

South African TUs and social movements- Numsa launches a United Front

Wednesday 3 December 2014, by [ABOOBAKER Shanti](#), [BELL Terry](#), [COHEN Mike](#), [HARTLE Ray](#), [MACAND Siphe](#), [MARRIAN Natasha](#), [SABC](#), [The Witness](#) (Date first published: 30 November 2014).

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Numsa not planning to overthrow government

Sunday 30 November 2014 06:50

SABC

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) has rejected reports that it and other forces are plotting to overthrow the South African government.

Numsa Western Cape secretary Vuyo Lufele spoke to the SABC in Langa during the provincial launch of the United Front for Workers and Communities, a Numsa initiative.

The launch is a build-up to the national launch of the United Front in the second week of December.

Lufele says Numsa is not fighting the government but its neo-liberal policies. "One would have to understand that we are in the class struggle, and ours is to ensure that we are overthrowing neo-liberal policies." "People would feel that there is an overthrow of government, there is no overthrow of government. The only thing that we hate is the neo-liberal policies, and therefore if people would interpret doing away with neo-liberal policies as to overthrow government it is their choice," explains Lufele.

No freedom without land

Meanwhile, the Congress of South African Non-Racial Community Movement says there can be no freedom if people do not have access to land.

The movement's deputy chairperson Mtobeli Kona has described access to land as a fundamental human right.

"As Cosaco, we are saying we are supporting Numsa and we have been waiting for this time long ago. Because in 1994 the government said there will be freedom for all, but there is no freedom, there is no land.

"You can't say we are free - from what.? Land first and then you can talk about freedom. We are saying there must be nationalisation of mines and then the government must stop selling companies to the private sectors," adds Kona.

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<http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/024b1a80466375f6878297b850a810e2/Numsa-not-planning-to-overthrow-government-20143011>

Numsa launches new social movement

Saturday 29 November 2014 18:30

SABC

A new social movement, initiated by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) was launched on the Cape Flats on Saturday.

The movement is an attempt to merge trade unions, and existing community organisations.

Saturday's launch is part of the build-up, to a national launch in December. The new movement aims to include 'all credible organisations with differing ideologies that seek to improve the lives of South African people'.

"Their struggles, if they are not brought together, and be together under one umbrella, the working class shall never win," says Numsa's Western Cape Secretary Vuyo Luvele.

Many have welcomed the move.

"We want to unite as communities, all the forces that are affected by the issues of the communities, we as Ses'khona thought let us be part of this," says Ses'khona's Khaya Kama.

Some remain cautious however. "Yes in the overall move to bring a relief for the people in this country we will support but many issues still need to be ironed out, until then we support this," says United Front Against Gangsters and Drugs' Abdus Salaam Ebrahim.

The Congress of the People (COPE) was also present. "This movement which has been steadily going on is something that needs to be understood and we thought it's important for ourselves to come and inform ourselves on what is happening to evaluate," says COPE Leader Mosioua Lekota.

Many feel government has failed to improve their living standards. The national launch is expected to take place in Johannesburg on December 13.

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<http://www.sabc.co.za/news/a/c7f448004661eeeeaa50ea268ea83ebc/Numsa-launches-new-social-movement-20142911>

Upholding a working class

The Witness, 18 Nov. 2014

Bent on challenging government on “anti-working class policies”, taking a swipe at Cosatu and determined to give a voice to the working class lies at the heart of the new movement. This also follows in the wake of Numsa’s expulsion from Cosatu.

On Sunday, Mchunu was sitting at the head of the table when the movement was launched in Durban — and judging by the packed room, there was enough curiosity and support to get cracking.

Mchunu’s role at the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) office at Jabulile Ndlovu House, on Che Guevara Road, is to educate shop stewards on issues around labour, legislature, collective agreements as well as echo political issues.

He joined Numsa in 2005 and now he is helping to seemingly steer it away from what was previously considered allies.

And just a day after its launch meeting, the mass movement has received a lashing from Cosatu president S’dumo Dlamini.

Cosatu and Numsa have been at loggerheads after Numsa was kicked out of Cosatu. This after a call for the trade union federation to break from the alliance with the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP) due to the ruling party’s adoption of the National Development Plan.

Mchunu remains adamant. “Cosatu is shouting at those affiliates sympathising with Numsa instead of looking at the reasons behind it, as tabled at Cosatu’s central executive committee.

“We are aware of the criticism coming from the ruling party and Cosatu, but we are also aware some elite are benefiting from the current neoliberal policies in place.”

He said the movement was confident it could face the harsh criticism, because it had the backing of the masses.

