the inequality. This logic is embedded in its recommendations.

The government's adoption of foreign-determined policy prescriptions, even as South Africa achieved a democratic breakthrough in 1994, suggests a problem. As a result, the state effectively appears to have become a transmission belt for such policies rather than an instrument for defending and exercising the hard-won rights of national self-determination and democratic sovereignty. This may well lie at the centre of the policy differences that have generated tensions within the ANC-led Alliance going back to 1996 and the gradual fragmentation of the unity that dislodged the apartheid regime in 1994 after decades of liberation struggle.

The OECD set the intellectual agenda. The World Bank supplied the financing through its Development Policy Loan series.[21] The IMF, through its Article IV surveillance, has been reinforcing this direction by prescribing recommendations for full unbundling, private participation (privatised operations or functions), and labour market flexibility, an attack on workers and collective bargaining, including a prescription to end the extension of collective bargaining agreements.

The SACP has characterised the situation as an ideological imposition dictated by foreign monopoly capital, representing submission to imperialist interests, a capitulation from revolution to reformism.[22] The Party stated that through their loan conditionalities, the imperialist-dominated and controlled IMF and World Bank have long been functioning in the Global South as instruments of the imperialist regime, and that where their loans are involved, the agenda is more often than not a neo-liberal one.

Beyond that, the imperialist policy transmission mechanism no longer necessarily requires formal conditionality on every World Bank or IMF loan. The policy direction is, among other networks, set through the OECD via its recommendations, the IMF's surveillance reports and the World Bank's programme lending, for example. In its letters of policy commitments to the World Bank and the IMF for their loans, the National Treasury embraces these policy directions in advance. The World Bank and IMF, as well as the OECD, have become sources to gather data from in studying the direction of policy decisions in South Africa, including that of the "independent" South African Reserve Bank, particularly where its monetary policy trajectory aligns with policy prescriptions advanced by the IMF's assessments, monetary policy co-ordination, surveillance statements or reports.

Eskom unbundling and power generation and transmission privatisation

President Ramaphosa announced that the soon-to-be established Transmission System Operator will own South Africa's transmission assets, contradicting Eskom's expectation that it would retain ownership through its subsidiary, the National Transmission Company of South Africa.[23] A dedicated task team was established to address the restructuring. While the President's statement was presented as a defence of public ownership against the encroachment of private interests, the full picture is different.

The unbundling creates the institutional conditions for privatising power generation through private-sector participation and competition, and for private generators to sell output without owning the grid. The public sector retains grid depreciation and maintenance. Private generators capture the revenue from electricity sales. The Independent Transmission Projects framework allows private companies to build and operate power lines. The World Bank loan supports marketisation through a wholesale market launch and scaling up private wealth accumulation in transmission.[24] The private power producers need not recover the historical cost of the grid. The grid's costs are socialised while the power generation surplus is privatised.

Rail unbundling, privatisation and port corporatisation

Rail Access Agreements have been concluded with 11 train operating companies across 41 routes, increasing active operators from one, Transnet, a publicly owned entity, to twelve.[25] The policy encourages private rolling stock investment and the establishment of private leasing companies.[26] The state retains the tracks. Private operators come in through the privatisation of operations and extract freight revenue. The access fee they pay is a mere rent, a deduction that private interests generally treat as a tax, part of production costs and seek to push down as far as possible to reduce those costs and become profitable. The operating surplus accrues to the private operator. The rolling stock lessor extracts rent, a claim on surplus value produced by the operator through labour exploitation.[27] Financial institutions arranging debt and insurance take further cuts from the surplus.

The Transnet National Ports Authority is being corporatised as a stand-alone state-owned corporation independent of Transnet.[28] Cabinet has backed the separation, which removes the ports authority from the Transnet group and ostensibly the conflict of interest arising from Transnet Port Terminals being both a bidder for concessions and a sister division of the authority that awards them.[29] What is the point? The content and direction of the concessions reflect a privatisation agenda during the concession period or even beyond. The concessionaire captures revenue from cargo handling. The land may remain publicly owned, while the value generated by the port's strategic location is partially captured by the concessionaire through control of the operational interface. There are also national security issues here, but these require a dedicated focus elsewhere.

Passenger rail devolution, commercialisation and the private sector interface

The passenger rail reform agenda seems to be proceeding along a distinct trajectory from the freight reforms, yet it follows the same structural logic. While the draft National Rail Master Plan, released for public comment in April 2026, confirms the government's intention to devolve urban rail functions to "capable metros", translating the National Rail Policy approved by Cabinet in 2022 into a phased investment and implementation programme that integrates passenger, freight and high-speed rail, it insinuates private wealth accumulation interests or value capture in the network, still under the notion of private-sector participation and competition.

More significant for this analysis is the parallel launch of Requests for Information (RFIs) for private sector participation in passenger rail. In October 2025, the Minister of Transport announced RFIs covering smart ticketing systems, depot management at Braamfontein and Wolmerton, commercialisation of PRASA's fibre optic network, regional rapid transit and the leasing of PRASA's new blue trains and repurposed yellow trains.[30] The Minister stated explicitly that "these regional projects are not possible without private sector partnership" and that the RFIs were issued "with the sole purpose to attracting the interest of the private sector to make these projects a reality".

