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# New Unity Movement

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## The Worker

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We Fight Ideas with Ideas

### 1. TALKING LEFT BUT WALKING RIGHT – MINISTER SISULU WRINGS HER HYPOCRITICAL HANDS!

Did Minister Lindiwe Sisulu experience a great epiphany? Does this explain her sudden, unexpected (and as it turns out, bogus) shift to the Left?

The government that she has been serving so faithfully in so many senior capacities over so many years has been in the forefront of championing the very policies she now lambasts as “talking about reconciliation, but not including *economic reconciliation*.”

The bourgeois split between politics and economics is something Karl Marx identified in his lifetime as long ago as the nineteenth-century – that in the liberal version of democracy there is a neat divide between the political sphere and the economic sphere. Thus, the people have their (political) talk-shops (some would say “dummy parliaments”) while the capitalist oligarchy holds the reins of real power, which is ownership and control of the key profit-making property in the economy. It is no different under our country’s Constitution, the one crafted at CODESA by the ANC-led groupings all eager for a place at the post-apartheid feeding trough. Lindiwe Sisulu was part of this pro-capitalist settlement and emerged as a key member of the leadership core taking the nation into the brave new world of post-apartheid neo-liberalism. Moreover, she has been in various cabinet roles since the dawn of this



version of democracy which is underpinned by the Constitution. From the beginning, she has been part of the process of implementing, defending and promoting the same order which has perpetuated the ongoing plunder of our country’s resources.

So, when she now talks the language of anti-imperialism, when she now suddenly discovers the “evils of colonialism [which] was and still is economic,” and that “it is organised crime; the robbery of other people’s land and resources; the exploitation and despicable use of their labour” can we be blamed if our first reaction is one of total cynicism?

“The land is where it all begins,” she says. One can have no problem with a question like, “How long will the centre hold if economic reconciliation, restoration of the land, and

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meaningful redistribution of wealth is not addressed as a matter of urgency?" But one can and does certainly have a problem from which quarter it emanates. In short, Lindiwe Sisulu suffers a credibility deficit.

One is reminded of the blatant hypocrisy so vividly demonstrated in Ignazio Silone's classic novel, *Fontamara*, set during Fascist rule in Italy in the 1930s, when a member of the local village ruling class, lawyer Don Circostanza, posed as the People's Friend, spouting all the politically correct rhetoric necessary to deceive his purported "friends."

"Meanwhile," says Sisulu, "our black politicians have become black assets for colonised capital." No doubt, she includes herself as one of these "black politicians." As a "black politician" she certainly has excelled as a "black asset" on behalf of imperialism/capitalism. Her record speaks for itself.

But the unkindest cut of all is her lamentation of the flouting of "indigenous law" by our Constitution. She makes a great play of the "mentally colonised Africans, who have settled with the worldview and mindset of those who have dispossessed their ancestors." Bravo, Lindiwe! Your "house negroes" (of which you, by your ample record of collaboration in formulating and implementing the country's Constitution in your high-profile ministerial roles, surely are one) used to be known as collaborators and Quislings in the apartheid era – the sell-outs, who worked the machinery of their own oppression.

Not unexpectedly, Acting Chief Justice Zondo condemned the minister's superficial sloganeering, and called for her to face disciplinary action, reminding her of her oath of office to defend and uphold this very Constitution, which, as we've observed, she's been defending and upholding for so many years since its adoption in 1996.

Also, not unexpectedly, her article has elicited a chorus of criticism as well as praise; in the latter case, most notably from one, Duduzile Zuma-Sambudla, daughter of ex-president Jacob Zuma.

But our criticism has a specific focus: the impression of the honourable minister's lack of integrity – and how this could mislead the very constituency that she is purporting to be speaking in favour of.

In the first place, she is known to have publicly praised the Constitution in 2018, when addressing members of the media at the UN in June 2018. "The expropriation of land is a clause in our Constitution," she said. "Our Constitution is a democratic instrument adopted by Parliament which allows us to expropriate land so that we are able to give land to

people who work on the land." Now, she's singing a different tune. If her sudden discovery that that is not so, that the Constitution actually empowers her "House Negroes" to rule in favour of their puppet masters, then surely, she should also immediately have resigned as cabinet minister – fallen on her sword, that is. But she's not done this. Who does she think she's fooling?