“The United Front was formed on the basis of realising the popcorn organisations exist in communities that have no direction, although they have genuine grievances,” he said.

Speaking about Sunday’s launch, he said Numsa was but a part of the movement.

“The movement is made up of different organisations, political parties and community organisation sharing the same challenges.

“We haven’t elected positions yet; but there will be a rotation system,” Mchunu said.

On reports of the United Front forming a party, Mchunu said no decision had been taken, but they were exploring various options.

"It will be dealt with at next year's central committee after the findings on the research we are conducting into working class parties are presented."

* http://www.witness.co.za/index.php?showcontent&global%5B_id%5D=128929

Trade unionists' United Front gathers momentum as ANC considers future at under 50% of vote

Posted on November 20, 2014 in *Undictated*

By Mike Cohen

Nov. 20 (Bloomberg) — Mziyandi Twani campaigned for South Africa's ruling African National Congress in four straight elections. Now he's working to build a new political coalition to break its monopoly on power.

The party that led the fight against apartheid has lost touch with its base of workers and the poor, Twani, 40, said by phone from the southern city of East London on Nov. 18. An educational officer for the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa, or Numsa, in the Eastern Cape province, Twani is trying to rally unionists and civil-rights activists to join the United Front — a precursor to a new workers' party.

"People are coming in droves to our meetings, saying the ruling party has long lost what it originally stood for," Twani said. "It is no longer serving the interests of the workers and the working class. We can't simply be loyal to logos and colors of party politics."

The defection of the 350,000-member Numsa from the ANC's ruling coalition and its plans to set up the United Front mark potentially the biggest threat yet to the party's domination. A new political party backed by the union could cut support for the ANC to below 50 percent by 2019, said Mzukisi Qobo, a politics lecturer at the University of Pretoria.

"They have a well-oiled financial and organizational machinery," Qobo said by phone. "They are used to organizing on the shop floors, they are used to campaigning electorally. They could eat very deeply into the ANC's constituency."

Union Power

South African unions have been key to keeping the ANC in power. The Congress of South African Trade Unions, the nation's largest labor federation grouping 21 unions including Numsa with 2.2 million members, helped the party win more than 60 percent support in every election since it took power under Nelson Mandela in 1994.

Cosatu also helped Jacob Zuma wrest control of the 102-year-old ANC from Thabo Mbeki in 2007, paving the way for him to become president two years later.

His relationship with some unions soured after the ANC adopted the National Development Plan, an

economic blueprint that seeks to encourage private investment and urges changes to labor laws that will make it easier to hire and fire workers.

Allegations by the nation's graft ombudsman that Zuma unduly benefited from a state-funded 215-million rand (\$19.5 million) upgrade of his private home, including a swimming pool and cattle enclosure, has added to the disgruntlement.

Coalition Cracks

The ruling coalition began to crack when Numsa, Cosatu's biggest affiliate, withdrew its support from the party last year.

Cosatu expelled Numsa on Nov. 8, a decision opposed by seven other unions with 600,000 members.

Two previous attempts by defectors from the ANC to form rival parties have failed.

The United Democratic Movement established in 1997 by former Deputy Tourism Minister Bantu Holomisa won 1 percent of the vote in elections in May. Support for the Congress of the People, founded by ex-ANC chairman Mosiuoa Lekota in 2008, fell to 0.7 percent, from 7.4 percent five years earlier.

A more recent challenge from the Economic Freedom Fighters, led by former ANC youth leader Julius Malema, has fared better. It won 6.4 percent of the vote just seven months after its formation. The party advocates the state seizure of mines, banks and land, and has drawn support among unemployed black youths.

First Test

"The onion is being peeled off layer by layer," Pierre du Toit, a politics professor at the University of Stellenbosch near Cape Town, said by phone. "The first significant layer was the EFF. Numsa is probably an even bigger threat to the ANC, especially if it retains the backing of seven or eight other unions."

The first test of support for a new party could come in municipal elections in 2016.

The ANC currently controls seven of the eight main metropolitan areas. A loss of union support could cost it the southeastern towns of Port Elizabeth and East London, where the automotive industry is based and Numsa has strong backing. Results from the national elections in May show the ANC's majority is also at risk in Johannesburg, the largest city, and Pretoria, the capital.

"The ANC without a Numsa split is increasingly vulnerable in these metros," Daniel Silke, director of Cape Town-based Political Futures Consultancy, said by phone on Nov. 18. "With a Numsa split, it simply becomes more so."

ANC Support

The ANC concedes that a breakup of Cosatu will erode its support and has called for Numsa's expulsion to be reversed, an appeal rejected by the federation's leadership.

