



# workers' nationalisation

rights to Aurora-type speculators and parasites, nor nationalisation limited to creating a new mining- 'Eskom' can resolve the crisis. Only a worker-led struggle for nationalisation of the mines and other key points of the economy, such as banks, factories and land, under democratic control of workers and communities can provide the way out of the dead-end.

Only on the basis of such public ownership and democratic planning of production and allocation of resources according to the needs of the majority can we move beyond the false choices between improved wages and job creation, between livelihoods and environment and between viable businesses and viable communities. The LRS study revealed that with just the profits of the nine biggest mining companies in SA, 2.3m workers could be hired on a wage of R12 500. Today these companies employ less than 350 000 people. To try and make ends meet, most work at least six days a week with long over-time hours, destroying their lungs and their general health. Meanwhile, the talent and energy of millions who go without work are wasted. The beginnings of socialist planning on the basis of a nationalised economy would allow for sharing out the work, providing jobs for all while still increasing wages. Moreover, the wealth produced would be used not for gambling on stock markets or with people's lives but to take society forward; developing sustainable industries beyond mining, education and protection of the natural resources.

The revolt that broke out after the Marikana massacre carries the seeds that can grow into the kind of movement needed to carry out a true 'mining revolution' along these lines. The alternative is not 'back-to-normal' but a backlash of intensified exploitation and oppression. The mining bosses have lined up behind Harmony Gold and Amplats because they know the stakes. Workers across the mining industry will need to mobilise a greater force based on the working class as a whole – workers across mines, farms, transport, manufacturing, the public sector, as well as students, youth and the unemployed – in a struggle for socialism.

**Izwi labasebenzi/ the Democratic Socialist Movement calls for:**

- General strike to defend jobs – an injury to one is an injury to all
- Nationalise the mines under democratic control and management of the working class
- For national minimum wage of R12 500 a month
- Recognise the independent strike committees
- Build the Workers and Socialist Party into a mass fighting socialist party

Until the ANC's Mangaung conference, the debate over nationalisation had dominated economic policy for two years. Ever since the infamous incident at the ANC's 2010 economic policy conference when Malema stormed the podium forcing the issue of nationalisation back onto the agenda against the will of a leadership. Then they still deferred to the authority that the ANC Youth League's president had derived from his role in ousting Mbeki and elevating Zuma into office. Alarmed by this development capital, at home and abroad, exerted relentless pressure on the Zuma administration demanding "policy certainty".

by Weizmann Hamilton

The Mangaung conference's rejection of nationalisation could not have been more emphatic than the decision to expunge the word 'nationalisation' itself from the documents adopted. Unable to face down Malema, who had promoted nationalisation as an "economic freedom campaign", the leadership fell back on the tactic of playing it long. Nationalisation was to be considered after a wide ranging study of its effectiveness as an economic policy by undertaking study tours to a number of countries. Now that this farcical world tour has ended, all pretence has been abandoned. The capitalists have the certainty they have been demanding.

It is one of SA history's modern paradoxes that under the watch of a president who had been elevated into office by a coalition promoting a vague 'left' economic agenda and by the humiliation of a foe who had become the embodiment of the ANC's swing to the neo-liberal right, he has wrenched the ANC even further to the right with an overwhelming majority. Zuma's Polokwane victory was presented as the first step in the fulfilment of the promise that the ANC would be turned back to its alleged working class roots.

But if under Mbeki the ANC went onto its knees in front of the capitalist class with the adoption of GEAR and its attendant offensive against the working class, under Zuma the ANC has gone onto its belly in front of its big business masters at home and abroad with its complete abandonment of nationalisation. In so doing Zuma has ripped the heart out of the Freedom Charter, the implementation of whose promises are impossible without the state taking control of the commanding heights of the economy.

Like bullets from a double barrelled shot gun, the rejection of nationalisation was directed simultaneously at two targets. On the one hand the vanishingly small number on the anti-capitalist left who believe that the ANC is still contested terrain for the struggle to determine its class character and its economic policies. On the other, the radi-

## ANC: party of the mine bosses - WASP is the alternative



Amplats getting additional gates welded onto the entrance of its Khomanani 1 Shaft in Rustenburg as workers laid down tools in protest against the threatened closure.

cal pro-capitalist nationalists, led by Malema, who had forced the party to expend a considerable amount of intellectual energy and resources on debating the matter. All doubt that the ANC is a party of capital has now been obliterated.

