



THE WORKER PAYS TRIBUTE TO FRANK VD HORST

The passing away of Frank van der Horst reverberated around the world because his involvement in SACOS and the struggle against the racist policies of the South African regime brought him into contact with Sports Federations and controlling organisations throughout South Africa and in Australia, New Zealand, Africa, Europe and the United States. He had close working relationships with and had the respect of Anti-Apartheid sports organisations worldwide. Frank van der Horst's name became synonymous with that of SACOS and the opposition to racism in sport and society.

It is ironic that even the President of SA and the Western Cape ANC lamented the passing of Frank van der Horst. Condolences aside, those belated praises are extremely inappropriate given that Frank and all of us believed that it was the ANC that orchestrated the demise of SACOS and nonracial sport when they unashamedly used Non Racial Sport as a bargaining chip in the Negotiated Settlement. The irony is compounded when it is realised that when the ANC government wished to confer a special presidential award on him, not once but twice, Frank, together with Dennis Brutus, Reg Feldman and others refused to accept the award because of the contempt in which they held the ANC for their complicity in bringing about the death of SACOS. Furthermore, it was Frank's oft-expressed belief that it was the negotiated settlement that had resulted in the mess that the country finds itself in today. Frank van der Horst was primarily a revolutionary committed to the overthrow of the system of capitalism-imperialism, who, because of the severe state repression particularly after the Sharpeville massacre of 1960, opted to pursue that struggle through involvement with the nonracial sports movement.

The young Frank was educated at Rhenish Primary School, Wesley Secondary and Trafalgar High Schools where he was taught by the likes of struggle



stalwarts Polly Slingers, Tom Hanmer, Ernie Steenveld and Ben Kies. Polly Slingers and Ben Kies were both banned from teaching in the late fifties. Frank qualified with a science degree at UCT after which he taught at Oaklands High School. After student protests at a visit by I.D. Du Plessis, Commissioner for Coloured Affairs (Secretary of the Department) to Oaklands High, Frank was transferred to Kokstad Secondary School, after which he resigned from teaching and continued his

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studies, completely changing his career and became a civil engineer.

Frank vd Horst loved sport and the outdoors. He regularly took students up Table Mountain for political conscientising and workshops. With his comrades, they, over a number of years, held political sessions with students at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). Frank was a political being more than he was a sportsperson. Frank was rooted in the struggles of people at grassroots level – in both ideas and action.

Bugsy Singh so aptly said, “*Frank weaponised sport*”. He used his understanding of the politics of oppression to give playing sport a deeper meaning. Knowing the plethora of talent among the oppressed sportspersons, Frank sought to instil pride in players despite the pervasive government narrative that they were inferior. As a result, Frank and his comrades in SACOS continuously suffered the accusation that they mixed politics with sport. Knowing this to be a ploy to capture naive sportspersons, Frank and his comrades in SACOS explained the unity of struggle and sport; the inseparability of sport, society, economics and politics. This vision that Frank shared with his comrades in SACOS, of infusing the liberation struggle into sport, is what made SACOS unique in the world.

In 2022, a number of ex-SACOS members realised that March 2023 would have been the fiftieth anniversary of SACOS, if it had not been so cowardly undermined and destroyed. The idea took root that SACOS, and the thousands that played sport under its banner, deserved to have its foundation 50 years ago commemorated, and that it would be appropriate to have some form of celebration.

Remembering SACOS Committees were established in some of the major centres in the country to organise the celebrations. Frank joined up with the Remembering SACOS Committee in the Western Cape and we soon got into the routine of using his house as a meeting venue. Soon, also, it became clear that the Remembering SACOS Committee would become more than just a group

organising a celebration.

Frank’s dream of building a socially responsible cadre of sportspersons who could see beyond the kicking, throwing and running, was destroyed by a pre-established political agenda driven by greed and expediency and facilitated by puppets who could not see further than their noses and their bank accounts. Our discussions in the Remembering SACOS Committee took on a new purpose, encouraged by the call from former sports heroes, champions and players, who saw how the vacuum left by the disappearance of Sacosport was filled by the destruction of the social fabric of oppressed communities.