The second issue is her shameless plagiarism of a huge section of a 2013 speech by former UK attorney-general Dominic Grieve. That the minister's spokesperson (Steven Motale) can refer to accusations of plagiarism against the minister as "ridiculous" is in itself ridiculous, and only strengthens the impression of her lack of integrity. Had her article been presented by her to a university as an assignment for grading, she would have exposed herself to serious disciplinary action.

And then there is the matter of her heart bleeding for the indigenous people of this country. She says, "When it comes to crucial economic issues and property matters, the same African (her "House Negro") cosies up with their elitist colleagues to sing from the same hymn book, spouting the Roman-Dutch law of property." Yet, this is EXACTLY what she did when she was minister of water affairs and sanitation!

She occupied this post in the cabinet from May 2019 to August 2021. In this period, she disregarded the interests of the indigenous Khoi and San communities by uplifting the suspension of a Water Use License in favour of the developers of the highly contentious River Club development at the confluence of the Liesbeek and Black rivers in Observatory, Cape Town. She exercised ministerial discretion in favouring the applicants over the appellants, at least one of whom was an Indigenous Khoi council for whom the site is a reminder of indigenous resistance against colonial intrusion at the Cape, and one that is sacred for all South Africans for that reason.

The development of the River Club property began with the sale of the land in 2015 and resulted in approval of the rezoning of the property and the granting of an Environmental Authorisation for the development in 2020. A number of interested and affected parties, including organisations of Khoi/San Indigenous groups opposed the development on the basis of the harm the development would cause to the environment, the adverse impacts on heritage and the consequences of the development for our country's climate change resilience. The site is part of an environmentally sensitive floodplain and an area sacred to the Khoi/San in terms of intangible heritage and memory.

For someone who is attempting to pose as a fierce critic of

“robbery of other people’s land,” and “the co-option and invitation of political powerbrokers to the dinner table ... while they dine caviar with colonised capital,” the contradiction that “8% of the population control 80% of the land and its resources,” how is it that she hands the keys to a bunch of rich “white boys” (all 5 development’s directors are white men) who will house the headquarters of one of the biggest if not the biggest transnational corporation set up by the wealthiest billionaire in the world, to pursue private profiteering?

If she truly believes “land is where it all begins”, why did she uplift the suspension of a license which allows sacred land to be consolidated as a private benefit to rich capitalists?

And, most bizarrely, if she is really concerned about “where is the indigenous law?” why does she trample the rights of indigenous Khoi and San peoples who have appealed to stop this development?

Sisulu’s contradictions on the River Club, cosying up to what looks like the clearest example of “white monopoly capital” in her exercising of ministerial discretion on the matter are unambiguous examples of her hypocrisy.

The working class and rural poor of this land, including communities with claims to indigenous rights are going to have to clearly identify the wolves in sheep’s clothing – the false

gods and prophets who talk left but walk right – to avoid being seduced into thinking their interests are being advanced.

It is certainly our opinion that Ms Sisulu is attempting to exploit deep-seated historical injustices among the still-disadvantaged masses of this country to promote her own selfish political interests. In this, she has joined a growing band of right-wing opportunists who in recent months have become more audacious in their play for power.

Whilst holding no brief either for the neoliberal constitution nor the judiciary which she has chosen to criticize for her own clearly self-serving purposes, we condemn her for the hypocritical manner in which she has done so, bearing in mind her complicity in ignoring the just demands of the oppressed community and in promoting the interests of the very institutions she professes to be opposed to.