"The split in the Cosatu can only benefit enemies of the alliance for the right and from the left," ANC Secretary-General Gwede Mantashe told reporters in Johannesburg on Nov. 10. "We don't believe the split in the federation is due to irreconcilable differences."

Numsa's general secretary, Irvin Jim, says the union won't return to the ANC fold unless the party abandons policies that have led to worker exploitation, factory closures and a 25 percent employment rate, which has remained almost static for the past 14 years.

"The working class needs its own political organization," he said in an address to workers at a Ford Motor Co. plant in Pretoria on Nov. 17. Numsa "will remain a union, it will not turn itself into a political party. We will be the catalyst for building the United Front and the movement for socialism."

The ANC has itself to blame for alienating workers, according to Twani, the Numsa education officer.

"It is no longer the ANC we used to know," he said. "Our observation on the ground from the various organizations, political activists, confirm the time for an alternative has arrived."

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<http://www.biznews.com/undictated/2014/11/20/trade-unions-united-front-gathers-momentum-anc-considers-future-50-vote/>

Numsa launches new front

By SIPHE MACANDA and RAY HARTLE on October 20, 2014 in *News, Politics*

NUMSA in the Eastern Cape has declared the ANC-aligned Cosatu "dead". The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) has now brought its United Front to East London, one of six national structures being set up ahead of the December launch.

Numsa's Buffalo City region treasurer Zama Silo, speaking at the local event in the Braelyn Hall, said that what was left of the federation was just an "empty shell".

But the UF's formation has been brushed aside by ANC Eastern Cape leaders, who said the new political movement offered nothing different to the tried-and-test policies of the ruling party and would not draw support away from the ANC.

ANC provincial spokesman Mlibo Qoboshiyane said the emergence of the UF was part of the democratic process, and provincial ANC secretary Oscar Mabuyane said the party was unconcerned about the UF.

"We are not threatened," Qoboshiyane said emphatically, adding that any new party was "a sign of a democratic dispensation".

"Democracy breeds a multiplicity of parties. It's a cause of progress and growth."

The UF's formal appearance at the weekend came just a day after the emergence of a new labour union, the Public Service Union of South Africa.

Numsa's Silo said: "Cosatu is no more, it is dead. It is in shambles. A divided Cosatu is very helpful to the ANC, because they want a Cosatu that is going to be a lapdog.

"Cosatu is in paralysis. It will never go back to its original form. We need to act so that at least the working class cannot be vulnerable. This means we need to unite. The unity of the working class is the only thing that will dismantle capitalism," Silo said.

He reiterated news reports yesterday which predicted that Cosatu secretary Zwelinzima Vavi will be suspended again from Cosatu, a development expected at tomorrow's central executive committee

meeting of the union federation.

Silo believes Numsa will also be suspended from the federation after constant attacks from within the ruling party and Cosatu.

Reports yesterday said Numsa's membership of the federation was likely to be severed as two other unions, Ceppwawu in the chemical industry and Satawu in the transport sector, have lodged complaints over the metals union's organisation of members in those sectors.

"There is a project [to support] a rival union to Numsa that emanates from the SA Communist Party and ANC. They want it to contest Numsa inside Cosatu.

They want to fire Numsa and for that union to enter in [Numsa's] space," Silo said.

Numsa's BCM regional chairman Linda Jali also took a swipe at Cosatu and the ANC, saying the federation should have broken away from the tripartite alliance "to become a militant and independent Cosatu to make sure that we advance the interests of the working class".

He said Numsa resolved to form the UF, which will include social movements, civic organisations and other non-government organisations.

Mabuyane said the "ultra-left tendencies" represented by Numsa had been part of the ANC all along but had not succeeded in asserting their agenda within the party.

There was a misconception, he said, that members of Numsa would automatically join the new political movement. However, he said it was possible that members of a union formation that was not part of the ruling alliance would continue to maintain their membership of the union while supporting the ANC.

Qoboshiyane said the ANC was pursuing a mixed economic policy.

"We are not a communist party [or] a trade union. We are a movement to liberate society from the policies of the past," he said.

He added that trade unions such as Numsa should focus on worker issues within industry, rather than formally entering the political arena at the risk of allowing worker organisation on the shop floor to become chaotic.

Activist and Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University academic Janet Cherry said the UF was not centred on Port Elizabeth only, but would draw on alliances with NGOs throughout the country, including BCM.

She said a big question which would likely be addressed through the current round of policy discussions was whether the UF would remain a broad alliance of organisations "on the left" that challenged the ANC government on issues or if it was to become a fully-fledged political party contesting through the ballot box.

