

ANC 55TH NATIONAL CONGRESS SPECIAL EDITION

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Voice of the South African Communist Party

Umsebenzi



A TURNING POINT FOR OUR MOVEMENT!

The revolution may depend on it!



ANC 55th conference: Another turning point in our struggle

This edition of Umsebenzi focuses on the ANC's 55th National Conference. The movement has faced many vital turning points in the past. But today, more than ever, the future of the South African revolution may depend on decisions taken at Nasrec

EDITORIAL

The ANC is facing conditions that necessitate a turning point. This is not for the first time in its history. In 1949, a group of militant youth pushed through a programme of action that was to change the nature and character of the struggle against apartheid, and the ANC itself.

The ANC moved from meekly sending deputations and petitions to London and Pretoria to negotiate for some rights to become a radical movement that would lead militant but peaceful resistance against the colonial and apartheid system. This initial tactic of deputations should not be dismissed altogether, though. It laid the basis of the ANC's defiance campaign, organisational overhaul and the replacement of a conservative, mild leadership that had reduced its relevance.

The younger generation – Cdes Walter Sisulu, Oliver Tambo, Nelson Mandela, A P Mda and others – took the helm and inspired new ideas and fire into what became a new organ of people's power. This radically changed the way the ANC organised itself into a campaigning force, forged closer links with the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) and planted the seeds for a broad alliance against apartheid.

The apartheid government felt the

impact of the 1949 programme and responded with more repressive laws, including the banning of the CPSA and ultimately the ANC itself. All this necessitated yet another turning point. A turn to the underground and armed resistance in 1961.

These turning points were not without internal resistance and increased external repression. The apartheid regime believed that by rounding up the leaders and sending them to Robben Island and by pushing back its fighters during the Wankie and Sipolilo Campaigns, that MK was snuffed out. It declared the ANC dead. Equally, some within the ANC camps, led by Cde Chris Hani, began to question the tactics of the leadership in Lusaka and pressed for a national consultative conference, later held in 1969 in Morogoro, Tanzania.

It was a revolutionary event. A re-

Like past turning points,
this one may also
meet initial internal
resistance

viewed *Strategy and Tactics* emerged, calling for intensified mass mobilisation internally and for the deployment of trained MK cadres inside the country to intensify the armed struggle. And it was at Morogoro that the theory of a national democratic revolution was developed further and clarified including on the relationship between the national democratic and socialist revolutions and the leading role of the working class and its allies.

Other turning points:

- ★ The youth uprising of 1976 shook not just the country but the ANC and created the space for the ANC to grow inside the country. As did the workers' strike from 1973 onwards.
- ★ In 1985, against a background of surging internal resistance and increasing apartheid repression, the ANC convened the Kabwe Conference to escalate the struggle and take the armed struggle into a new phase of creating a "People's Army". But conditions also opened up for negotiations.
- ★ The democratic breakthrough of 1994 and changed conditions that began to change the character of the ANC. A political party that was *Ready to govern*¹, battling with the important contradiction of trying to keep its national libera-



Chris Hani, less than a year into his terms as SACP General Secretary, speaks to Thokoza residents in April 1991 - at the time many of them were engaged in brutal, defensive conflict with IFP loyalists, who were part of what was later exposed as an apartheid covert campaign to undermine the ANC

tion credentials on the one hand while gathering the bricks to rebuild a new South Africa.

There was a confluence of internal differences, sometimes even to the point of contradiction, internally within the ANC on the one hand; and on the other the continued weakening of the apartheid regime to the point of negotiations, and these helped develop a new path forward.

But there are new challenges. Most of these are the result of what the ANC has become, and what its policies and actions have made this country: the initial succumbing to the neoliberal Washington Consensus² dogma resulted in GEAR, the nostalgia of being a national liberation movement without a national movement, and constant tensions with its Alliance partners. The pressure to perform as an electoral political party and its trappings of garnering votes by “delivering” services as opposed to a movement that mobilises its people for their own liberation.

Leaders have been modelled more as marketable saints than as revolutionaries who realise that their mission is far

from being achieved. The real challenge lies in having failed to systematically turn the system of apartheid on its head and to build “another country” serving all its people, especially those who remain marginalised. True, a lot has been done in using newly found state levers to bring reforms that gave hope to millions. But the danger is now more apparent that all of these and more could be lost if 2022 does not become the necessary turning point as it was in 1949, in Morogoro 1969, in Kabwe 1985, and in Durban in 1991.

In the articles inside this edition of *Umsebenzi*, we explore some of what needs to be done in terms of radical policy changes; leadership; the nature and character of the ANC and the Alliance; electoral reform; sports, arts and culture;

education and skills; state transformation; the economy, employment and labour issues; local government; organisational review and a whole range of other issues.

These issues require the urgent attention of ANC conference delegates. In the recent past, policy issues have taken the back burner because leadership elections and jockeying for positions have become the focus. We hope that through this, a perspective of communists and progressives who want to push through with the legacy of Cde Hani and the dreams of their neighbours, we can elevate the discussions to the same level we have elevated the ballot box and securing high office.

Let this be indeed the last throw of the dice. The revolution may depend on it. ★

Endnotes

1. A1992 ANC policy document: *Ready to govern – ANC Guidelines for a Democratic South Africa*
2. The US package of 10 policy prescriptions that created the basis for a neoliberal world order.

We hope to push the legacy of Cde Hani and the dreams of our neighbours



Through the eye of the campaign budget ...

Campaigning for high ANC office has become a multi-million Rand industry, warns Precious Banda – and it is destroying the organisation



Nasrec awaits the arrival of ANC delegates on 16 December - exactly 61 years after umKhonto weSizwe launched its first sabotage attacks and announced its presence in leaflets containing the historic words: *The people's patience is not endless ...*



I have been thinking hard about my student days where we were taught about *Through the eye of the needle*. Whenever our peers asked us whether we fit through the eye of the needle, we always thought we did not because we regarded what the eye of the needle described as something way above us. This prompted us to give our lives to the organisation and to continuously learn and serve so that we become better comrades who will one day fit through the eye of the needle. During the nomination process for candidates to the ANC NEC, I began to wonder why it is so easy for a lot of comrades to avail themselves for leadership not only in the ANC but in the SACP as well. I believe it is because we have not centred the teachings of the eye of the needle.