**Dr BASIL BROWN**

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**17 JANUARY 2022**

## **2. CADRE DEPLOYMENT IN THE ANC – JUST LIKE THE NATIONALIST PARTY IN THE APARTHEID ERA?**

**It’s always been an open secret that the ANC employs an active strategy of “cadre deployment.” Now it’s been confirmed. There actually exists within the Party a special “deployment committee,” which was recently forced to make public the minutes of its meetings between 2018 and 2020.**

**These minutes reveal, inter alia, that the committee (headed up by the country’s deputy president, David Mabuza) [deliberates] “over individuals to fill positions in entities ranging from the Nuclear Energy Board to the Road Accident Fund, as well as top posts in government departments.” (Rebecca Davis, Daily Maverick, 6 January)**



This immediately raises questions such as “how widespread is the practice?” “Are there times when connections trump competence – in other words when a candidate for a position is preferred even though s/he might lack the necessary qualifications?” And, “Is this what is meant by affirmative action – jobs for pals and family?”

There certainly is much evidence to back up any of these assertions. A few trenchant examples will suffice:

1. The Zondo Commission found that former SAA board member and chartered accountant Yakhe Kwinana appeared to have "no clue" about what the job of an accountant entailed. Now the SA accountancy regulator intends to probe into her background.
2. A specialised investigation team has identified a number of serious safety violations which certainly led to the large-scale destruction caused by the recent Parliament fire. These include
  - 3.1 The sprinklers did not kick in (they were last serviced in 2017, and were due for a follow-up service in 2020).
  - 3.2 The emergency staircases were poorly ventilated with minimal natural vents.
  - 3.3 Fire doors were locked in a position using latches, and this overwhelmed emergency exits with smoke. In addition, roof smoke vents did not activate
  - 3.4 Parliament fire alarm was received by the Cape Town Fire Service from the old or new National Assembly buildings.
  - 3.5 According to minister de Lille, the CCTV cameras were not monitored between 2h00 and 6h00, when the fire started.

And then there is the wholesale destruction of our railway system. Was this as a result of deliberate neglect? Did our national rail service have to be (deliberately) destroyed or allowed to fail, to create an opening for a private (that is, “for profit”) road transport system to come into being and flourish? Who benefits from this?

We are all aware of Eskom’s serial failings, and of its horrendous employee track record. There is also a suspicion that Eskom is being allowed (maybe actively assisted) to fail, so as to create a case for privatising the supply of electricity. This year, Eskom’s net after tax profit amounted to a whopping R9.2 billion – certainly good evidence that there’s money to be made in supplying electricity in this country. So, the mouths of the privatisation vultures will be watering.

Then there is the case of PPE tenders. We might never know the true extent of the corruption in awarding of PPE contracts, but we do know that it runs into the billions of rand. Apart from the fact that high profile figures like former health minister Zwele Mkhize is implicated, there is also the astounding moan from rank-and-file ANC cadres about “why can’t we tender from and be awarded PPE tenders?” (Meaning, why can’t we and our friends and families form bogus companies

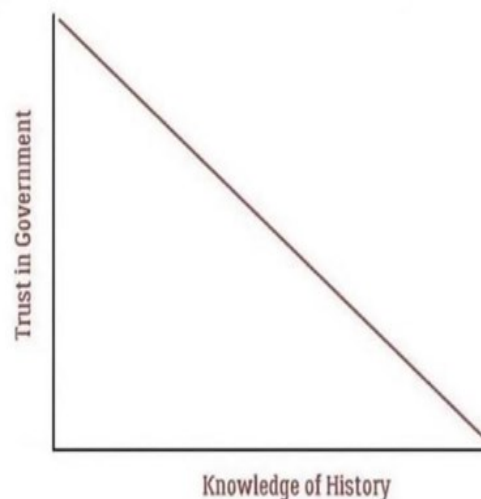
overnight to enable us to join the feeding frenzy at the procurement feeding trough?).

It is widely believed (in left wing circles, anyway) that the impunity with which the state can be looted is a key factor in the “fall-out among thieves” which manifests as a power struggle between the so-called Ramaphosa and RET factions within the ruling party. It is also widely believed that if the RET grouping succeeds in taking control of key positions in government (such as President) and institutions of state, SA will be a lot worse-off – a case of “out of the frying pan into the fire.”

