



# The Worker

**The Worker is an official publication of the  
New Unity Movement**

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## SONA: AN EXERCISE IN FUTILITY

**Knowledge  
is  
Power**

So, another SONA (State of the Nation Address) has come and gone, and, like all previous SONA's will no doubt already have been forgotten by those who wasted their time listening to it. There has been a consistent pattern with all SONA's: they serve as an opportunity for the president to firstly exaggerate the difficulties which government has had to contend with in the preceding year, and then to put a positive spin on their achievements in the same period. It also provides the president with an opportunity to attempt to lift the nation's morale with promises of what the government is planning to achieve in the year ahead.

This year, President Ramaphosa structured his speech around four "overriding priorities," which included the ongoing fight against Covid-19, the need for economic recovery, the urgency with which job creation initiatives need to be pursued, and the fight against corruption.

For the Democratic Left in this country (which includes all non-parliamentary elements seeking a socialist transformation of society) these SONA's will almost by definition offer little if any hope of substantive change. In the first place, there is absolutely no reference in Ramaphosa's speech to the capitalist system and its iniquities, or to the class struggle and imperialism. Yet, the capitalist system is the source of all our woes – the

enemy to be overthrown. Every single solution offered by Ramaphosa is offered within the framework of the capitalist system, as if there is no other way. As Noam Chomsky (well-known American political activist) would have put it: Ramaphosa was strictly limiting the spectrum of acceptable opinion, but would be allowing very lively debate within that spectrum – in order to "keep people passive and obedient."

And so, rather than putting us on a course of radical and urgent change, the government's strategy becomes one of "economic gradualism," just as we've seen in all other spheres. Achievable targets are set for gradual, incremental improvements in the percentages by which the government

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measures change, and these we are expected to applaud. Meanwhile, the stagnation continues. One year there might be a slight increase in the matric pass rate, the next year a slight decrease. From an unacceptably high base, one year unemployment might increase, next year, decrease. And so it is in every other sphere – the crime rate, the housing backlog, the deficiencies in healthcare, etc.

Interestingly – and perhaps – sinisterly – all economic solutions are as a matter of course tied to empowering the private sector. There is a bias towards premising solutions on incentivizing the domestic bourgeoisie. And this is the whole point. It is not untrue to say that the ANC as well as every other party participating in the parliamentary process in this country would be united on this point – just that they would all have their own specific agendas for achieving this same end.

For as long as our government is committed to

empowering the capitalist class we will never see the creation of a truly caring society in this country. Parliamentary democracy combined with economic gradualism are the kid gloves currently in use by the owning classes and their hangers-on to prosecute their strategy of class-warfare-from-above. The objective is to keep the “great unwashed masses” in a state of appeasement and never-ending hope, while the owners of capital (and their hangers-on) proceed on their path of exploitation and plunder.

With every passing SONA, the Democratic Left should be hearing alarm bells ringing. For how much longer, we should be asking, will this state of affairs persist? When will we be hearing a genuine *people's* SONA? We must fight for it to happen in our life-time.

Aluta continua.



People stand in a queue to receive food aid amid the spread of Covid-19 at the Itireleng informal settlement, near Laudium suburb in Pretoria, South Africa, May 20, 2020.

Siphiwe Sibeko / Reuters

## THE SONA ON EDUCATION

**When considering the 2021 State of the Nation Address (SONA), I would like to borrow a phrase from Ali Fataar – the 2021 SONA was like “old garbage in new bags”.**

Ramaphosa gave little or no attention to schooling in his address in the SONA. After 26 years as a “democracy”, the country’s education system has been plagued by systemic failure.

Education infrastructure grants were slashed by R1.9 billion last year in the redistributed budget to cater for the COVID-19 pandemic and a further R2-billion was diverted to relief in other sectors of society.

In the Nelson Mandela Metropole, several schools have been left in a state of disrepair, including those that are being rebuilt and many being renovated. At one school, double-shift classes (4 hours per shift) has been the order of the day for the past eight years. At these schools, contractors have just packed up and left because of non-payment by the education authorities. The Education

Department’s offices have been without electricity since September 2020. Officials leave early as no computers are running.

At one of the schools, the construction

of the school building has now been in progress for eight years. The school is now housed in eight small-sized low-ceiling prefabricated, classrooms. This school caters for 1180 learners. This includes 47 staff members. (Teaching and non-teaching staff)



**Teachers relaxing in their make-shift staff room**

- Two of the classrooms are used as staffrooms (47 adults) to adhere to Covid-19 protocols. All-in staff meetings are a thing of the past.
- If all eight classrooms are used for schooling, 31 classes of 100% capacity classes will rotate every fourth day.
- If the school adheres to safety protocols (all 8 classrooms) for contact teaching, 62 classes (50% capacity), schooling can take place every 7<sup>th</sup> and, in some cases every 8<sup>th</sup> day.