The journey towards the ANC's 2017 54th National Conference was fascinating, giving us an opportunity for deep retrospections on organisational renewal

and hence the current discourse which encompass organisational redesign. The discourse on organisational renewal is hollow because there is very little in the life of the organisation and its body politic to indicate we are on a renewal trajectory. One can therefore charge that the renewal work being done is mainly for ticking the boxes while new tendencies that weaken the organisation are exponentially increasing. We must respond to whether or not we are in the state of the proverbial "prescribing the wrong medicine for a sickness". We are still confronted with the very questions we asked five years ago on how the ANC leadership selection process has degenerated and is commercialised.

The lobby towards the 2022 ANC 55th National Conference is characterised by male power, tribalism and regionalism, dispensing of patronage to members in exchange for support, the auctioning of support where the highest bidder is nominated, factionalism, and anti-

factionalism – factionalism, purging of those who hold different views and lack of debates on policy positions. If the conference doesn't address these issues, we will emerge with a very weak ANC unable to respond to growing public demands for accelerated service delivery and accountable, ethical leadership. This conference is a make or break for the ANC and the entire Alliance; we have cultivated an environment where electoral processes and leadership selection become a point of weakness which tear our organisations apart.

We need decisive leadership to strengthen the movement as the hope and heritage of the people. The ANC needs a leadership that will unite its members. We need leadership which is gender conscious because gender equality and women representation and leadership has always been a central feature of national liberation. Instead, it has been crudified into box-ticking, much like renewal, where things change without changing. The growing

feminist and civil society mobilisation in South Africa championing the plight of women demands a leadership that looks inward and becomes more purposeful in affirming women and the LGBTQIA+ community in its leadership structures and positions beyond the ritual deputising we are subjected to. This will inspire confidence in a lot of women who do not see themselves in the alpha men who occupy key positions of our organisations.

Deplorable things are happening and reproducing themselves in the name of lobbying from one conference to the other. The closer we get to conference, the more these tendencies intensify. The structure of campaigns, the liberal-style candidates' posters, the criss-crossing of the country come at a serious cost, creating limitations on democracy by commercialising organisational processes. We are sadly going to an ANC conference where leaders will be elected based on the campaign budget they have, rather than the filter of the eye of the needle.

Lobbyists and campaign managers make hundreds of thousands of Rands out of hefty campaign budgets mobilised to prepare vicious, violent, and masculine battles against comrades who don't hold the same views and to buy the support of poor members. We need to interrogate the role of lobbyists and campaign managers especially those who are not active members of the ANC. What role do they play in undermining the unity of the organisation? It is lobbyists who approach structures to request them to host our leaders with costs taken care of and some extra change. Now even mobilisation is tenderised. This is a sad situation for any pro-poor revolutionary organisation.

The lobbying and campaigning for candidates is often media based, with the use of social media becoming more noticeable.

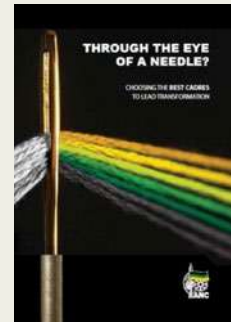
Candidates and their lobbyists are literally marketing on social media, not through engagements with structures and members. Comrades insult each other as if the ANC will not need all of them after conference. To say we must move with evolving times and loosen the bureaucracy is not to give ourselves leeway to deviation on these platforms. Measures must be put in place under organisational renewal to combat such ill-discipline. We need to explore what kind of monitoring tools are available for this purpose of guarding the unity of the organisation on social media.

When you gawk at the campaigns of our candidates who have declared their availability in the media, it is clear is that you cannot contest or avail yourself if you are not funded. What this means is that the majority of ANC members who are poor and working class, mainly women, will never be able to contest for high leadership positions. This is a systematic and structural exclusion of the poor and women by commercialising these democratic processes and creating a multi-million Rand conference industry. While the constitution says every member has a right to nominate or to be nominated, elect, and be elected, it's only those who have the resources who can do so. If we allow this to continue, we might end up with an organisation led entirely by proxies of capital.

The ANC must ask itself is if it has the capacity to correct and stop the commercialisation of leadership contests. Part of the burden of evolving and rebranding the organisation to adapt to the current highly innovative and digital times is the ability to live up to these times without losing ourselves and our ability to maintain discipline. If we don't, we will weaken the power of branches and membership which in turn weakens the unity and fighting capacity of the organisation. Members must assert themselves and discourage the expectation of patronage. Members and delegates must ultimately show that while campaigns and resources have been invested by candidates, it is their ballot votes that have the final say. This is a clarion call to reclaim the ANC from money.

Among the decisions the conference must take is whether this mode of contestation and campaigning for candidates is sustainable considering the damage it causes the ANC with vigilant opposition parties which continue to capitalise on our differences and weaknesses. Our different leadership views must reaffirm our strength and a pool of capacity. Leadership should evolve out of our battles, our struggles, not out of budgets. We wish the delegates well as they go to conference, we plead with their consciences to reaffirm the eye of the needle. Whether the ANC can self-correct both in form and content rests with members and delegates. ★

Cde Banda is a former YCLSA National Committee member and currently a member of the ANCYL National Youth Task Team



Through the eye of the needle

Originally published in 2001 as an ANC NEC discussion document, *Through the eye of the needle: choosing the best cadres to lead transformation* has since been elevated into policy as the guiding document for electing leaders and public representatives of integrity. It was reviewed and amended two years ago.

The phrase from which the document takes its title comes from the New Testament Gospel According to Matthew in the Christian Bible "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God".

The discussion document mandating the review acknowledged "the manifest lack of revolutionary morality and disrespect for the movement's values and, particularly, its character", which had "led to the loosening of the glue that binds its members, consequently compromising unity and cohesion of the movement".