We know that the ANC is a “broad church”/multi-class alliance, comprising working class as well as bourgeois elements. We also know that mere working class identity does not automatically translate into a socialist disposition. Furthermore, a nationalist agenda (such as the ANC’s) is one which seeks to elevate the interests of whoever is (subjectively) defined as “the nation.” It has nothing to do with transforming society, but everything to do with wielding state power in the interests of the “nation” WITHIN the marketized, capitalist system. We should therefore not hold out any serious hopes that the ANC (or any other of the mainstream political parties for that matter) would have the will or capacity to bring about fundamental change. The best we could hope for is a REDUCTION in the amount of corruption – just as, within the educational sphere, where the best that the ANC-government is able to provide is incremental improvements, such as a tiny percentage increase in the matric pass rate.

We also know that transformation is indeed possible. We have outstanding examples, most notably that of Cuba, a poor country by any measure, and one which has been suffering decades of US-led economic sanctions. Today, Cuba is a world leader in the provision of medical expertise and engineering. Of course, Cuba is a tiny country by comparison with ours, and has a whole different history, but the point is, Cuba has shown that it can be done.

Our government, with its commitment to neoliberalism and to cadre-deployment; with a multi-billionaire as president; and with a policy of “growth (and employment) through private investment” has promised (again) to address the issue of cor-



ruption.



### 3. WAS 2021 SOUTH AFRICA'S VERY OWN *ANNUS HORRIBILIS*?

Like 2020 and the years prior, the same scenario as before repeated itself. The only change was the resounding vote of no confidence received by the ANC at the polls on 1 November. Whilst the ruling party remains in the driving seat, as far as control of the majority of municipalities is concerned, the 5,2 million votes received by the ANC was just about everything but the *coup de grâce* for the aspirations of the ANC for 2024. There are an estimated 42.6 million voters, yet a mere 12 million votes were cast. This illustrates that more than 70% of the electorate either did not register to vote or just stayed away from the polls. This however does not augur well for any of the opposition parties as well. With all the hype in the news media on the elections, it would have been expected that a lot more interest would be shown in the elections. Most of the opposition parties took a dive in the number of votes garnered.

The horse-deals that were struck at CODESA made it possible for those involved to conveniently forget about the corruption of the apartheid regime. The apartheid progenitors are still sitting with the money whilst the ANC is squabbling about monies that had been misappropriated during their rule. Corruption is wrong in any language and there should be no statute of limitations on its prosecution. Are those who stole our land and resources going to be brought to book or some form of restitution made?

During the Northern Areas uprising in Gqeberha/PE and the Western Areas in Kariega/Uitenhage in August 1990, the tensions between the UDF and the second-generation exiles (these are ex-pats who were born and/or spent their formative years in exile) were palpable. Most of the exiles claimed senior positions in the structures in communities. Further, revolutionary Street Committees established in the aftermath of 1976 were abandoned. Is this part of the present tensions that exist in the ANC today?

Corruption, as highlighted by the Zondo Commission, misuse or abuse of state resources, incompetence at local, provincial or national level, service delivery mismanagement, have mainly contributed to the ANC nose-diving from more than 60% in the elections to a low of less than 50%. At one stage, the ANC royalty, with the Tambos, the Mandelas, the Sisulus, in the leadership, was deemed to be 'walking on water'. That myth has now been exploded. The reality is that whilst the leaders were making promises they just could not deliver a better life for all. The internecine disputes amongst the leadership presently do not assist matters. Papering over the cracks just adds

to the instability that is evidenced in the hung councils. Service delivery is therefore further bound to suffer.

According to the Zondo Commission, the ANC could not deliver constant and reliable electricity, nor provide adequate water and sanitation for the masses. State-Owned-Enterprises (SOE's) were all beset with multiple problems and became cash cows for the greedy and the corrupt.

Unemployment has skyrocketed to 46,6%. Together with youth unemployment ranging to almost 75%, it is the time bomb that is due to explode as it did with the July food uprisings. It is the food-shops that were mainly targeted. Food was appropriated on a massive scale. The spark that lit the fuse that was to become the July Food Riots was mass impoverishment, unemployment and hunger, the only surprise is that this did not happen earlier. The Zuma affair is being used by the ruling class as an escape from the real issues. People are hungry!!! The price increases in basic foodstuffs, transport, fuel and paraffin have impacted negatively on the lives of the poor. A massive 30.3 million of South Africa's 58 million people are

poverty-stricken with more than 11 million citizens living in extreme poverty, yet food is being thrown away by supermarkets on a daily basis. 12 million people or about 45% of the estimated labour force of 27 million are unemployed.