There has been no sport or cultural activity at the school for the past eight years. Surely, this cannot be termed education.

With a dire shortage of accommodation, the Eastern Cape Education Department was taken to court in 2018 to provide more classrooms at four schools in the King Sabata Dalindyebo Municipality.

Despite court injunctions, there has been no progress on the provision of adequate classrooms.

The Department undertook to build 22 classrooms at Attwell Madala SSS, 20 at Dudumayo SSS, 21 at Mnceba SSS and 11 at Enduku JSS. **Nothing has**

**happened to date.** Now with COVID-19 protocols in place at one of the schools, the Grade 12’s will attend school for four days a week, whilst the rest will attend school on a rotational basis, once every three weeks. (*Information from the Maverick Citizen Eastern Cape 2021/02/16*)

## How can Ramaphosa and Motshekga venture to say all schools are ready to start on Monday 15 February?

Ramaphosa made similar promises in the previous State of the Nation Addresses on school infrastructure development. The department of Basic Education and the Public Works and Infrastructure Department has not delivered on any of these promises.

In his address to the nation in 2006 Mbeki promised that, pit toilets would be “a thing of the past” by 2011. At present, there are 3800 schools with pit toilets. 3500 Schools have water supply challenges – most have been supplied with tanks. On-tap water supply in the (deep) rural areas is mostly non-existent. Talk is cheap.

Ramaphosa made mention of running a broadband programme over the next 2 years – this can only be



**A teacher marking outside – No place to hide**

advantageous for the privileged elite. Tablets to schools in rural (or urban) areas will be of no benefit if teachers are not committed to teaching. Technology is a tool that can be used by

skilful teachers – but is not an end in itself. The 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution will not be promoted by giving learners access to tablets.

Are schools in the rural areas supplied with electricity? Where does the money come from to electrify the rural areas – should the priority not be the provision of housing and sanitation? Tablets just cannot operate in a vacuum. Are the villages supplied with electricity? What if tablets need to be recharged at home?

Overall, Ramaphosa was woefully weak when dealing with education – arguably one of the most important contributors to a thriving society – but can this sector improve – even incrementally, under an ANC government whose priority is the capitalist elite?



Before the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic in South Africa, the schools, in Mthatha, Mqanduli, Mount Frere and Engcobo, had classes that had to house more than 100 children with five having to share a desk made for two

Hit with a combination of Covid-19 regulations and a dire shortage of space, and despite several court orders to force the Eastern Cape Education Department to build more classrooms, 1,147 learners at Attwell Madala Senior Secondary School in Mthatha can attend school once in a three-week cycle.

## **PRESS RELEASE: JOINT STATEMENT ON THE CCMA CRISIS BY +30 WORKER SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS**

### **THE BOSSES' GOVERNMENT INTENSIFIES ITS ATTACK ON THE WORKING CLASS**

The ANC government has cut the budget of the CCMA by R600 million for the next few years. Non-unionised workers occupying the least secure and lowest paying jobs who depend on the CCMA for their workplace rights will be most affected.

The government's decision to cut funds to the CCMA is not simply a financial matter of budgets. It is yet another political attack on the working class under the pandemic. It is consistent with cutting the 2021 health budget, freezing public sector wages for the next four years and breaking wage agreements across the public sector. At the same time, the government offers big business billions of rands in relief and security. Together, these moves ultimately serve to open new avenues for private wealth accumulation and deepen capital's cheap labour regime.

The CCMA budgets cuts are the political actions of a government determined to use Covid-19 to increase bosses' profits and further entrench the power of the ruling class.

#### **CCMA RESPONSES AFFECT ONLY WORKERS**

The CCMA has responded to the budget cuts by shutting down its walk-in dispute referral facility, which is how more than 60% of all its disputes are referred. Workers must now refer their disputes online. How many workers will be able to do this?

The use of part-time commissioners has also been suspended until March 2021. Only full-time commissioners will continue to hear disputes. But the majority (60%) of the commissioners the CCMA employs are part time and they hear 80% of all CCMA arbitrations. The CCMA will be unable to function. Already our organisations have experienced the following issues:

- Cases are taking as long as 4 months before being heard.
- Retrenchment disputes referred during lockdown were simply not

conciliated, a necessary step before their referral to the Labour Court.

- There is no response to the online system.
- Commissioners are pressuring workers to settle disputes, in some instances for as little as R250.

A further concern is that the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Employment and Labour recently agreed in principle for the CCMA to begin to charge fees for its services, including for disputes on the National Minimum Wage!