The discussion document bemoaned the fact that "the ANC has grown in membership, yet the quality of its cadres is fast diminishing". And it urged members to "openly discuss the issue of campaigning for leadership positions in the organisation and the use of money that accompanies this phenomenon. It has begun to slowly change the nature and character of the movement as we know it." ★



Electoral reform must return power to the people

Electoral reform is not simply about allowing independent parliamentary representation, writes Tessa Doms, but about the Freedom Charter objective of ‘government based on the will of all the people’



In 1955, the mass democratic movement adopted the Freedom Charter as its lodestar for the fight against apartheid, but more importantly as a vision for freedom. While the Freedom Charter addresses many areas of public life, including work, land and education, its opening salvo has a line that gets to the heart of what it takes to attain and maintain a democratic project. It reads: “We, the People of South Africa, declare for all our country and the world to know...that no government can justly claim authority unless it is based on the will of all the people...”

If democracy in South Africa is truly to be a project of governance for and by the people, we must be guided by the ‘will of all the people’. It should be worry every compatriot when we continue to see mass non-participation in democratic processes and elections.

Millions of South Africans are opting out of voting. The official voter turnout in the last 2021 local government elections was 45%. When one considers the full universe of voting aged South Africans is 40-million people, when only 12-million show up to an election, as was the case in the 2021 local government elections, we are actually facing voter turnout of approximately 30%. The will of less than a third of the voting population that is determining the fate of the country – a far cry from the Freedom Charters objective of a government that reflects the will of all its people.

South Africans are at dangerously high levels of despondency and disillusion-

ment. It is no longer as simple as frustration with the governing party; we do not trust that our democratic process can deliver the better life promised for all.

At the centre of this is a sensibility that voting is a hollow act that does not give meaning to self-governance. How can it, when between elections most people feel alienated from governance. Our electoral system and political culture only ensure that elected public representatives account to their parties and party bosses, rather than directly to the people of the country they take an oath of office to serve.

The majority of South Africans have no

party bosses who can recall them, rather than “we the people”.

The electoral system we have today is an accident of history. It was crafted in haste in a time of crisis and thus was meant to be transitional. The electoral system was triggered by the assassination of Chris Hani on 10 April 1993. Until then negotiations between the liberation movement and the apartheid regime had not reached a point of agreement on when the first democratic election would be held. The murder of Chris Hani changed that. The mood of the country had turned from frustration to anger and impatience. All negotiating parties

knew that the time to deliver a new dispensation was more urgent than ever, so a date was set for a year from that time to hold the first election.

Choosing to have only a proportional representation system was determined mainly by ensuring that the system was easy to implement and by allaying the fears of white people who fear getting no seats. Direct constituency-based voting was abandoned in favour of a party-based system.

A more considered approach was taken with the local government elections system, resulting in a mixed direct and proportional system.

This allowed independent candidates to contest, but also ensured that even if they contested in party colours some of those in parties would represent their communities and constituencies in wards, and not only represent the party. In the early 2000s the Van Zyl-Slabbert report came to a similar conclusion about



Vote counting at Addington Primary School, Durban in 2019.

party affiliation: having a solely proportional representation system where you must be in a party to contest means people are forced into party politics to be elected, but also have no means to hold elected people to account unless they are in party structures. This is the precise problem that the current Electoral Amendment Act is meant to correct. An electoral system that is excludes people who do not choose party affiliation and a system that makes elected people only eager to account to



Queuing to vote in 2021 local government elections in Langa, Cape Town. But with each election, the queues are getting shorter ...

what is needed for the national and provincial elections, a mixed direct and proportional system that gives real event to constituencies and accountability to the people not only the parties.

So it is alarming that as the Electoral Amendment Bill has been considered by Parliament in 2022, MPs have opted for a bill that ignores the recommendations for a mixed system in favour of a system that irrationally and unjustly requires individuals to contest on the same ballot as party lists. A bill that allows some votes cast for independent candidates to be discarded. All to avoid direct accountability to communities and voters.

The Electoral Amendment Bill is not and should not be narrowly about independent candidates. It brings to focus a long-neglected conversation about a voting system that places people rather than parties at the centre of accountability, and ongoing accountability between elections. MPs, the NCOP and the President must thus be urged to carefully consider the message they will send to an already untrusting and disillusioned country if they persist with a version of this bill that will produce an unfair process and ignore an opportunity to return true electoral power to the people. ★

Cde Dooms is a director of the Rivonia Circle think tank, a sociologist and a commissioner at the National Planning Commission

Umsebenzi

Want to join SACP debates? Report on what's happening in your branch, your district, your province? We're starting the first of a series of six-month writing courses for SACP members in January 2023.

The courses are fully virtual – so we'll cover participants' basic data costs. Each course involves a monthly workshop plus a few hours' work a week and regular interaction with the trainers.

eMail Umsebenzi's deputy editor Cde Buti Manamela at butimanamela@gmail.com. Include:

- Your name, contact details (email and phone number – and Telegram Messenger or WhatsApp numbers, if they're different)
- Your SACP or YCLSA branch details.
- A brief note 100-250 words on why you want to take the course.

Classes are small – 10 to 12 comrades – so don't be discouraged if you don't make it on to the first course.



The struggle isn't over: State power and the NDR

The ANC has conceded some ground to capital in defining our state, writes Oupa Bodibe, but we have achieved some gains – and must take our struggle to its revolutionary conclusion



State power has come into sharp focus within the ANC-led movement for different reasons. The concept of state power is broad and in this piece the focus is on the executive. This debate is necessary in the build-up to the ANC national conference.

The state exercises different powers that are vital for the functioning of modern society. The policy making function of the state determines the political, legal and socio-economic rubric of society. The regulatory power of the state controls the behaviour of different actors and sets ground rules for different sectors of the economy and society. The state can guarantee the rule of law. It also raises revenue by levying direct and indirect taxes. The effectiveness of the state is measured against these different elements.

