

The Worker



Knowledge is power *NO. 63 . October 2012*

THE ASSAULT ON THE SCHOOLS OF THE OPPRESSED CONTINUES!!

More than 2 400 public schools throughout South Africa have been closed by the government since the year 2000. Now the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) wants to add a further 27 schools to the list. We are all aware of the scandalous failure of the government to ensure delivery of textbooks to the schools of the poor in Limpopo. We are also aware of overcrowding in many schools throughout the country, and that many children do not even have a decent classroom to learn in, but have to sit outside under trees. The majority of the schools of the poor have no facilities such as libraries, science laboratories and sports fields. When the government should be working hard to improve the quality of schooling for all South Africans, they are actively engaged in destroying it.

But the people are fighting back. In the Western Cape, affected communities and civil society organisations have organised widespread protest action against the proposed closure of 27 schools in the Province. There have been numerous public meetings in which speaker after speaker condemned the authorities and exposed as fraudulent the poor excuses that they have offered as reasons for wanting to close the schools. At the Peak View Senior Secondary School in Bridgetown, Athlone, a member of the "Concerned Community Organisations Against the Schools Closure," Mr Frank van der Horst, delivered a hard-hitting presentation at a public hearing on 18 August. The following are a few extracts from his presentation:

- Poor results in the past at Peak View were identified by the school governing body as basically due to a LANGUAGE problem, as 66% of learners speak iSiXhosa, not English, as their home language. The school pro-actively appointed iSiXhosa teachers and subjects which resulted in a dramatic improvement in results. The school was not praised for their creative initiative but instead attacked by the WCED for 'not following proper procedures' to appoint iSiXhosa teachers and subjects. The incompetent, backward and anti-educational WCED failed to identify and correct the language problem. The WCED officials and MEC are utterly hopeless and should resign or be fired in total disgrace - NOT any school closed down!
- The WCED attack the learners as 'coming from outside the community' from Langa, Nyanga, Khayelitsha, Gugulethu or Crossroads. This is blatant racism to enforce the old group areas, location, ghetto, or Bantustan mentality through apartheid forced removals by closing public schools. We all have equal rights enshrined in the Bill of Rights to every part of the city and anywhere in the country. We are ONE NATION! Racists cannot be allowed to run educational management systems.
- The closure of schools is a plan to privatise education as an elite profit making business. Quality education is already a commodity (item to be bought or sold for profit in trade) that only the rich or well-off can afford. The forced closure or deliberate destruction of poor schools is to speed up this process to drive poor students into the ground. Inferior public education will increasingly be destroyed by more closures, corruption, mismanagement or sales of prime property. Education will become commercialised as a profit making venture, ensuring a dictatorship of the rich! Already a company called Curro Holdings (listed on Johannesburg Stock Exchange) was formed with R1, 2 billion fund from Public Investment Corporation (PIC) and Old Mutual, to build private schools and buy other schools. Pension funds from workers' unions are used against them! The wealthy will monopolise the elite schools, get better jobs, higher salaries, better promotion, widen the wage divide, increase economic discrimination, class oppression and educational victimisation.
- The dislocation, forced removals and destruction of poor schools will add more pupils to the already 7 million unemployed in South Africa, 72% of which are youth between 15 and 35 years of age. A larger number of students do not finish matric nor enter tertiary education. Every year about 800 000 of the 1, 1 million school-leavers do not find jobs. They add to the cheap unskilled labour or the huge surplus unemployed. This causes deep hostility and is a time bomb that is already ticking!
- Public education in South Africa is in deep crisis and in a state of collapse. There is huge inequality between the public schools (80% of schools, mainly poor), which the majority of our children attend, and the fully equipped, well-managed, mainly former Model C or private schools that the children of the rich attend. This inequality reinforces class division and destroys the future of poor youth. It denies them job skills and ruins society and cripples economic growth. South Africa's educational system is ranked a disgraceful global low of 133rd out of 143 countries in literacy, numeracy, science and mathematics by the World Economic Forum. The forced and vicious destruction of poor public schools will push us even lower down in the global rankings of quality education.