During these discussions Frank was always at pains to paint the bigger picture to help us understand how the shifting geo-political world scenario



Sacos Stalwarts, from left, Frank van der Horst (Hockey Western Cape), Hassan Howa (Cricket Western Cape), MN Pather (Tennis Durban) and George Singh (Soccer Durban).

impacted our communities and thus our responses to the challenges. He struggled with us to break down the complexities of practising “No Normal Sport in a **Still Abnormal Society**”. He wanted us to understand that even though times and circumstances have changed and thus require a fresh approach, the major contradictions in society are the same as they were before.

In the time of the heyday of SACOS Frank was scathing in his condemnation of the quislings who scrambled for the crumbs that fell from their masters’ tables and did not hesitate to call them sell-outs. He thus tried to warn us of the modern-day sell-outs. All of us have benefitted greatly from our association with Frank.

Thank you Frank for your courage, honesty, leadership and comradeship.

GNU: THE MORE THINGS CHANGE ...

Introduction

Dora Taylor (Unity Movement activist, author of *The Role of the Missionaries in Conquest*) remarked, way back in 1969 that:

A future ANC government “would lead to a neo-colonialist regime, and this simply means the entrenchment of imperialism in South Africa. It does not mean the liberation of the oppressed workers and peasants.”

This was a good 25 years before the 1994 elections. It was some 55 years ago. Now, thirty years after 1994, we can say:

SHE WAS 100% RIGHT!!!

Phyllis Ntantala (Unity Movement activist, wife of AC Jordan, and mother of Pallo Jordan) observed around 1994:

An ANC government would result in “merely the replacement of one administration by another... albeit that one administration was white and the next will be black.”

The future ANC government, she wrote, was the result of “common ground” being found between an ANC that “could not overthrow the government by force [and] the government [that] could not hope to quell the black struggle for equality”. As a result, nothing much would be gained and 1994 signalled that “the struggle for total liberation has only just begun.”

SHE DIDN'T SEE 1994 AS AN END, BUT AS A BEGINNING!!!

Ahead of the 2014 national elections, our Movement issued a pamphlet in which we said:

Some twenty years into constitutional democracy and South Africa continues to languish in a crisis that relentlessly deepens. The economy is incapable of creating decent, sustainable jobs for the vast majority of our people; the health and education systems are in-and-out of a state of collapse; across the length and breadth of the country communities live in constant fear of crime and lawlessness; looting of the state coffers continues unabated; and corporate profits created by the sweat and blood of South African workers continue to be repatriated to the centres of world imperialism.

AFTER THIRTY YEARS OF ANC MISRULE,

NOTHING HAS CHANGED!!!

Prospects under the GNU

The GNU is a compromise of the worst kind, comprising some really undesirable bedfellows. The parties include the ANC (40.18%), DA (21.8%), Patriotic Alliance, IFP, Good Party, PAC, UDM, and Al-Jama'ah, all of which are pro-neoliberalism.

Under the watch of the ANC::

- ◆ Corruption, also\ the Phala Phala millions (\$580 000, about R8.7 million at the time)
- ◆ Cadre deployment
- ◆ Dragging its feet on land reform
- ◆ Promoting the interests of Traditional Leaders
- ◆ State capture crimes – no consequences for Zuma; no more word of the Guptas' extradition

As is well-known, the DA is openly and unashamedly

- ◆ Pro-Israel
- ◆ Pro-Ukraine
- ◆ Pro-US government
- ◆ ... and is no friend of the working poor (just ask the homeless in our cities and towns).

Among the “smaller” collaborators, the case of Gayton McKenzie and his Patriotic Alliance is particularly interesting: McKenzie is a former criminal who was jailed for robbery for 17 years. He is known to have gang links, and in 2022, while mayor of the Central Karoo District Municipality, he raised R3 million for “service delivery” at a gala dinner fundraising event in Sandton. The money was never deposited into the municipality's bank accounts.

Like all his peers, he is not short of personal wealth. His net worth is estimated at \$4 million. He is set to earn R2.68 million annually from his ministerial position with a five-year term, compared to R1.27 million if he remained an ordinary Member of Parliament. His position in the GNU cabinet gives him the power to rule that the national anthem will remain unchanged. He will also be entitled to attend prestigious sports events such as the Olympic Games at the public's expense. The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture will be the toy that will keep him onside for the next five years.



**The main actors in the Coalition
Government/Government of National Unity
ANC & DA**

No doubt he will use his influence in the GNU to drive the Patriotic Front's fascistic agenda, which includes their tough stance on (illegal) immigration, the death penalty, and conscription. (Oh, and he loves Netanyahu and Zionism). How does all this square with the Freedom Charter?