The revolutionary theory of the state asserts that the state is the instrument of class rule; it operates within a set historical context; and under a set of dynamic balance of forces. The capture of state power is considered a means to transform society in a revolutionary process. The big question is how the ANC-led Alliance has used access to state power in the last 28 years to achieve the goals of the national democratic revolution (NDR) or as an end in itself. There is a vast literature on the state in post-revolutionary societies and all conclude that revolutionary parties ultimately lose their way and seek control of the state by any means necessary to distribute patronage.

This pessimistic view is backed up by the experience of many post-revolutionary and post-colonial states. But it is not



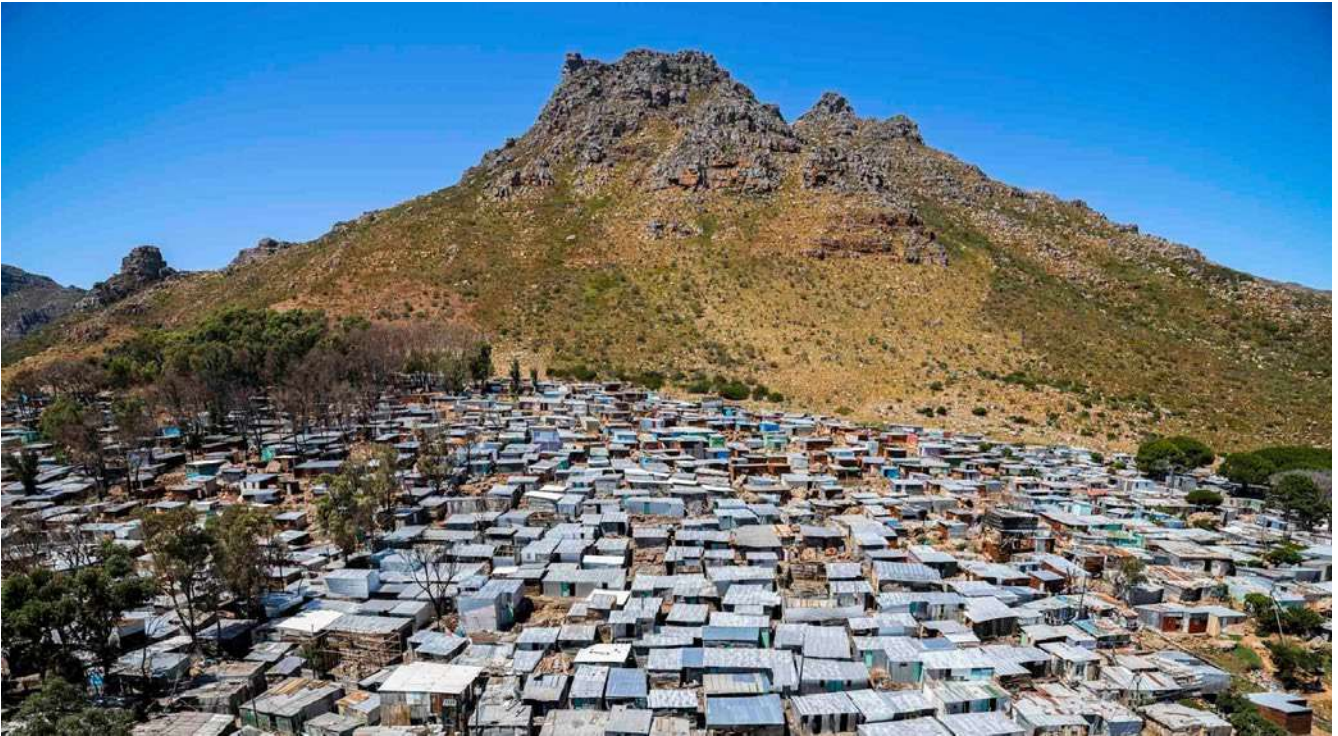
Four out of five households have no access to basic services

inevitable! Countries such as Cuba have mobilised society and used state power to survive the longest economic blockade imposed by the most powerful country on earth, the United States. The late industrialisers of south-east Asia used state power to discipline and incentivise capital to transform their agrarian society into advanced industrialised countries.

**Has the Alliance used
28 years of state power
to drive the NDR or as
an end in itself?**

The Constitution adopted in 1996 provides the framework within which our democratic state had to operate. It is not altogether a fetter on the transformational power of the state. The new democratic movement has not fully tested the limits of the Constitution and has in some cases opted to adopt cautious or conservative economic policies. This talks to the political will to use state power in a transformatory fashion.

The democratic state also denuded its power by adopting the new management framework to make state agencies behave like private corporations. Privatisation and corporatisation of state agencies and the short term contracts for senior management were some of the strategies



The massive Imizamo Yethu in Hout Bay. Like millions of other informal settlements, its residents have virtually no access to basic services

employed.

It was hoped that the private sector will fill the gap left by the state and drive an economic transformation. In this vision, that state is construed as an instrument to facilitate private sector activity and enforce contracts. Many academics, policy makers (including the World Bank) have questioned this impoverished vision of the state. Many have come to recognise that the state should intervene especially where markets fail or drive a transformation/structural change project.

Considering this, how do we reimagine the role of the state? First by debating the character of the current state. South Africa is an advanced capitalist society in Africa and the state acts to both stabilise the capitalist economy while also introducing popular measures to change the colonial-apartheid nature of the society. The notion of the national democratic society tries to fudge the class nature of the state, because of the dichotomy between those who exercise political power (the former liberation movement) and those who control economic power (national and global capital).

Still, the state is a contested terrain and is not homogenous. While the ANC has conceded some ground to capital, the issue at stake is whether the transition is over and the ANC government has become a pure instrument of capitalist rule. It is tempting to answer yes, given

the gains made by capital, especially finance capital, against the working class. But the situation is complex. It is the same ANC-led state that has introduced several progressive social policies to transfer income, assets and opportunities to the black majority.

The bone of contention is that the ANC-led government has not gone far enough to reindustrialise the economy and to reduce the highly concentrated nature of the economy. In this regard, the state has failed to realise the economic transformation vision of the NDR. Black economic empowerment does not even scratch the surface and depends on the benevolence of established economic power.

