

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa hosts an International Symposium of Left Parties/Movements

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The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) will be hosting an International Symposium of Left Parties/Movements in Benoni, Kopanong Hotel, from the 7th to the 10th August 2014 under the theme;

“Building our own Movement for Socialism: Learning the Lessons First Hand”

The Symposium is in line with Numsa’s groundbreaking resolutions taken at our Special National Congress (SNC) held in December 2013. The Numsa delegates who attended the SNC mandated the national leadership structures to “explore” the establishment of a Movement for Socialism (MfS) given that the working class needs a political organisation committed in its policies and actions to the establishment of a Socialist South Africa.

This International Symposium provides an opportunity and space for Numsa and the invited individuals/formations to share lessons and learn from each other’s past and present experiences on the successes and failures of Left parties or movements in power to drive a Socialist Society.

We remain convinced that the only viable solutions for humanity lie within Socialism. The current global capitalist crises, genocide, senseless wars to impose imperialist interests and environmental degradation, demonstrate for all to see, that capitalism is a discredited and barbaric system. Clear features of a discredited capitalist system can be seen in global warming, environmental destruction, the threat of nuclear war, the ever growing sense of hopelessness, anger, hunger, inequality, unemployment, corruption, among many other human problems – all produced by a global capitalist system that puts profits before people.

The majority of South Africans – who constitutes the black working class and rural/landless poor – no longer, feel that the 1994 democratic breakthrough will mean anything beyond periodic elections. The daily experience of the working class and rural/landless poor is that of mass poverty, unemployment and extreme inequalities in a very rich country. 20 years after our democratic breakthrough, it is patently clear that South Africans are as far apart as they were before 1994.

Much of the despondency of the working class is as a direct result of the failure by the 1994 breakthrough to radically implement the Freedom Charter in full.

Numsa is determined to campaign for the full and radical implementation of the Freedom Charter.

No one, we must insist, must pretend that all is well in post 1994 South Africa when millions of workers, especially young Black workers, cannot find work. Half our population lives substandard lives, surviving well below any decent poverty line.

The massive de-industrialisation we have suffered as a result of the reckless neoliberal capitalist policies post 1994, from GEAR to the now repackaged, yet identical twin called the National Development Plan (NDP), will simply worsen our plight.

Given our natural wealth, we are convinced South Africa can become a developing and prospering country in which the majority of our people can be provided with meaningful and decent work, share the land, live safe and in peaceful environments. It is entirely possible, through knowledge production, to offer young and old free education from pre-school up to graduate level. Cuba is a shining example of how health and education is the primary concern of the Socialist State outshining by far the inferior education and health provided in existing capitalist societies.

We are convinced that we can have a thriving rural population with sufficient food and a sustainable livelihood. We know that it is very possible to have the wealth of the country benefit all the people of South Africa. This is what the Freedom Charter demands and this is what the rulers since 1994 has abandoned to enrich a tiny minority at the expense of the majority.

To achieve all this and more, South Africa must start and navigate its tough journey towards socialism.

The Symposium will be held under the strategic theme “Building our own Movement for Socialism: Learning the Lessons First Hand”. The strategic objectives of the Symposium are:

- Learn, first hand, from the experiences of different parties and movements globally, including in the global South, both historically and those currently leading the struggle to reconstruct Socialism;
- Carefully study the historical formation and programmes of working class parties internationally;
- Explore the different type of parties – from mass workers parties to vanguard parties, in taking cognizance that in the struggle for Socialism, a number of organisational forms were thrown up as instruments of the working class to rise to the position of being the new ruling class;
- Through the lessons from elsewhere, deepen our own understanding and work on building the SNC resolution on the Movement for Socialism towards the 2015 Numsa International Conference on Socialism;
- Build global solidarity and lasting alliances with trade unions, left political parties and social movements who share our passion and vision in advancing our struggle for a socialist South Africa and ultimately a socialist global order.

The December 2013 Special National Congress determined that a comprehensive report of our international study in exploring the Movement for Socialism must be submitted to the March 2015 Numsa Central Committee. The roadmap to execute this SNC resolution is as follows;

1. National Political School on What is Socialism – 13-16 June 2014;
2. Colloquium of Left Political Parties to talk about the formation and their political programmes – 8-10 August 2014;
3. Public seminar with Left Political Parties in provinces – 11-15 August 2014;
4. International Study Tours – Sept-Oct 2014;
5. Writing up our experience of the study tours – November 2014;

6. National Political School on experience of the study tours – 13-16 December 2014:
7. Writing up study tours and options for a Movement for Socialism – January 2015:
8. National conference on socialism as per SNC – February 2015:
9. Numsa Central Committee to fulfil the Special National Congress mandate – March 2015:

Numsa's President will officially open the Symposium on Thursday 07 August 2014. A number of international and local speakers are expected to address the Symposium.

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<http://www.numsa.org.za/article/numsa-host-international-symposium-left-partiesmovements-7-10-august-2014/>