

# Opening Address To The Popcru National Executive Committee

06 JULY 2013

**POPCRU HOUSE – AUCKLAND PARK**

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Chairperson...

National Office Bearers...

Esteemed members of the POPCRU NEC...

Good morning comrades. We are gathered here this morning after an eventful week in the country. Unprecedented events have taken place with regard to the country's former statesman and our icon, Nelson Mandela. We still wish Madiba peace and healing, hoping that when his time comes he will be at peace with his being and that which he leaves behind. We also note the dispute in the Mandela family and as fellow human beings; we can only draw lessons from such experiences in order to ensure that we are governed by harmony in our professional and personal lives.

Comrade Chairperson, the reality of this life's journey is indeed nothing beyond the fact that we are only human and therefore mortal. At some stage we will have to depart from this planet. One of the reasons that many of us here and our members across the country work so hard is to ensure that they leave behind positive legacies for their children. This and many reasons is why when we made the clarion call for members employed by the South African Police Service as Admin Staff to join us in the streets, they answered the call in their numbers. Their situation is really grim and they look upon all of us in this room to ensure that they get some sort of reprieve for all their struggles. Some have been stuck on Level 3 for over 10 years and more, we heard the stories as they marched across the country.

The employer has unfortunately not shown concrete interest in engaging with the union around finding a resolution to this matter. There have been absolutely no engagements, even after we delivered our memorandums to their doorsteps. It is now upto us in this structure to deliberate around a way forward in this matter. We have promised our members that we will ensure an end to their poverty and desperation and we have to take that into cognisance as we discuss the next step of action.

Although there are a number of outstanding issues that we have with the SAPS, the PSA employees issue is pressing. While on this department, comrades I believe it's worth mentioning that the Green Paper on Policing which seeks to unify the country's Security Agencies is progressing well, having received a nod from Cabinet last month. We have always expressed our will that this proposal aimed at addressing safety and security in a holistic manner be passed into law and we are confident that will be the case.

Meanwhile the Ministerial Task Team set up in the Correctional Services Department has proven that indeed once you hit rock bottom there is no other place to go to except up. Various issues which have caused all of us headaches for a number of years have finally been concluded through the MTT intervention. I can safely say that relations with the DCS have improved thoroughly. However our members have also been frustrated with the recent loss that we suffered at the Labour Court in the matter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> group of Ring Fenced Students. The department has come through for us in this regard as well by agreeing that albeit that we will appeal the matter, they will settle it upon receipt of our court papers. Now this is exemplary conduct on the part of the employer but we should not sit on our laurels hoping that this will always be the case.

Comrade Chairperson, it remains the responsibility of the union to ensure that we win cases where we declare disputes with the employer. The situation with the Ring Fenced Students should be an exception.

I also want to register my disappointment with the state of affairs at the Road Traffic Management Corporation. Despite our many attempts to meet with the organisation's management, we have had absolutely no luck in getting them to agree to a meeting which would discuss what is truly transpiring at the unit. There are grim rumours making the rounds in the public discourse, confirmed by some MEC's, that the unit is heading for a dead-end. Our members are naturally worried about the news hence our need to be better informed in order to prepare ourselves for whatever eventuality arises. The closure of this unit would mean that our decade long campaign to Nationalise Traffic in South Africa would eventually die out as the RTMC was established for exactly that, to consolidate all departments in an effort to have a centralised system. This matter is of great concern to me and should be for all of us as we carefully consider our options in an effort to save not only the organisation from itself but our resolution to pursue a Nationalised Traffic Service.

While we look at ways of bringing to our members nothing but excellent services, it is also Electioneering period. Ours comrades has always been to see to it that the African National Congress wins the elections with an overwhelming majority. That commitment has never been more important than it is now. We are all aware of the new parties mushrooming out of every corner seeking to destabilise the ANC and take charge of the country. The leaders of these new formations vary from pro-imperialism fanatics to political rejects. It should worry all of us when self-professed philanderers rear their heads in our political space seeking to challenge the government of the day. These individuals don't only take for granted the intelligence of the electorate but also the capability of the ruling party. Our country faces many challenges as we grow into a bigger and better

state and we all know that there isn't any other party capable of seeing our transformation through except the ANC. As we sit in the different structures, may we campaign aggressively in light of these developments knowing that we should never take our members or any other South African for granted.

Another formidable challenge that we must rise to as an organisation is the continued incapacitation of the SACP. It is our responsibility as members to empower the structures of the Communist Party if we want to see its survival. It is no question that we need a powerful and resilient vanguard party. Moving on to the Federation, we have as a union made submissions to the COSATU Inquiry and Facilitation process. We took this action believing that it is our responsibility as member unions to ensure that we exist in a reputable Federation that is free from fault and scandal. We should be able to preach truth knowing that indeed we have no skeletons hiding in closets within the Federation.

Comrade Chairperson, I also want to echo the sentiments made by COSATU during the recent visit by the father of Imperialism, US President Barack Obama. We cannot host the American President in our country and whip out the red carpet for him while his country continues to oppress millions of people across the world in the name of democracy. We support COSATU in this stance as we all know that indeed US policies perpetuate unequal and exploitative trade relations and underdevelopment in Africa and the rest of the developing world. As part of WFTU we have been calling on this very same President to release the Cuban 5 who have done no wrong to the American people. During his visit none of this came to the fore and that is why we opposed his visit, for it doesn't benefit us or our friends.

What we support and should rightfully so is the strengthening of the BRICS. It is no surprise that the self-proclaimed world Superpower saw it

fit to come to South Africa as the emergence of BRICS and the success of the group means our ability to stand independently without the United States and others in the West. We must be vigilant of this interference in our journey to financial independence from the west. It is quite clear that the unity of the BRICS nation is a cause for sleepless nights for the Americans.

A classic example of what happens where the so called Superpower interferes is Egypt which continues to receive over 1 billion US dollars per month in aid from the Americans despite its disfunctionality and current military coup. We must also keep in our thoughts the continued battle in Syria, a civil war which has been going on for over a year while the rest of the world watches in wonder. We ought to ask ourselves, what our role in this is and seek to fulfil it.

May we all share our views openly and honestly in this forum as we build a strong union that not only services its members but the country and world in which they live.

Amandla!