The second issue is how to deal with the perception that the ANC has lost control of society and cannot bring the power of the state to bear to ensure the safety of all South Africans. Lawlessness is rife and the rich and poor adopt different coping strategies. The rich (black and white) are retreating into gated com-

munities with private security, private refuse removal and labour supply, thus bypassing local government. In poor communities, people take the law into their hands due to frustration with the police services. Warlords have taken over basic functions such as land allocation to create new shanty towns.

Lastly, what interventions are required? It must be appreciated that the policy deal of a market-led economic strategy has reached its limit and depends on the price of commodities rather than the internal momentum of a manufacturing-led economic recovery. The gains made in creating a social safety net and transfer of income to poor households are now under strain. Government struggles to extend basic services to at least 20% of households.

Unemployment remains high and is unlikely to drop substantially unless demand for low to semi skill jobs is stimulated. The state requires reform that will ensure a disciplined machinery focused on transformation. The tendency of ANC governments switching direction every five years needs to change. Social power must be mobilised to countervail the power of capital. ★

The policy deal of a market-led economic strategy has reached its limit

Cde Bodibe is an activist and member of the SACP and ANC, and a former functionary with Cosatu. He is with the Gauteng Department of Education



What is to be done on sport, arts and culture?

Sport, art & culture have a vital role in unifying South Africa, but we are doing far too little to ensure most South Africans can participate, writes Palesa Motshoene in her message to the conference



The ANC's two main goals are to bring South Africa together for a shared purpose and future and to correct historical injustices through reparation. Accordingly, the objective of sport, arts, and recreation is typically linked to raising individuals' quality of life and creating strong, socially conscious individuals and communities. But the country remains divided because only some have access to the resources and infrastructure needed to participate in these sectors. It remains a privilege. The governing party has made slow progress in its effort to bring this country together through sport, the arts, and culture.

"Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand," Cde Nelson Mandela said in 2000 – asserting the power of sport. Sport, like the arts and culture, are essential sectors South Africa needs to prioritise in terms of participation and economic opportunities. Sport, arts, and culture have inherent societal value due to the increasing emphasis on economic concerns.

The importance of cultural aspects in fostering social solidarity and national pride is also vital. Sport, particularly the holding of mega-sporting events, are also linked to enhancing a country's patriotic responsibility and social cohesiveness.

Particularly in youth, sport enhances pro-social conduct while lowering crime and behaviour that destroys their future. As it was envisioned in the ANC's *Ready to govern* policy document, sport and rec-



These young tennis players at Isaac Booi Primary in Nelson Mandela Bay are almost unique among township pupils in having tennis courts, racquets and balls - funded and maintained by corporate grants.

reation would promote national unity by fostering a shared sense of identity that transcends cultural, racial, and language barriers and improves friendship and relations abroad.

The principle that "participation in sport and recreation is a right for all and not a privilege" can only be put into practice through development programmes that are specifically designed to encourage greater sport and recreation participation in black neighbourhoods, villages, and rural areas across the nation.

Programmes for the advancement of grassroots sport are necessary for this. Sport and recreation facilities must be a crucial component of any community development initiatives.

Not all black communities and schools experience this. According to Amnesty International, the government has neglected to adequately address this issue during the country's 27 years of democracy.

One of the most successful tournaments hosted by South Africa was the Fifa World Cup in 2010. The primary legacy of the 2010 World Cup in South Africa was the "feel-good impact" connected to national pride and social togetherness, which are viewed as components of culture.

In addition to bringing people together, the event helped the economy by adding an estimated R38-billion that year. But not much has been done to capitalise on the tournament's success – a serious indictment of the government.

The Ready to Govern policy document states that the arts and culture have the potential to unify a nation for which apartheid caused racial and cultural divisions.

The section on arts and culture states that the purpose of policy in this area is to "redress the inequities inherent in



Khayelitsha youngsters beginning their training as rugby players – while interest in rugby has surged among township and rural youth since the emergence of Siya Kolisi, Makazole Mapimpi and Lukhanyo Am as stars, access to facilities and equipment is almost nonexistent other than in the Eastern Cape

our society in terms of race, class, and gender”.

Notably, all other represented cultures and our rich and diversified aesthetic traditions in the fine arts, literature, and music needed to be nurtured and promoted. The document also discusses the establishment of centres for arts education and training, especially in black schools, where it has been blatantly denied.

As the ANC prepares to hold its 55th National Conference at Nasrec, today’s reality demonstrates that little has changed. According to the late Professor Es’kia Mphahlele: “The arts have been served by alternative institutions primarily because the state has never been interested in using schooling to promote creativity.” The national conference should focus on the need to do more to tilt the scales.

But rather than making extracurricular activities in our communities compulsory along with creative courses like theatre, dance, and music compulsory in our schools, institutions are being destroyed and are severely underfunded.

The National School of Arts, a sought-after arts institution, is one of the institutions that almost closed in 2020 due to a

lack of funds. This school has produced some of the country’s best artists. But it desperately needs funding, despite government’s emphasis on the critical importance of having such institutions that preserve the arts and cultural heritage.

According to the South African Cultural Observatory (Saco) report: *The economic mapping of the cultural and creative industries in South Africa 2022*, the arts sector contributed 2,97% to the economy. The government must recognise the sector’s importance and increase funding to support its growth. In 2020, the sport, arts, and culture contributed 5,6% to the GDP, which translates to R248- billion (*Umrabulo Policy Document, 2022*). This sector would grow further if the government guaranteed that everyone participated and had access to the necessary infrastructure. To ensure that their craft is safeguarded and preserved and that they, too, do

not struggle financially due to not benefiting from their craft, it is crucial that institutions that assist the industry’s growth, including sports and performing artists, be supported.

