



Youth build socialist alternative

by Mameitwe Sebei

The ANC aligned Progressive Youth Alliance has pledged its undying support to the ANC and vowed to mobilize young people to ensure another electoral victory for this government. The PYA is made up of Sasco, the Young Communist League and the ANC Youth League amongst others. This shocking, though not surprising position reflects the unbridgeable gulf separating these organisations from working class youth today -- a gulf that insulates their leadership from the discontent of working class youth in whose name they claim to speak.

Zuma and the ANC must have breathed a sigh of relief at this announcement, especially after the lengthy period of antagonism between the ANC and the ANC Youth League, which, under their now expelled former president Julius Malema, has been a consistent critic of Zuma. This capitulation is just as revealing as it is shameful when viewed from the standpoint of working class youth who responded to Malema's prosecution by protesting outside Luthuli House, marched with him for economic freedom in our lifetime and watched with horror as workers were mowed down in cold blood at Marikana..

However shameful and disgraceful this capitulation is, it was virtually guaranteed. The left-wing posturing of the ANCYL in its call for a radical policy shift in favour of nationalization of the mines, banks

and farms, never indicated a shift in its social base towards the working class. Even when the ANCYL echoed the frustrations of working class youth by raising the issues of mass youth unemployment and inadequate and unaffordable space in higher education, it did so solely for the purpose of mobilizing the youth behind their factional struggles in the irredeemably pro-capitalist ANC.

Their differences with the pro-Zuma faction amounted to differences of opinion between sections of the same class. In particular, the factional struggle reflected the frustrations of the aspirant black capitalist class at the failure of ANC policies to dislodge the white dominance of the commanding heights of the economy. It had nothing to do with the transformation of the economy in the interests of the overwhelming majority of poor working class people.

In their revolutionary youth, the 'young lions' of the Progressive Youth Alliance would not only refuse to remain silent, they would mobilize for stay-aways and issue calls to render the country ungovernable. Today, these organisations are nothing more than empty shells of their former selves. They are devoid of the support of the working class youth. This is reflected in the silence of their ranks against the alliance with the pro-capitalist and murderous ANC. This can only suggest that the masses of youth have long left their ranks and that nothing but place-seeking

careerists who use their positions to join the gravy train are left.

This betrayal has left a political vacuum on the left for working class youth. The other so-called left youth organizations outside of the congress are incapable of providing a viable mass, fighting alternative to the waves of courageous and militant youth swelling the ranks of the working class.

On the university campuses, the other left organizations such as Pasma (Pan-Africanist Student Movement of Azania) have often appeared as an alternative to PYA. Unfortunately this invariably turns into disappointment and disillusionment as soon as the paralyzing effect of nationalist politics, chronic factionalism and the lack of a clear political perspective begins to make itself felt. These organizations manifest the same rotten and corrupt tendencies as their mother bodies and do not appear fundamentally different from the PYA aligned youth organizations with the decorative difference that they are not aligned to the ruling party.

Careerism, place-seeking and corruption in these organizations is as rife as it is in any of the PYA organizations, which like them, are training academies of the future ruling elite. It is for this reason that working class youth in the communities are searching elsewhere for political leadership and a voice for their discontent. If we do not provide a revolutionary socialist alternative, these youth, particularly those that are unemployed and without access to higher education can be bribed to support reactionary movements as we saw during the 2008 xenophobic outbreak.

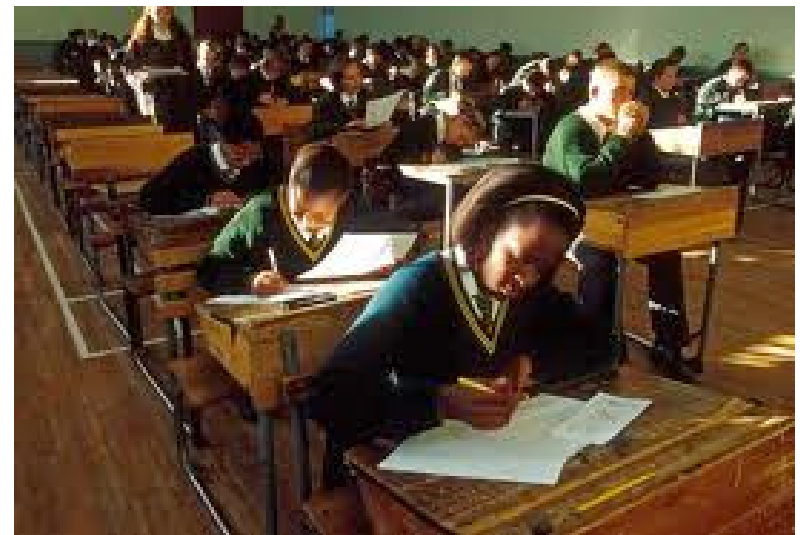
On the other hand, with unemployment amongst young people estimated at over 54%, access to higher education only accessible to 16%, and almost half the population, the majority of whom are young, living in poverty, the working class and particularly its youth will continue to fight.

The working class youth urgently need a fighting organization and political voice.

Building this organization is the single most important task facing work-



Tshwane youth marching, February 2013.



ing class youth today. An initiative for a student and youth movement standing for revolutionary socialism could not be timelier. The DSM and the Socialist Student Movement are preparing for such an initiative.

To succeed in building a mass, fighting alternative such a movement needs to base itself on the youth leading service delivery protests in the communities, in the mining, farming and other industries and to unite them with those students fighting financial and academic exclusions in universities and colleges. It has to be an active campaigning organization, taking up the issue of poor wages amongst the working poor

youth who lack jobs and learning opportunities and face unaffordable living costs and education bills.

Any such movement must raise a clear alternative to the current system. It must argue and fight for socialism as both a possibility and the only viable alternative to the bleak futures on offer from capitalism. To achieve this we will need a political vehicle. Young people must unite with workers committees, trade unionists, community and socialist organizations in the new Workers and Socialist Party (WASP) and build an organisation capable of taking political power into the hands of the working class.



Flagstaff: service protestors arrested

Government swift to send in police, slow to provide bare minimums of life

by DSM-Flagstaff

Residents of several localities around the small and impoverished Eastern Cape town of Flagstaff have long fought for much-needed improvement in services in the area. Amongst other things, people are demanding access roads, piped water, electricity, houses and sanitation. But memorandums and several marches have been ignored by the local authorities.

When the Siphaheni Residents Association Committee in which Balasi DSM members played a

leading role, organised villagers and hawkers, led residents in a blockade of the road leading into Flagstaff on January 21, it was in the hope that this desperate act would warrant government attention. Indeed, the government responded very swiftly this time, by sending in its police to silence the protesters! The protest had only been going on for ten to twenty minutes before the police arrived and immediately began chasing people around, carrying out indiscriminate arrests and

shooting. 44 community members – 31 villagers and 13 hawkers were arrested with extreme brutality and many were injured.

After the arrests and the police brutality meted out to the protesters, the authorities seemed willing to negotiate! But the protesters rejected this without first the release of those arrested. The next day, hundreds of residents gathered outside Flagstaff magistrates' court in protest as the 44 appeared on charges of 'public violence'. They

were released on a bail of R400 each and the case against them will be heard on March 8. The bail money was raised by the community and the fees for a lawyer to represent those charged will likewise be raised in the community.

We call on residents in all the localities in Flagstaff to continue the struggle by reaching out for support to all residents and workers in the area. We need a service delivery general strike, not just in the Eastern Cape but in the whole country.