Just how spineless and intellectually cowardly this decision was is demonstrated by the fact that the very imperialist masters whose boots they are licking have had no qualms about resorting to nationalisation as a policy response to the worst economic crisis capitalism has faced since the Great Depression of the 1930s. To save the capitalist system, governments in the US, Britain, Spain and elsewhere have nationalised companies for economic, social and/or political reasons especially financial institutions whose collapse would have triggered a systemic crisis for capitalism even worse than the one it is currently experiencing.

Lulled to sleep by their own propaganda – that sound economic management has enabled SA to survive the world economic crisis – the ANC leadership has in effect handcuffed itself precisely at a time when drastic state-driven measures will be needed to avert the coming catastrophe in the SA economy.

Yet even aside from the direct impact of the global economic crisis, the necessity for exerting control over the blind forces of the capitalist market has long been a dire necessity in SA without which the economy could not have developed to the extent it has. In the course of its development, capitalism in SA, in an early demonstration of its effete, belated character, had to rely on the state and nationalisation to develop the railway network, the electricity grid, the iron and steel industry, the telecommunications network, the post office, and the petroleum-producing capability etc. Although the GEAR-inspired fire sale failed (with only Iscor falling outright into private hands) the management of state-owned-

enterprises on a commercial basis has wreaked significant damage on the economy piling up the contradictions that ultimately will only be resolved by state intervention on a socialist basis.

The lessons for those dreamers in Cosatu who imagine a non-existent past when the ANC was supposed to have been rooted in the working class, the lesson of Mangaung is clear: the ANC has returned its ideology and economic policy to its capitalist roots, aligning it with the policy it has been implementing ever since it came to power. All else – the RDP, the Freedom Charter – was mere left-wing flirtation, flattering the working class to deceive it. The radical Freedom Charter especially, even without the word socialism anywhere in the text, was ideological seduction, nothing more, in its nationalisation clauses, which survived a fierce contestation, merely to appease working class delegates at the Congress of the People where it was adopted.

As Nelson Mandela made clear following the adoption of the Freedom Charter, in his article "In Our Lifetime" published in Liberation in 1956 – barely a year after the Freedom Charter was adopted, the ANC leadership's interest in nationalisation was never to create a socialist society, which he understood correctly to mean ownership of the commanding heights of the economy by a workers state where production would be for use not profit, but "to open up fresh fields for the development of a prosperous non-European bourgeois class ...for the first time in their history the non-European bourgeoisie will have the opportunity to own in their own name and right mines and factories, and ...private enterprise will boom and flourish as never before."

The ANC leadership's abandoned interest in nationalisation was only ever for the purposes of creating a black capitalist class. The policy of Black Economic

Empowerment, in other words, is the practical expression of the aspirations of the black middle class as expounded by Mandela. BEE is the Freedom Charter of the aspirant black bourgeoisie. As former ANC spokesperson, Smuts Ngonyama so crudely expressed when explaining his acquisition of shares from Telkom turning him into a millionaire overnight, "I did not struggle to be poor."

The founding of WASP has brought onto the political stage, a party that apart from being based on the working class, the only class in society with an interest in, and the capacity to bring about the overthrow of capitalism and the socialist transformation of society, a true champions of socialism; a party that will place on the agenda a programme for the eradication of mass unemployment, poverty, disease, illiteracy, homelessness, environmental degradation, oppression and discrimination based on gender, race, religion or nationality.

Such an agenda can be achieved by the establishment of a workers state which will place the commanding heights of the economy under the democratic control and management of the working class, to develop a democratic plan to utilise society's productive capacity to provide prosperity for all. Under capitalism, the bosses and their governments have, with the use of nationalisation, have in fact engaged in theft, stealing a page from the future socialist society as Frederick Engels, the great collaborator of Karl Marx, put it. WASP will implement the whole book.