Recommendations to the ANC 55th National Conference:

- ★ Ensure a working and active sport, arts, and culture sub-committee.
- ★ Ensure that sport infrastructure at township and rural schools is built, accommodating the different sporting codes besides netball and football.
- ★ Make sport, arts and culture compulsory at schools.
- ★ Make theatre, dance, and music are compulsory at school.
- ★ Build a library, art centre, and sporting facilities in every community.
- ★ Ensure that government allocates sufficient funding to grow the sport, arts, and culture.
- ★ Ensure heritage and cultural institutions are maintained and preserved.
- ★ Ensure that Performer’s Protection Amendment Bill is urgently enacted. ★

**Creative school courses
in theatre, dance
and music should
be compulsory**

Cde Motshoene is a former publications manager at the YCLSA and an MCom candidate in business management at the University of Johannesburg



Hard work ahead to treat ‘morbid symptoms’

The SACP has a heavy responsibility in revamping the ANC as a party of left integrity able to tackle the multiple crises afflicting the country, writes Barry Mitchell

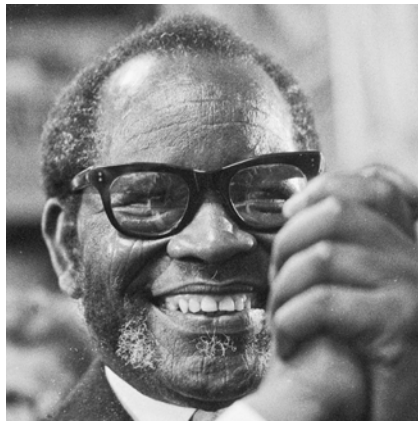


Thirty-two years ago, Comrade Oliver Tambo, the President of the ANC, landed in Johannesburg on the eve of ANC’s first legal gathering since its unbanning, Tambo had led the movement in exile for the previous 30 years. The 1990 consultative conference of the ANC saw the convergence of comrades, combatants, activists, worker leaders and former political prisoners.

The resolutions and depth of contextual understanding and discussion reflected in the conference declaration is incredible! In contrast to what we have become used to at more recent ANC Conferences, delegates did not spend two hours deliberating on credentials or aspects of the agenda. Their perspectives did not relate to the contestation of political and leadership positions, the lobbying of factions through passive-aggressive “Point of order, Chair!” Instead, conference delegates were expected to provide political, social and economic insight during an extremely fragile period of transition.

From 16 to 20 December 2022, the ANC will convene its 55th National Conference. This conference convenes under incredibly difficult conditions, morbid symptoms as Antonio Gramsci would say.

Deeply ingrained social and economic inequalities, with three quarters of our youth sitting at home in a state of hopelessness and apathy, these are just some of the many ingredients that make up what the Party refers to as a crisis of social reproduction, where life itself becomes impossible to sustain. This conference is likely to degenerate into four days of lobbying and wrangling for positions, mar-



Oliver Tambo (above), ANC president for its 30 years of exile, returned to attend the ANC 1990 consultative conference – a truly incredible gathering of deep discussion on policy and strategic – while Mam’Ray Alexander (below) dedicated her life, from the age of 15 to struggling, along with thousands of other worker leaders to win constitutional recognition of workers’ right to collective bargaining. Today these rights are being undermined by an ANC-led government



riages of inconvenience and very little reflection on the state of the movement, our economy and society in general. By contrast, the 1990 ANC consultative conference deliberated on crucial matters, developing resolutions on the negotiations and the suspension of the armed struggle, on violence, sanctions and international isolation, delegates provided superior logic and leadership that would help shape our 1994 political and juridical transition.

The ANC’s degeneration of discourse and debate is a result of many things, one of which is the influence that patronage, power and greed has had on the ANC, the proverbial corporate capture of the ANC’s most basic structure, the branch. Another is the strategic use of this crisis by ANC leaders and former trade unionists in government to further entrench and unilaterally impose a neoliberal macroeconomic framework on society. Further aggravating this disastrous fiscal austerity project, the ANC government has pushed a core section of its motive forces – public sector workers – deeper into debt and social strife.

The SACP understands these morbid symptoms, but it needs to locate this assessment within the responsibility of the SACP in influencing the content and context of the upcoming ANC conference deliberations, not by choosing a faction to coat-tail, but to “... earn our place as a vanguard force by superior efforts of leadership and devotion to the cause of liberation and socialism”, Cde Joe Slovo wrote in *Has socialism failed?* 33 years ago. “And we can only win adherence to our ideology by demonstrating its superiority as a theoretical guide to revolutionary practice.”



Workers march through Johannesburg against attacks on their collective bargaining rights in 2020 – one of many marches nationwide as four South African union federations united in the face of the challenge

Contained in the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, in Chapter 2 of the Bill of Rights, is Section 23, dealing with labour relations. The subsections that fall under Section 23 are widely accepted as a norm in many liberal democracies. In the context of our history, these subsections were a result of many years of struggle.

On 6 November 1929, a 15-year-old Ray Alexander arrived at Cape Town harbour, having left her native Latvia. Her life henceforth was dedicated to organising unorganised workers towards a realisation of their rights as human beings. To personify the worker in terms of its collective power. To better working conditions, to fight for a living wage and to ultimately disrupt the exploitative and destructive nature of the capitalist mode of production.

Mam'Ray, like countless other prominent worker-leaders in South Africa, understood the intricate relationship between organising and mobilising workers on the one hand and building socialism within the context of South Africa's unique conditions on the other. The attainment of the subsections in the Bill of Rights are a product of decades-long struggle against a brutally inhumane system, a lot of compromise was also made

in ensuring these subsections exist and are put into practise. In October 2022, the South African Government confirmed, through the limitations attached to Section 23 Labour in the Bill of Rights (Section 36 (1)) that it will use any means, including the Constitution to undermine an enshrined and hard-fought struggle to attain collective bargaining for organised workers in this country.

Workers and the poor in South Africa are at a crossroads, an *interregnum*, as Gramsci termed it. They have been placed in a seriously fragile situation, life itself has become untenable to sustain. What is to be done?

As complex as these precarious conditions are, the SACP must be guided by Slovo's advice, it must assist society in navigating through these multiple crises. There is little hope in expecting any substance from the ANC's conference, however some recommendations for delegates to consider could be in addressing

ANC conference delegates could demand a change in the way government develops its policies

the crisis in the chain of policy making – reconfiguring the way government policy is developed and introduced, making it an inclusive process of Alliance members and broader sections of society.

