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Wake Up the Power of the Working Class and Poor

Lucien van der Walt

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Our country is in a mess. Hunger, poverty, exploitation and injustice stalk the land.

The working class and poor face, at every step, the high walls of injustice, the chains of unemployment, and the bullets and batons of the police.

Conflicts shake the country, and hopes that shone in 1994 are fading, rusting under the waters of greed, oppression, and inequality; those hopes seem like a dream that fades when you awake to a grim reality.

The national question, our deep divisions of race and nationality, remains unsolved: politicians, black and white, make the situation worse in order to get votes.

We see the African National Congress (ANC), a party that embodied for so many working class people, so many hopes, breaking those people and tarnishing those hopes. We see ANC politicians buying votes, stealing money, running a broken school system, and grinding down the working and poor people.

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We see breakaway factions from the ANC making the same false promises, but their record speaks for itself: in office, they were exactly the same. We see the big opposition parties, like the Democratic Alliance (DA): more promises, more lies, and all with a terrible record in office.

While millions are unemployed, those with jobs work endless hours, sweating, bleeding, faces lined with exhaustion. Big capitalist corporations like Lonmin squeeze the blood out of the working class; big government companies like Eskom drive down wages, and force up prices.

Who killed the workers at Marikana? The police? And who sent the police?

The ANC government and its close friends, the army and police generals, and the big capitalist corporations.

Little breakaway ANCs claim to be different, and even give themselves new names, but they aim only at getting back into the circle of the rich and powerful, riding the suffering of the masses back to high paid office, tenders and mansions in the wealthiest suburbs. It cannot go on like this.

It is time to wake up the power of the working class and poor so we can break the chains, break the illusions, break the cycle of misery.

This means going back to basics, and building the power of the working class and poor, through mass organisations, political education, and a real understanding: the shining light of anarchism and syndicalism.

To quote from the Industrial Workers of Africa, the revolutionary syndicalist union our predecessors founded in 1917 in Johannesburg, and the first African black trade union in the country:

While you were asleep, the mills of the rich man were grinding your sweat, for nothing.

Wake up! Open your ears. The sun has arisen and the day is breaking.