* <http://www.dispatchlive.co.za/news/numsa-launches-new-front/>

United Front looking beyond 'midwife' Numsa

by Natasha Marrian, 04 November 2014

THE National Union of Metalworkers of SA (Numsa) has identified “hotspots” across the country where it has built “embryonic” United Front structures — but insists that they are not forerunners to a political party.

Head of the United Front and the Movement for Socialism Dinga Sikwebu says that despite a surge in service-delivery protests over the past 20 years, there is no cohesion in these struggles.

He says the United Front is not a coalition but the coming together of community and worker organisations against socioeconomic problems. It supported the Lwandle community in the Western Cape when they protested against their eviction from land belonging to the South African National Roads Agency and residents unhappy with the running of the Nelson Mandela Bay Metro in the Eastern Cape.

At its launch next month United Front structures will decide how to approach the 2016 local government elections. While much has been made of the “Numsa moment” focusing largely on its split from the tripartite alliance, there is confusion about its 2013 decision to form a United Front and research the possibility of a workers party or a movement for socialism which may contest elections.

Its progress so far has been “uneven”, Mr Sikwebu admits, but it has made considerable gains in Gauteng and Mpumalanga — where it has launched structures — and in the Free State, Eastern Cape and Western Cape. The United front first found expression in a campaign against the National Employment Tax Incentive Act in June when it protested outside Parliament with other organisations. This approach was found wanting.

“The image we did not want to build was that of an ostrich, which is big up top but thin on the ground. So the best way to build embryonic United Front structures was in townships, where there is a concentration of our members and where there are (service delivery) hotspots,” Mr Sikwebu said.

The front is working with aggrieved residents in Ekurhuleni, to tackle the “surcharge” municipalities add to electricity payments. In Katlehong, Vosloorus and Thokoza, they are supporting campaigns for improvements to health facilities and lower costs for burial sites.

In Germiston, the United Front is campaigning for basic services such as water and electricity in informal settlements. In Mpumalanga, where “the appetite for the United Front is high”, according to Mr Sikwebu, youth groups and church organisations are supporting campaigns for safe mine dumps and clean water.

In the Eastern Cape the United Front has structures in Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage, East London, Grahamstown and Sterkspruit. Head of ideological work for the United Front Zanololo Wayile — a former Nelson Mandela Bay Metro mayor and MP who failed to make the cut for a seat in Parliament — says they are targeting the massive crisis in education and health in the Eastern Cape.

Mr Wayile says corruption is also a major issue and disgruntled ANC councillors and Cosatu leaders are working with the United Front. He likened the structures being launched to the United Democratic Front of the 1980s: “We are not reinventing the wheel, we have been there in that space.” We feel the United Front will take on its own political life independent of Numsa after its

launch in December. "While the relationship between the front and Numsa's possible launch of a political party appears tenuous, Mr Sikwebu likened the union's role to that of a midwife. "The midwife doesn't name the child, the child doesn't look like the midwife. We are not building something that will look like Numsa, we are not building something that will dictate the policies of the government," he says.

Mr Sibeku says that if organisations working under the United Front banner wish to raise the issue of contesting the 2016 elections at next month's launch conference, Numsa will contribute to the debate but will not dictate a course of action. "People want an alternative, but there are dangers of getting into this electoral thing prematurely. You can be swallowed by the machine and you will not be different to anyone else. If we are cajoled into 2016, we may trip." My feeling is that in this there is going to be a combination of struggle, of electoral politics, and of litigation. If you put those three together it could be a way to fight issues," he says.

The United Front will launch on December 14. Clarity on how the Movement for Socialism or Workers Party waiting in the wings will develop will emerge after Numsa's March 2015 central committee meeting.

* <http://www.bdlive.co.za/national/labour/2014/11/04/united-front-looking-beyond-midwife-numsa>

Enough is enough: United Front launch

November 30 2014

By SHANTI ABOOBAKER

Johannesburg - The ruling ANC has been captured by a capitalist class and communities say "enough is enough".

This was the essence of Saturday's Gauteng launch of the National Union of Metalworkers of SA's (Numsa) United Front to fight working class struggles.

The Front will be launched nationally in two weeks.

The Gauteng leadership of the Front was expected to be announced today.

"Enough is enough and as Numsa we are not going back on our 2013 (special national congress) resolutions. The working class in the ANC has been swallowed. The glorious ANC has been captured by the capitalist class," said United Front national convenor, Dinga Sikwebu.

The policies and programme of action were due to be knocked out on Saturday. Sikwebu said the Front was being established because Numsa was frustrated with having to lie to its membership about the lack of progress among the poor in the country.

"The reason why (we're launching the Front), is that as a union, we were tired of going back to our people to tell them lies. We were tired as a union to say to people 'There is a better life that is coming when the better life is disappearing into the sunset'."