UNDER THE GNU NOTHING WILL CHANGE!!!

NUM CALLS FOR UNITY OF THE LEFT

Only 38,5% of the citizenry bothered to go to the polls in May 2024. This stayaway from the polling stations is either a massive disinterest in the politics of the day or a rejection of the Westminster parliamentary system.

The number of possible voters topped 42.3 million. Eventually 27,79 million voters registered to vote in the elections of 2024. However, only 16,3 million citizens voted in the elections. The official voter turnout, according to Independent Electoral Commission, has declined from 89.3% in 1999 to an all-time low of 58.6% in the 2024 general elections. It is ironic that most if not all the political parties refer to “our” people as if the majority supports the current electoral system. The effect is that the ANC whilst still the majority party in parliament has had their number of seats reduced from 230 to 159.

One could speculate about the meaning of the fact that millions did not participate in the elections. But, what is clear is that the call for the formation of a principled united Left Front has become more urgent and that the Left has to overcome the fractures that haunt it.

It was evident that more than 60% of the voting population is either indifferent to or rejects the present electoral system. For the majority the past thirty years have merely meant “much of the

sameness” as prior to 1994. Many of our citizenry are still living in shacks, in fact the number of shantytowns and backroom shack dwellers have increased ten-fold. The poor are subjected to non-existent sanitation, debased education and health systems and increased poverty and inequality. It is ironic that concomitant with the inauguration of the seventh parliament since 1994 and the promises made by its politicians, unfortunately, disaster struck as floods and shack fires ravaged the

Western Cape and KZN. Once again, the poor suffered great losses in their aftermath.

The ANC was thus forced to establish what they called a Government of National Unity (GNU), with their main coalition partner being the Democratic Alliance (DA). This probably signals the end of the Tripartite Alliance (the ANC, COSATU and the SACP), as we know it.

The policy of the GNU will be a combination of ANC and DA policies. These policies will be supported by the neoliberal order. Therefore, this means that matters will be no different from the past thirty years with the mainstay being that the economy will be market driven with ever-increasing unemployment in a capitalist world. At present, the official unemployment rate is at an abnormally high 32.9% in the first quarter of 2024. South Africa is further facing a critical crisis with staggeringly high youth unemployment of 60% of 15 - 24 year olds struggling to find meaningful employment.

The rise of nationalism and fascism by some of the political parties is a cause for concern. The call for what is called “foreign nationals” to be declared illegal immigrants signals the growth of extreme right-wing politics. The thuggish attitude of political parties that threaten violence only enhances the tyranny that is so evident in particularly the KZN province.

What is needed: a break with neoliberal austerity, sustainable jobs, improved service delivery – water (currently a national crisis), sanitation, electricity, housing, quality education and health care, improved road infrastructure, an improved rail and air transport system etc. These will not be possible under the GNU with its Statement of Intent allied to the National Development Plan.

GNU policy will be a combination of ANC and DA policies, all underpinned by the neoliberal order. So, things will be little different from the past thirty years. In a nutshell, neoliberalism favours the market; the market is a site of competition among capitalists; this competition leads to ever-increasing automation; which leads to ever-increasing unemployment. With AI technology on

the horizon, this pattern is set to intensify, not only in SA, but globally.

The strike action of 1973 has become known as a turning point in the struggle against apartheid in SA. This strike complemented by the 1976 Soweto uprising that engulfed the whole of the country as well as the regional general strike in the Vaal region of 5 and 6 November 1984 indicated that the working class had demonstrated its power when it shut down the economic heartland of SA. In the Cape, the Fattis and Monis strike and the Red Meat boycott had a telling effect that showed the way in which the Left should organise. Moreover, the “Spirit of Marikana”, against all odds, signposted the resurgence of the Working Class Movement in South Africa.

Unions played an important role in the struggle against apartheid. Since 1994, however union activism has declined. Although unions have made significant gains in the workplace, they were still faced with many challenges. Challenges such as technological advances, casualisation of jobs, outsourcing of services, deployment of union leadership outside of the union and corruption in the workplace as well as the neoliberal policy embarked upon by government have negatively impacted on the unions. Despite all of this, there is still a real possibility of labour and community structures forging a revolutionary movement in the country.