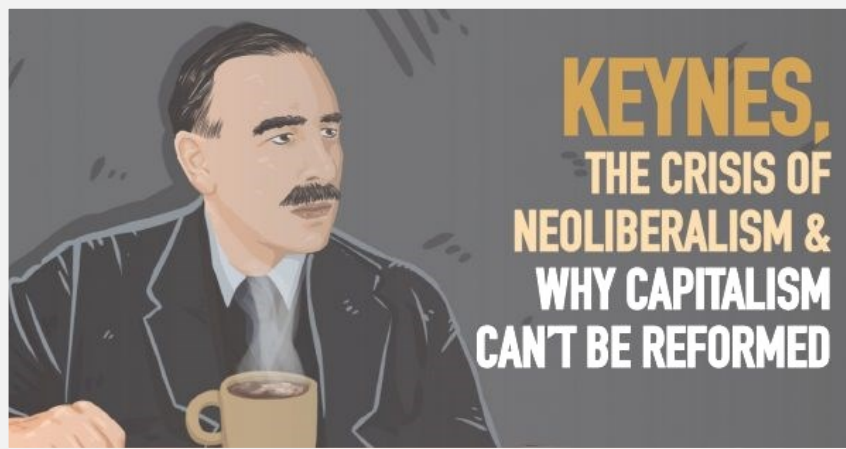


**The unemployed queuing for an interview**

Recently paraffin prices reached a record level of R13,56/l. With almost half the population living below the Upper-Bound Poverty Line and jobless, do we expect SA to be a stable country? How are people expected to survive?

The nature and forms of the disparities in SA are legion and is demonstrated in most sectors of socio-economic existence. It is however most noticeable in education and health.

Strangely, though it seems, teachers have become particularly quiet when educational matters are raised. Teachers today are not involved in any community/civic activities as the teachers of the 60s – 80s. Teachers have become compliant, complacent citizens. Only a few are involved in extra- and co-curricular activities. Teaching has become a “run-of-the-mill” job. Despite everyone being aware of there being a dearth of teachers, particularly in the foundation phase, there was a deathly silence from the unions when 20 thousand teachers were “rationalised” in 1993 and 1996. Very few raised a whimper when the now-discredited dumbing-



down OBE was introduced in 1998. Teachers did not object when teacher-training colleges were closed in 2000. Since 2012 thousands of schools were closed in the country and in particular, more than a thousand in the Eastern Cape Province alone. In the Eastern Cape, in 2021 alone, 40 thousand learners dropped out of school – not a murmur from the teaching corps. Whilst the pass rate may seem commendable (and we laud those who did well), the throughput rate does not look all that good. In a News 24 article on 26/03/2021, minister Motshekga is quoted as saying only two-thirds of learners who started in Gr. 1 reach Gr. 11 and 52%, Gr. 12. In any case, the matric pass rate is an indicator of the weak state of education in the country.

Could one describe the situation as a systemic failure of the education system?

The health sector is no better. The Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the rampant inequalities in South African society. Different variants have continued to surface. 3,55 million infections (cases) have been recorded in SA with more than 93 thousand deaths. HIV/Aids is more prevalent in SA than in any other country on the African continent. It is common for many scientists to classify HIV/Aids prevalence according to “race”, however, this data does not take into account the ineq-

uities, poverty, literacy rates of persons surveyed.

In 2019, an estimated 360 000 people developed tuberculosis (TB) in South Africa; 58% of these individuals were HIV positive, and 17% died. South Africa has between 10 000 and 30 000 cases of malaria per year. Malaria, like tuberculosis is a preventable disease.

Will 2022 be different? It is seriously doubtful. SA is wedded to rapacious neo-liberal capitalist policies as crafted in the run-up to the 1994 elections. SA represents a microcosm of this system. Underlying all that, 2022 is going to see a fight for the

presidency of the ANC, with more distractions with politicians choosing where to hang their hats. This is all about a power game and very little about service delivery and working in the interest of the workers, the rural poor and the peasants.