#### **CUTS TO MAKE CCMA EVEN MORE ANTI-WORKER**

The CCMA has for some time become an openly anti-worker organisation. The organisation actively prevents over 70% of the country's workers from representation at its hearings by insisting that only workers who are members of registered trade unions can be represented. Workers with money can hire lawyers to represent them in certain kinds of cases. Very few workers can afford that. Workers face a difficult and arbitrary process when they apply for 'alternative representation'.

The CCMA incentivises its commissioners to 'settle' as many disputes as possible, especially at conciliation. What the settlement figures hide is the bullying and lying workers are subjected to by commissioners in order to 'settle', with no regard for the 'social justice' the organisation is obliged to pursue. Some of these developments are the result of the CCMA having to take on more of the functions of the thoroughly dysfunctional Department of Employment and Labour, like the national minimum wage, without a concomitant increase in its budget.

At the same time, the organisation has become overly legalistic, despite its mandate to resolve disputes quickly and cheaply. Commissioners often make no attempt to assist workers with resolving disputes. Instead, they behave like

judges and allow the big corporate law firms to make increasingly absurd technical points to delay matters, making a mockery of the principle of expeditious dispute resolution.

The changed social base of CCMA officials has greatly intensified the organisation's abusive treatment of workers, from case managers through to commissioners themselves – many of whom are now lawyers and 'professionals' with little or no contact with or sympathy for the working class.

The reliance on part-time commissioners, many of whom operate private law firms that take briefs from employers, acts as a structural inducement for such commissioners to be seen to be 'pro-employer'.

Workers constantly relate experiences of corrupt commissioners (both permanent and part-time) who take kick-backs from employers or who offer to settle workers' disputes for a 'fee'.

The CCMA has become so anti-worker that its full-time and part-time commissioners no longer apply the law in their rulings and awards, openly substituting their ideological and political prejudices instead. In this, it is no different to the Labour Court and the Labour Appeal Court, where some acting judges from big corporate law firms sit on the Labour Court 'bench' the one day then appear for employers the next, where they use the very judgments they themselves have handed down.

The struggle to transform the CCMA into an organisation that respects workers and is guided by social justice instead of protecting the bosses' profits must begin now. Too many workers depend on it for us to leave the CCMA in the hands of the bosses.

### **ATTACKING VULNERABLE WORKERS WITH THE SUPPORT OF ORGANIZED LABOUR**

It is no surprise that the state and big business, who sit on the CCMA governing body, have voiced no opposition to the treasury budget cuts. The state representatives are acting in furtherance of a national government decision. Big business, as the biggest violator of worker rights, benefits most from a limping CCMA. But the agreement by the three trade union federations on the CCMA governing body to suspend walk-in referrals and

the use of part-time commissioners needs far more explanation. Why did they not resist? Why did they not cause an internal crisis within the CCMA by refusing to go along with these anti-worker measures? The answer is that these are sweetheart organisations whose job is to further the class interests of the bosses. It is time to build a new workers movement.

### **WE DEMAND:**

1. The immediate full reopening of the CCMA, including walk-in facilities and part-time commissioners hearing cases, with all the necessary Covid-19 health protocols in place to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.
2. An increase in the budget of the CCMA to meet its growing caseload.
3. The immediate appointment of more full-time commissioners, even if this means cutting the R4 million annual salary of the CCMA director.
4. A complete ban on part-time commissioners acting for employers during the period of transition towards the employment of more full-time commissioners.
5. The creation of a mechanism allowing workers and communities to report corrupt commissioners, anti-worker commissioners and hold to account disrespectful staff.
6. Scrapping Rule 25 and giving all workers the right to representation at the CCMA, regardless of whether they are members of registered trade unions or not.
7. The immediate closure of NEDLAC – 56% of whose R40 million annual budget goes to salaries, where the average salary is R800 901 and where the working class is routinely sold out by 'organised labour' and self-styled, unaccountable 'community representatives'.
8. The immediate closure of Productivity SA – whose budget is over R80 million per year and whose sole purpose is to find ways to intensify the daily exploitation of workers.
9. The redirecting to the CCMA of the existing DEL funding to Productivity SA and NEDLAC.
10. The resignation from the CCMA governing body of the three labour federations.

Bheki Ntshalintshali, a paid employee of Cosatu, to pay back the R206 157 he received for attending governing body meetings in 2019 and Narius Moloto, a paid employee of Nactu, to pay back the R174 312 he received. Geoffrey Esitang of Fedusa was paid also paid, R52 293.

11. A restructured DEL that includes an increased budget, increased inspectorate that can assume enforcement functions currently and inappropriately entrusted to the CCMA, dismissal of staff responsible for corruption in the UIF and Compensation Fund, and a weeding out of staff who are nothing more than outriders for employer interests, including directors and chief directors.