It is evident that fundamental change has become a necessity. Cracks are already appearing in the GNU. This is a moment in history that has to be seized. With the inevitability of the political and social crises that are bound to appear, the Left has to unite, embark on a minimum programme of demands and nurture and develop the way forward to a socialist future.

Closure of Schools in the Eastern Cape

The closure of schools in the Eastern Cape is part of a nationally driven programme, Rationalisation, which was initiated by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in 1996 and formalised through the Ministerial Committee on Rural Education in 2005. The rationalisation process was planned to have been completed by 2012

According to the DBE the aim of rationalisation is to close, merge or realign non-viable schools to release funds and resources to improve the general health of the education system.

However, the Eastern Cape is a poor, largely rural province and, especially in the ex-Transkei homeland, there are many villages spread across large tracts of land without any municipal infrastructure or even relatively decent roads. In the deep rural areas some schools are small and may range in size from 12 – 50 learners. It is these schools and those with fewer than 150 learners that the ECDoE is targeting for closure.

In contrast to this approach there are other countries where small schools are well-supported and even desirable.

In Queensland, Australia, there are about 100 state schools with learner enrolment of less than 20 per school. Abergowrie State School is such a school with enrolment less than 20; Trebonne State School close to it, has 12 learners and Mt Fox State School, 82km away has just 2 learners. The schools are part of a cluster of eight small schools collaborating on the curriculum. In addition, they visit each other's campuses and compete at inter-school sports activities.

The River School is a small independent school on the Sunshine coast of Australia. This is what the Principal, Ann Donoghoe, said about her school, "A small school allows you to truly support the individual development of the whole child – academically, physically, spiritually and emotionally. Our children know they belong to a community of love."

While small schools in Finland are also shutting down because of a drop in birthrate, migration to bigger cities and changed and improved social conditions, a strong support network of small schools still exists. In a 2009 copy of the International Journal of Educational Research it is stated that in Finland 30% of all primary schools are small schools, with only two to four teachers. This is because these schools are situated in sparsely

populated areas. Furthermore, almost 20% of each age group learners are at a rural primary school with fewer than 100 learners.

Cuba has the highest literacy rate in the world (100%) because of the high value it places on education. It also spends the highest proportion of its GDP (by world standards) on education. Unlike in South Africa a high premium is placed on Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Cuba, no wonder its education system is regarded by many as the best in the world. The focus on ECD was already started in 1961 when day care centres were set up for children under the age of six and immediately began by adopting an inter-sectoral approach – providing education, adequate nutrition and healthcare, including specialised health services. The Educate your child Programme is available in all communities and is an in loco intervention where small groups of mothers are trained in their local communities on basic nutrition, health care and education. Parents are regarded as the primary educators and are involved with their children's education from ECD to Secondary school levels. Parents often volunteer as supervisors for after school activities at local schools. Cuba has many small, rural schools that are treated as important sites of teaching and learning.

In China, rural small-scale schools (also known as village small-scale schools or micro schools) are defined as schools that have an enrolment of fewer than 100 learners. These schools still play a vital role in the education of rural children, accounting for 44,4% of the total number of rural primary schools and 5,8% of the total rural primary school enrolment.

South Africa's spend on education (as a component of its GDP) is only eclipsed by Australia and Cuba, of the countries quoted above and illustrated in the table below.

Comparative GDP spend on Education by Country

| Country | Percentage | World Economy Ranking |
|--------------|------------|-----------------------|
| South Africa | 6,6 | 35 th |
| Cuba | 9.39 | 64 th |
| Australia | 8.5 | 13 th |
| Finland | 5.71 | 43 rd |
| China | 4.01 | 2 nd |

Yet, as a country, we have very little to show because of the numerous systemic inefficiencies - corruption by officials, lack of proper planning, poor maintenance of infrastructure and poor buy-in from communities. We score very poorly in the international language and Maths/Science evaluation, and even lag many African states.

Clearly, by comparing the above-mentioned countries and their education spend, the education budget is adequate to deliver a very good education system without resorting to the unnecessary closure of schools in rural, poor communities. For a country with the 35th largest economy in the world, the state has failed dismally to provide a better life for its citizens.

There is very little chance, given the pervasive incompetence and corruption (problems with learner transport, school nutrition, pit latrines, lack of school support, dysfunctional district and non-existent circuit offices, etc) that the saving occasioned by the closure and consolidation of schools will result in an improved education system.



Don't close our little school, parents tell Eastern Cape ...

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