Beyond the obvious concerns about its content as a form of privatisation, a related concern regarding the "partnership" is its extractivist and, in other respects, also parasitic character. The involvement of private wealth accumulation interests is fundamentally geared towards value extraction and profit-taking from a public asset. The areas opened to private value capture, meaning "private participation", are precisely those where surplus value can be extracted: fare collection systems, depot operations, fibre network commercialisation, and more. The private company that operates the ticketing system captures a fee from every transaction. The private company that manages depots extracts a management fee. The private company that leases rolling stock extracts rent. Each of these is a claim on the value generated by the public rail system. Once a private company takes over what has been public asset, operation or function, the transfer effectively privatises it. This is essentially what all these references to "private" refer to.

The passenger rail case therefore reproduces the pattern identified in freight rail and some aspects of electricity. The state retains the tracks and the stations. It transfers the operational interface to private capital. The commuter pays a fare. The private partner takes a toll on the transaction, the depot or the asset. The value that would otherwise flow into national revenue and be available for service improvement is diverted into private wealth accumulation.

The devolution agenda adds a further dimension. By transferring operational responsibility to metros that lack the fiscal capacity to sustain the system without national transfers could create a structure in which any private companies involved will become the residual claimant on any operational surplus while the public absorbs the risk of under-funding. The Minister of Transport has, in fact, ironically but correctly questioned whether municipalities that struggle to deliver water and electricity are capable of managing rail.[31] This question is pertinent.

Spectrum privatisation through auction

ICASA carried out the privatisation of the public's high radio frequency spectrum through an auction in March 2022, licensing the spectrum in the 700MHz, 800MHz, 2600MHz and 3500MHz bands.[32] Spectrum is a natural resource. NB – the constitution mandates the state to adopt legislative and other measures to ensure equitable access to all the nation's natural resources. This is contradicted by

privatisation. The auctioning of the high radio frequency spectrum converts a public resource into a privately controlled asset.

The private capturer of the resource obtains exclusive use rights and owns the revenue stream for the licence period. Marx's analysis of ground rent applies here: the owner of a natural resource necessary for production extracts rent by virtue of exclusive control. The auction capitalises that rent into a lump sum but leaves the ongoing value stream to the private capturer. Surplus consistently flows into capitalist private hands while the state, through the National Treasury, appears concerned about a national deficit.

Home Affairs functions privatisation through outsourcing

The Department of Home Affairs has expanded its bank partnership to deliver smart identity cards and passports through bank branches and mobile apps.[33] VFS Global operates visa application centres on a user-pay model. The department does not generate surplus value through its functions.

What capital can do is levy a toll on the flow of citizens through the interface. VFS is interposed between the applicant and the state and functions like an extractive intermediary that sucks a toll in its private participation. The banks obtain customer acquisition and retention. The data dimension is distinctive. Personal information, such as biometric and identity data, which must be protected by law, is dispersed across private platforms. Its value, and that of related data, such as occupation-specific and income-related information, where or if required and collected, lies in its commercial exploitation.

The imperialist-controlled international financial institutions' loan architecture

The loan sequence from 2022 to 2026 forms a coherent architecture. The 2022 World Bank COVID-19 Response Development Policy Loan initiated the programmatic series under the cover of pandemic recovery.[34] The 2023 energy loan began the electricity reforms. The 2025 loan added freight. The 2026 loan extended to water. Each loan built on the last. Each was presented as a response to a specific crisis, with "private participation", already decoded, as a key objective.

Beyond its opposition to privatisation, the SACP has argued that accumulating foreign-currency-denominated debt exposes South Africa to external shocks and that, when the national currency depreciates, repayment costs soar.[35] The National Treasury's approach to managing public debt, including that proportion of debt-service costs, through austerity, either under or as fiscal consolidation, curtails public investment or, in worst-case scenarios, almost eliminates it. At least two things then happen next.

Austerity contributes to economic stagnation, which the neo-liberal paradigm then invokes to rationalise and deepen austerity measures. The paradigm uses austerity to push the shift towards the private pathway, including privatisation as private participation or private participation as privatisation.

The build, operate and transfer defence, its class substance

The President and the Minister of Monitoring and Evaluation have argued that the build, operate and transfer arrangements do not amount to privatisation because the asset ultimately returns to the state.[36] This defence confuses legal ownership and economic appropriation. It fails on two grounds that Volume II of *Capital* clarifies.

The first is the appropriation of surplus value during the concession period. The private company that builds and operates a rail terminal under a concession does not need to own the asset to extract surplus value from its operation. It needs only the right to operate the asset and to collect the revenue that flows from its use not only to cover the build and operate costs but, most decisively, to make and maximise surplus as profit. The state may hold the title. The private company holds and controls the source of revenue or its stream. The surplus value and ultimately profits realised during the concession period accrue to the private concessionaire, not to the public.