Another critical aspect would be a genuine recommitment by the ANC and the government to honour hard-fought labour rights and to desist from continuously undermining collective bargaining. Lastly, to roll-back the neoliberal austerity framework and work on developing an inclusive Alliance approach to introducing a comprehensive macroeconomic framework for industrialisation that addresses employment creation, poverty eradication and inequality reduction.

These may seem like idealistic recommendations for delegates to consider, but take the 2024 national government elections into account. By relegating workers to a relationship of subservience with the government, by making unilateral decisions and by undermining collective bargaining the ANC has turned its back on workers. Who will be on the ground canvassing for the ANC in 2024? ★

Cde Mitchell is an SACP Central Committee member and Nehawu Parliamentary Officer



The crisis of the ANC is OUR crisis

As Alliance partners are we complicit in the political erosion and stripping the ANC of its moral ethos? asks Gugu Ndima



A country once beaming with the effervescence of hope, stands crippled by political despair, blinded by the grimness of an uncertain future. It doesn't require a scientific or Marxist analysis for anyone to see that the once promising "rainbow nation", as dubbed by the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu, has faded into a bleak shadow of what might have been. Society converges yet again in a political cul-de-sac, with the burdens of the ANC's disintegration, weighing heavy on the political future of this country.

I say "yet again" as it seems the feverish eve of the anticipated ANC conference invokes an air of suspended lucidity. This suspension of logic and rationale plays itself out in palace politics, in the state and tragically its ramifications are felt through all sectors of society.

Naturally, we await the outcomes with bated breath. Tragically, not for an outcome informed of principles rooted firmly in Through the eye of the needle, but an anxious wait for the emergence of a "better devil".

That is what the once known producer of the most competent leaders for each epoch has become. A battalion of profound conceptualisers and implementors of the Theory of Thieving relativity, now the barometer of leadership in an organisation unmatched with leaders who had foresight about the democratic dispensation when it was treason to imagine a national democratic society.

The ANC limps from institutionalised factionalism, bleeding from the consequences of better devil politicking and the perverse trajectory of personality cults. The tragic irony of it is that the ANC also has the think tank to produce



The Decade of the Cadre is drawing to a close

diagnostic reports and solutions to this, in the form of organisational and political reports gathering dust at Luthuli House. This year marks the close of a very important decade in the ANC, the *Decade of the cadre*.

The pronouncement of the *Decade of the cadre* in 2012 was supposed to mark an era when a new kind of 'political mould' would develop in response to the leadership requirements of society.

The envisioned decade was arguably informed by changes in motive forces, the economy and confronting the challenges of the current dispensation. For the ANC this meant that the cadre in the branch, in government, in religious

congregations, business and civil society ought to demonstrate distinction in their calibre, behaviour and character, ensuring that the ANC leads in thought leadership, finding solutions and more importantly working towards realising the national democratic society intended.

But the ANC does not cut a lone figure in this moral and political abyss. The mass democratic movement in its entirety stands exposed to public scrutiny and chastisement for what South Africa has become. Have we not as Alliance partners become complicit in the political erosion and stripping the ANC of all its moral ethos? Both SACP and Cosatu leaders have been an integral part of the leadership of the ANC and of the country over the years. Should we not also take responsibility for what has become of the ANC and the deepening crisis that our country faces?

The constitutional genealogy of South Africa in the democratic dispensation remains a proud implant of the ANC.

As its allies, have we become complicit in the political and moral erosion of the ANC?



Delegates will gather at Nasrec on 16 December of the organisation's most tormenting post-liberation conference

To have mobilised and forged a political trajectory based on a pursued vision towards a national democratic society is an accolade unmatched and will not be for years to come. It was with this legitimacy and political currency that the ANC became leader of society. Hence the country paces in limbo frantically attempting to reconfigure politics, as society has known it in the past 28 years.

What on earth happened to the torch bearers of a society re-imagined, with foresight unmatched? This question comes at a time when branches will congregate for probably the most tormenting conference of the ANC post-liberation.

How did the producer and unifier of thought leaders, visionaries, radicals,

leftists, conservatives and overall society, dismally fail to continue producing leadership for this epoch in history?

The ANC is perennially self-mutilating. The big question is what role the SACP should play in confronting the challenges that the poor and the working class face. What should be the role of the trade union movement as the onslaught on the working class deepens both from

the state and private capital.

Populist groups, such as the Operation Dudula, are finding space perhaps because both the SACP and Cosatu are preoccupied with saving the ANC rather than leading working class communities. If frank decisions and talks do not occupy this conference about the direction of this country and the ANC, in no time the once leaders of society will only talk about strategy and tactics in lecture halls and reminisce about an organisation which once had the political legitimacy to tell the greatest post-liberation story on the continent. ★

Cde Ndima is a SACP and ANC member, and former spokesperson of the YCLSA

Operation Dudula finds space because Alliance activists are distracted by the ANC crisis

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Western Cape Provincial Secretary Benson Ngqentsu addresses picketers gathered outside Parliament to protest 'GEAR 2.0'

PICKETING PARLIAMENT

SACP and civil society say No to 'GEAR reloaded'

The fight against the government's anti-worker neoliberal economic policy is garnering broad support, as the recent SACP picket against the 'Mini Budget' showed, writes Barry Mitchell



The SACP in the Western Cape staged a picket outside the Cape Town City Hall, the temporary venue of the "People's Parliament" since the National Assembly burnt down, in October. The SACP-led picket was supported by several Cosatu affiliates and civil society formations such as the Healthy Living Alliance (Heala) and Treatment Action Campaign (TAC). The aim was to pre-empt what we were expecting from the tabling of the medium-term budget policy statement (MTBPS), the "Mini-Budget" by the Minister of Finance, Cde

Enoch Godongwana – the entrenchment of neoliberal austerity measures and an ambivalence by government towards the real crises facing workers and the poor.