Bhaskar Sunkara in an editorial in *Jacobin Magazine* of 11 July 2016 stated, “*While working people are as different and divided as ever, they are still positioned to rattle the capitalist cage and win gains*”. What we may not be aware of is that all around us activists are going around attempting to build structures that may rattle those cages and take us toward another world that is within our sights.

#### 4. AUTOMATION AND THE JOBS BLOOD-BATH

**There is a growing body of support for the “self-evident truth” that unemployment is caused by automation. For most people, this assertion would no doubt have intuitive appeal. Many of us would be able to marshal our own experiences in support of it. For example, if a business such as KFC uses a machine to take customer orders, it means KFC has replaced a shop-floor worker with technology – thus, the logic goes, automation has created unemployment.**

The experience becomes even more dramatic when one considers the impact on traditional jobs of a computer system such as SAP (an enterprise software application used by many large multinationals) which has the potential effect of wiping out whole departments of employees.

However, SAP and other similar automation tools also creates new jobs, and the net effect of implementing them can only be established via empirical data (in other words, the facts need to be checked).

It is feasible to distinguish between “labour enhancing” and “labour destroying” technologies. A labour-enhancing technology would be one which leads to the creation of new jobs, or the enrichment of existing jobs, whereas a labour destroying technology would obviously have the opposite effect. But, as with our SAP example above, there is no straightforward, single impact. Take the case of smartphones. While society has undoubtedly benefited from the invention and development of the smartphone, and while this technology has created and improved many jobs across the value-chain, it has also destroyed many traditional jobs or made them redundant. And, importantly, some types of jobs which were created can be described as “burdensome and soul-destroying,” as in the case of Chinese workers in the packaging factories of Zhengzhou, China. In short, a job could be a mixed blessing; it might produce an income, but could be akin to slavery.

Similarly, machines in the clothing industry have had the effect of de-skilling workers; the skills have been transferred to the machines, and workers have been reduced to mindless (over-exploited, underpaid) operators of mass-produced commodities.

Interestingly, a counter-theory has emerged to challenge the conventional wisdom that automation is responsible for (global) unemployment. In a nutshell, this “new” theory—fully supported by data—asserts that the “culprit” is not so much automation, but *reduced output*. The data shows that when manufacturing output falls, unemployment rises, and when output rises, unemployment falls. Thus, the conclusion to be drawn is that overproduction is the cause of unemployment.

So, what explains “overproduction?”

Society appears to be caught in an unresolvable dilemma. We have developed the means of production to levels which outstrip our capacity to “consume” what is produced. This is because there is not sufficient buying-power in the market to absorb the goods produced. So we have a vicious cycle: Firms produce more goods than can be consumed, so production is cut back, and employees are let-go. Fewer employees means less buying power in the market, which in turn means less output. Firms have the capacity to produce enough goods to satisfy human needs, but rely on the market-mechanism to “move” those goods. In the absence of sufficient buying power, much of that capacity lies idle.

Yet, billions of people around the world are starving or barely surviving, for lack of basic necessities! We have the capacity to fulfil human needs and to usher in a “post-scarcity” world. Instead, we are on a collision course with planetary destruction.

Such is the inherent logic of capitalism, which is why many observers describe it as a system which is “inherently unstable.” Wolfgang Streeck, in his book, *How Will Capitalism End?* has the following to say:

Capitalism has always been an improbable social formation, full of conflicts and contradictions, therefore permanently unstable and in flux, and highly conditional on historically contingent and precarious supportive as well as constraining events and institutions. (Verso, 2016)

A further contradiction with regard to capitalism, is that while it is self-destructing, there is no expectation that it will simply fade away and be magically replaced by socialism. As we are busy witnessing, the pain and hardship produced by a failing capitalism is resulting in numerous social responses — at the one extreme, fascism, and at the other, socialism, while, in between, we are seeing the rise of nationalist and other forms of group identity emerging as responses.

For those of us committed to a socialist future, the message is clear: it will entail a long and arduous struggle, even as time is running out on us.

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