Numsa had abandoned attempts to influence the ANC and tripartite alliance to adopt policies which

were pro-poor.

“That has failed... instead of swelling the ranks of the ANC so that the ANC may be working-class biased, the time of a new alternative has arrived. So they can expel us from Cosatu, even if they dismiss us, our unashamed position is that ‘Enough is Enough’ and, as Numsa, we are not going back on the 2013 resolutions.”

Numsa has repeatedly said the United Front will not be a political party, with plans afoot to launch a Movement for Socialism to contest elections.

Earlier, political analyst and businessman, Moeletsi Mbeki, said there had been a process of de-industrialisation in the country which was “one of the biggest causes of poverty” in South Africa.

He said de-industrialisation was responsible for the unemployment rate of 40percent as well as millions of people going to sleep without food.

Independent Media

* <http://www.iol.co.za/news/politics/enough-is-enough-united-front-launch-1.1788433#.VH6nad5Zf4c>

Who stands to lose most in SA union fracas

Posted on November 30, 2014

News & Views

by Terry Bell

Politically, the biggest potential loser in the ongoing and increasingly bitter fracas within Cosatu and its affiliates is the smallest member of the ANC-led tripartite alliance, the South African Communist Party (SACP). That party’s Medium Term Vision (MTV), described in some party documents as a “ten-year plan” looks close to being in tatters.

This “vision” calls for the creation of “socialism” which the SACP describes as a mixed economy, multi-class “transitional social system”. It is a goal that can be attained by bringing “all key sites of power and influence” under “working class control”.

However, since the SACP describes itself as THE party of the working class, this implies SACP control. Here the trade union movement is vital. In the the words of the MTV, “building working class power in the workplace is a key dimension”.

The SACP was particularly successful in this: until very recently, almost every member of the Cosatu executive was a party member. The same applied to the leaderships of the biggest unions. Critics maintain that this is an authoritarian, “top-down” approach.

But it has led to much of the tension and backstabbing between Cosatu leaders and amounts, in fact, to an acrimonious divorce between former comrades who once shared the same vision. The dissidents, led by Numsa, argue that the SACP has “gone off track” and been “absorbed into the

ANC” to support anti-working class policies.

Loyalist elements within the SACP are understandably outraged, so it is unsurprising that some of the most vitriolic attacks on Numsa have come from unions such as the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), and the major public sector union, the National Education, Health and Allied Workers’ Union (Nehawu).

Frans Baleni, general secretary of NUM, serves on the central committee (CC) of the SACP. His Nehawu counterpart, Fikile Majola, sits on the even more powerful, 11-member SACP poliburo where he serves with Cosatu president S’dumo Dlamini and the ANC secretary-general, Gwede Mantashe, a former general secretary of NUM.

NUM’s immediate past president, Senzeni Zokwana, who this year moved into parliament as agriculture minister, is the national chairperson of the SACP. He is the latest of a number of leading SACP unionists to have moved into politics at both provincial and national level. Prominent among them is SACP deputy chairperson, Thulas Nxesi, former general secretary of the Democratic Teachers Union and now public works minister.

Since parliament is obviously also a “key site of power and influence” it is not surprising, given the MTV goal, that the SACP is disproportionately represented among ANC MPs. This, according to Numsa general secretary, Irvin Jim, is the party’s reward from the ANC for “delivering” Cosatu to the governing alliance.

A loss of influence, let alone control, over Cosatu would almost certainly mean a severe loss of influence with the ANC, certainly in terms of parliamentary positions. As matters now stand, the SACP general secretary, Blade Nzimande, is higher education minister, while his party deputy serves as deputy public works minister.

Among other SACP CC members in the national parliament are minister in the presidency, Jeff Radebe, his trade and industry counterpart Rob Davies and deputy minerals minister Godfrey Oliphant. One of the best known faces of the current parliament, deputy parliamentary speaker Lechesa Tsenoli also serves on the CC along with former communications minister Yunis Carrim and former energy minister Ben Martins.

The targets of the ire of this faction are Cosatu’s beleaguered general secretary, Zwelinizima Vavi, and Irvin Jim. Both, until fairly recently, were members of the SACP.

However, although the squabbles at leadership level have tended to dominate the news, the main driving force behind the turmoil seems to be the widespread demand among rank and file members for a return to democratic control of the unions. This would mean a loss of influence and financial support, especially for the SACP, but might, in the longer term, make for a larger, healthier and more vibrant trade union movement.

* <http://terrybellwrites.com/2014/11/30/who-stands-to-lose-most-in-sa-union-fracas/>