The educational attack is primarily directed at the schools of the poor. They suffer:

- Shameful non-delivery, or late delivery, or dumping of text books;
- greedy corruption in the awarding of tenders;
- hopeless mismanagement;
- poor or inadequate buildings and
- the ongoing closure of schools.

This plan of forced removals to other schools will result in higher school fees and additional costs (for example, transport). This attack will deepen the desperate plight of the poor who are already suffering high petrol, water, electricity and other municipal costs. The class divide between rich and poor will widen, even though South Africa already has the highest gap between rich and poor (as measured by the Gini co-efficient) of all the countries in the world).

- FORWARD TO A NEW SINGLE SYSTEM OF FREE, COMPULSORY, QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL!
- DOWN WITH THE CORRUPT ATTACKS ON THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR!
- FORWARD TO A UNITED FRONT AGAINST THE CLOSURE OF PEAK VIEW AND ALL THE OTHER SCHOOLS
- DOWN WITH THE ONGOING ATTEMPTS TO DESTROY THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR!

LET'S UNITE AND MOBILISE ALL SCHOOLS, COMMUNITY AND WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS, MOSQUES AND CHURCHES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SOCIAL INJUSTICES, CLASS OPPRESSION AND THE DESTRUCTION OF EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS!

FORWARD TO A PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY! FORWARD TO FREE, COMPULSORY, EQUAL, QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL!
FIGHT TO KEEP OUR SCHOOLS OPEN!

BRUTAL SLAUGHTER OF MINeworkERS AT MARIKANA!

In the past few weeks an enormous amount has been said and written about the brutal slaughter of black mineworkers at Marikana by a murderous, trigger-happy police force. The world has reacted with outrage and disgust at what has been called "the ANC's Sharpeville."

In this short piece, we want to highlight the inhuman, living conditions of the poverty-stricken communities living in Marikana and the rest of the so-called "Platinum Belt" in North West Province and Limpopo.

While platinum mining companies such as Lonmin make BILLIONS OF RANDS in profits from their operations in North West Province and Limpopo, their workers are forced to live in the most appalling conditions.

Marikana suffers all of the following:

- A lack of housing, with many people being forced to live in squatter camps;
- Air and water poisoning, high noise levels, cracks to houses from the blasting operations, and the destruction of roads by heavy vehicles;
- Poor health services;
- High unemployment;
- High crime levels;
- Corrupt police;
- A shortage of schools, and children having to travel long distances to get to their schools;
- No recreational facilities;
- No old age care facilities.

There has been what can only be described as a low intensity war in the whole platinum belt for the last 10 years. The most brutal system of land removals – a system far worse than the mass removals carried out by the apartheid system – has been underway in virtually every district where platinum deposits had been found. Whole villages have been uprooted by force.

The striking mineworkers are demanding a minimum wage of R12 500 a month. The bosses are saying this is unreasonable. But research shows that last year alone, the average pay for mining chiefs was a whopping R20,2 million for the year – in other words, R55 000 a day!!! The current wage received by the mineworkers is a mere R4 000 a month. How do you feed and clothe a family on this? How do you pay for all your basic needs, like education for your children, healthcare, transport, rent and so on? It is estimated that the average worker at Lonmin has to work for 325 years to earn just what their CEO earned in 2011 alone. This is scandalous. For too long South Africa's mining and other capitalist industries have grown rich on the backs of cheap black labour.

THIS MUST STOP!!

AS WORKERS WE MUST UNITE AND CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY IN A DEMOCRATIC, WORKER-CONTROLLED SOUTH AFRICA.

THE UNITY MOVEMENT SUPPORTS THE WORKERS OF MARIKANA AND ALL OTHER WORKERS IN THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST THE GREEDY, PROFIT-HUNGRY CAPITALIST BOSSES FOR A JUST WAGE AND LIVING CONDITIONS. ALUTA CONTINUA!!

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