The Minister was not present to receive the memorandum. The meeting was addressed by SACP 1st Deputy General Secretary, Cde Madala Masuku, our Provin-

cial Secretary, Cde Benson Ngqentsu and the Brian Bunting District Secretary, Cde Monde Mqulwana.

Speaking against the idyllic backdrop of Table Mountain, the provincial secretary outlined the historical context of the government's neoliberal trajectory since 1996 in the form of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). The memorandum traced the roots of the multiple crises facing our society and located these challenges within the current global balance of forces.

The memorandum put forward several demands for the National Treasury and Government to respond to. These

**We demanded
an end to attacks on
collective bargaining
and to austerity**



Finance Minister Enoch Godongwana delivers his mini-budget - the medium-term budget policy statement

included: calling for an end to the undermining of collective bargaining (a Constitutionally enshrined right of workers); an end to austerity, the budget cuts and so-called “fiscal anchors”; the prioritisation of resources for the National Health Insurance (NHI) to ensure quality healthcare for all and a focus on the root challenges facing our economy as opposed to microeconomic tinkering.

The picket alerted us to several significant issues. Firstly, the intensification of the crisis of social reproduction, because of sharpening class contradictions within our society, has broadened conditions suitable to engage and cooperate with other working class formations, organised and unorganised workers. The ideal of building a powerful socialist movement of workers and the poor will be determined by our display of superior leadership in navigating through the multiple crises facing our people. Leaders of various community-based organisations, such as TAC and Heala incorporated their demonstrations in the SACP picket, sharing platforms and echoing similar catastrophic challenges facing the working class. This is a start.

Another immediate concern is the lack of influence that Cosatu and the SACP have in developing policy positions that would provide workers and the poor with immediate relief as well as a long-term framework for tackling unemployment, inequality and poverty. As the SACP has said, this can take the form of a macroeconomic framework for industrialisation, a relative delink from the suffocating stranglehold of international financial institutions and ensuring our policy positions are also informed by our

people on the ground.

The outcomes of the MTBPS also mark a definitive line drawn in the sand between the government, the National Treasury and the poor and working class of this country. The second wave of GEAR reloaded has now been entrenched by former trade union leaders, our comrades. ★

Cde Mitchell is an SACP Central Committee member and Nehawu Parliamentary Officer

Umsebenzi

Want to join SACP debates? But worried you're not senior enough to have be taken seriously?

Don't be. We're running the first the first of a series of six-month writing courses for SACP members in January 2023.

And we're looking for young, enthusiastic comrades to participate.

You'll find the details on how to apply on page 7 of this edition

FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Make digital tech work for education and skills

Yershen Pillay stresses that capital's grip on the data economy must be resisted to open digital access for education and the working class



We live in the era of automation, big data, and artificial intelligence (AI). The current epoch is equally characterised by the datafication of people, the digital exclusion of the masses and high levels of digital inequality. The datafication of society has created new areas for capital to squeeze new profits such as through limited access to education technologies.

Education technologies, such as virtual reality (VR) training devices and the use of VR training pods are moving beyond the hype and into the classroom. We are at the beginning of the AI and extended reality (XR) revolution as these technologies start to mature and become increasingly more prevalent in every aspect of society. Indeed, the lines between the digital world and the real world are becoming increasingly blurred and porous.

This provides the basis for examining the problems faced by society when confronted with new technologies and their usefulness to socio-economic transformation. We need to address the increasingly systemic issue of digital access and inclusion for the working-class. According to the National Education Infrastructure Management System Report of 2021, only 20% of schools had access to the internet out of a total of 23258 public and 2154 independent schools in the country.

The ICT sector report for 2021 produced by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa), suggested that the internet penetration among learners in South African schools was only 26%, meaning most learners and teachers simply do not have the access to the internet and online training tools. This data suggests an alarmingly

low level of internet penetration among schools in South Africa.

This data supports the assertion that digital access and inclusion in the education sector is a problem in South Africa. To succeed, learners must have access to the internet in an increasingly digitised world. Learners need to be able to access education and training opportunities at no cost. Every aspect of skilling and training must integrate technology in some form or the other.

This calls for a rethink of the relationship between education, technology, data, power and inequality. We need to rethink the role of the state in increasing access to education technology for the masses. Education policy needs to shift towards a greater role for the state in the education technology sector.

There are two main challenges faced by the working-class masses in the context of education technology. The first is the affordability of data and devices. The second is accessibility as the costs of purchasing and using Fourth Industrial revolution (4IR) technologies, such as virtual reality technology, will naturally exclude the poor thereby exacerbating existing social divisions.

We must therefore make the call for the private sector to zero-rate data for the education sector therefore making it possible for all schools to have unlimited access to data for teachers and learners. From an infrastructure perspective, 'skills cities' need to be constructed in every corner of the country. In this way, the state will facilitate the development of the education technology sector and ensure that the working-class masses are not left behind in the high-tech skills revolution.

The skills mismatch is a root cause and one of the main contributing factors

to the high unemployment rate in the country. Focusing on the skills mismatch as a root cause of the unemployment problem, leads to a series of questions. Does South Africa need a grand strategy on skills matching and what would that look like?

How do we promote local and international collaboration in addressing the skills mismatch in South Africa? Does South Africa need a 'skills city' in every province to bring together the local and international skills community for more positive results? How do we bridge the digital skills divide between urban and rural?

To bridge the digital skills divide between urban and rural may require smart skills centres in every corner of the country. This could form the pillars of a grand strategy aimed at enabling skills development for the future of work. The concept of smart skills centres is aimed at bridging the digital skills divide by taking skills development and training directly to poor communities. In this way, the cost burden placed on poor learners such as transport and data costs are eradicated, and learners are more engaged through the immersive skills experience.

We need to make technology work for the education of the masses. We need to scale Smart Skills Centres for increasing access to skills development and training. Emerging 4IR technologies have the potential of revolutionising education, skills development, and training by providing more immersive, enriching experiences for learners. The challenge we face as a country is to ensure that such opportunities are available to all. ★

Cde Pillay is an SACP CC member and former YCL National Secretary