The build-operate-transfer model chosen, including cases in which the private concessionaire benefited from substantial injections of taxpayers' money to support private profit, is often uncritically presented as a success story rather than being re-examined and re-engineered to eliminate the parasitic extractivism embedded in its faulty design for the benefit of private concessionaires.

For example, the Gauteng government's payment of up to R20 billion in patronage guarantees to the Bombela Concession Company stands as a stark indictment of the parasitic public-private partnerships that privatise profits while socialising losses. Initially modelled as a baseline top-up of R360 million in its first year, the taxpayer-funded liability escalated aggressively as passenger numbers consistently failed to reach the original target of over 100,000 daily commuters. Driven by widening operational shortfalls, the annual guarantee ballooned to R1.5 billion by 2019 before surging to an astronomical R3.05 billion for the 2024/2025 financial year. For nearly two decades, this compounding financial drain effectively insulated private partners from market realities at the public's expense.

From this, it is also evident that a crucial question often goes unasked. Who captured the surplus value the system generated over nearly two decades of operation? The question is seldom, if ever, posed because the answer exposes the weaknesses in the design of the build, operate and transfer model chosen. These weaknesses are neither inevitable nor beyond re-engineering in favour of mutually beneficial outcomes, especially public benefit, including revenue.

Second, in other cases, operating private companies appropriate surplus value even where the state still holds the infrastructure. In the rail sector, the state retains ownership of the tracks, for example. Private train operating companies have now been granted exploitative access to capture freight revenue by operating trains on the network.[37] The access fee paid to Transnet is a mere deduction from that revenue. The private operator does not need to wait for a concession period to end but

appropriates surplus value from operating public infrastructure in every accounting period. The rolling stock lessor owns locomotives and wagons and leases them to operators. Its return is rent, a claim on the surplus value produced in operations. Each of these extractive claims is a deduction from the value created by the rail system. If operations remained within a public entity, or if the state fully acquired the revenue, its value could serve public needs.

Beyond the legal form of ownership, the most decisive question is therefore who controls the operations value chain and who appropriates the value that flows from it.

Komati de-commissioning and livelihoods destruction

Komati Power Station was the first coal station decommissioned under the "Just Energy Transition". The World Bank financed the project, approved in 2023. The last unit was shut down in September 2022, while the loan was finalised the following year, in July 2023. Closure came first, financing through the loan later. Eskom admitted the economic activity should have continued at Komati.[38]

The employment loss was severe. Eskom CEO conceded that around 350 workers lost work. They were called "mainly contractors", meaning workers in outsourced or out-contracted operations, not the contractors under whom the workers worked. Both these workers and those in informal activity around the station supported on average up to four people, dependents. A conservative estimate places indirect livelihood loss at over 1,400 people.

The World Bank's indicator for workers retrained or redeployed remained at zero in December 2024, with a target of 100% by October 2028.[39] The informal economy was destroyed. Traders who sold food to workers, transport operators and small service providers depended on the station's worker remuneration bill. The World Bank's results framework contains no indicator for informal sector recovery.

The SACP argued that no power station in South Africa should be decommissioned until a suitable replacement, with equal or preferably greater generation capacity, work and sustainable livelihoods opportunities, is in place.[40] The powers that be, armed with support from the imperialist-controlled World Bank, did not care, did not listen. With no sense of solidarity, they attacked workers, informal traders and their families in that way.

In-sourcing, democratic public control

The SACP has characterised Operation Vulindlela as shifting economic power towards private capital. The policy's focus on bourgeois reformist reforms in electricity, ports, water and logistics is cast in the language of removing "binding constraints" and enhancing efficiency, but from a class analysis, the neo-liberal reforms insinuate private wealth accumulation into public infrastructure and operations.

The SACP's critique names privatisation, already highlighted, as the outcome. The demand for in-sourcing follows logically. If operations return to the public sphere,

revenue will flow into the national fiscus. The SACP's call for in-sourcing aims to restore the unity of the investment and revenue circuit under public ownership.

Big business demands governance control beyond what it has captured

Business Leadership South Africa and Business Unity South Africa have, for instance, argued that the electricity transmission system operator must own the grid assets outright.[41] Their substantive demand is that capital must control the general condition of production. The grid determines access, despatch and pricing. Control over grid governance determines the terms of private participation and competition. Their demand is not for a level-playing field but for private capital control over the ground on which the field is laid out. Since such control cannot be controlled by everyone, their demand is private monopoly control, monopoly by those who will capture that control.

Conclusion

The working class must unite behind the Freedom Charter's call for the people as a whole to own monopoly industry. This includes both its underlying infrastructure and operations considered as elements of a single industry. Through unity, the working class must build a new anti-privatisation campaign and advance the struggle against inequality in pursuit of shared prosperity and a better life for all. This struggle cannot be reduced to protest politics, important as such mobilisation remains. South Africa needs a broad and determined struggle across society to stop privatisation in its different forms, including the transfer of strategic resources, assets, public-economy operations and public services into private hands, while advancing democratic public ownership and control.

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