**ISSUED BY:**

Gauteng Community Health Care Workers Forum  
 Albert Advice & Development Centre  
 AGIWAS  
 Association for Rural Advancement  
 CALUSA  
 Casual Workers Advice Office  
 Elsie's River Advice Office  
 Greytown Farm Workers Forum  
 General Industries Workers Union of SA  
 Helderberg Advice Office

Housing Assembly  
 International Labour Research & Information Group  
 Izwi Domestic Workers Alliance  
 Khanya College  
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 Migrant Workers Union of South Africa  
 Nelspoort Advice Office  
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 South African Domestic Workers Union of SA  
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 Independent Workers Advice Office  
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 Trade Union of Musicians of SA  
 Ubuntu Rural Women's Movement  
 Western Cape Casual Workers Advice Office  
 Women On Farms Project  
 Workers World Media Production

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## NEW UNITY MOVEMENT

### TRIBUTE TO OUR COMRADE DOROTHY MURPHY

**The members of the New Unity Movement are greatly saddened by the passing away of our comrade, Dorothy Murphy. To her family and friends, we mourn with you the loss of a family member and friend and a staunch member of the Unity Movement.**

Currently, the world is experiencing the ravages of a pandemic caused by a contagion that is killing hundreds of thousands of people. By its nature, the virus relies on the close contact of people to wreak its deadly devastation. Yet, there are public servants who, by the nature of *their* work, have to remain in close contact with patients who have contracted the disease and therefore run the real risk of themselves being infected. These so-called frontline workers, like hospital personnel and paramedics, are risking their lives to treat the infected patients. These are brave people who must be respected and revered for what they do.

Similarly, like many of her contemporaries, Comrade Dot Murphy was brave and courageous. She stood up against a vicious state to shield her students from the brainwashing manipulations of the Apartheid education system. It is said that education is the handmaiden of the state. Most of us can recall a time in the history of this country when its rulers used education to fashion the minds of the learners and scholars so that they

would grow up to agree with and accept the subservient role in the South African society that was set aside for them and their families because of the pigmentation of their <sup>skin</sup>.

The future of South Africa that the government of the time desired, was one which prescribed a rigid demarcation where, for one group in society, South Africa would become the land of milk and honey, while for the other it would make laws and pass Acts which would set a ceiling on their development, forever to be 'hewers of wood and drawers of

water'.

These racist political engineers of the Apartheid system went to great lengths to ensure that their plans of "White" supremacy and segregation came to fruition. Our schools were designated to become centres of second-class education with inferior facilities and underpaid staff. The prescribed textbooks taught lessons which had one message, "Black man, know your place." Of course, they needed willing teachers to drum the falsehoods required to promote segregation into the young minds of innocent children. And there were many such teachers who did their master's bidding.

But, despite their best efforts, many schools of the oppressed became centres of excellence. Despite their bullying and the propaganda of their so-called civilisation and superiority, they did not reckon with teachers of the calibre of Dorothy Murphy. Comrade Dot Murphy was part of a band of brave and committed teachers who ensured that the plans of the regime came to nought!

She studied for her degree at Fort Hare University where she encountered a number of progressive political thinkers and students yearning and planning for emancipation. As a teacher she, with her husband, Rudolph (Cde Dolph), became active members of the Teachers' League of South Africa (TLSA). She taught at the John Bisseker High School in East London and the Heathfield High School in Cape Town where, for her, educating was not the slavish regurgitation of Apartheid educational prescripts. She desired more for her pupils. She became a shield against the propaganda of the segregationist syllabus of the state. She wanted to assist her students to become world class, to be able to take their place as citizens of the world.



She concurred with another member of the TLSA who said at the time, "...it is the duty of the true teacher to pull off the mask and scrape off the scales of ignorance that blind the youth."

But more, Comrade Dot also believed that she had a revolutionary duty to fulfil outside the classroom. When they moved from the Eastern Cape to teach in Cape Town, she and Cde Dolph became activists in the Wynberg Civic Association and South Peninsula Educational Fellowship (SPEF). They joined the New Unity Movement at its inception and belonged to the Southern Suburbs and then South Peninsula branches where she played her part in the liberation of the oppressed. Till the end, she was convinced that, surrounded by the suffering and deprivation in our country, emancipation has not been achieved and that the struggle must continue.

We salute her for having remained loyal and true to the founding principles and policies of the Unity Movement as embodied in the Ten Point Programme. Our respect and love for our Comrade Dot Murphy shall live on in our dedication to the principled struggle, embodying the policies of non-racialism, anti-imperialism and non-collaboration.

We wish you, Shereen and your sons Micah and Niall, solace and fond memories of our comrade Dorothy Murphy.

Thank you.  
Kind regards  
Mickey Titus  
Secretary



**Sitting:** Mrs Mavis Slingers and legendary teachers, Mr Polly Slingers, **MRS DOT MURPHY** & Mr Frank vd Horst

with students from Trafalgar High School

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