

Social Transformation and Young Communist League perspective.

1. Introduction

It is impossible to conceive of any Left perspective on social transformation that is devoid of a recognition of a society's class character to which social relations, as they are, stems from. We proceed from the premise that fundamentally, the spasmodic unequal social development is underpinned by the extent to which capitalist development in our country has obtained; and that as we grapple with issues of social redress and social transformation, these in final analysis would be effectively realised in totality, under socialism. In the now, all what we seek to achieve will always be minimum gains owing to the contested nature of social relations in the axis of classes ranged against each other in society.

Social patterns and social physiognomy in South Africa are such that they are structured, organized and maintained along the lines as to strengthen the holding hand of the status quo. So any theorization on social relations has to have elements of a trajectory that seeks, in the long run, to debunk the existing social relation in correspondence with the economic relations as a framework to which we exist and operate.

Again, the point of departure is that the YCL branch must be of a special kind anywhere it exist, it must at all times seeks to unravel social ills through active campaigns and a direct grappling with the sorry conditions within which a community finds itself. In essence, Young Communist League must be the agent of social transformation. It is a task that it cannot devolve to any other political structure than itself.

It therefore stand to reason that social challenges raised in this short document, in the main, must mean that the YCL is called upon to assume leadership in raising those or untangling them whether in concert with other progressive social forces or the alliance formations including the SACP. Any social malaise, in society, youth becomes the hardest hit as a section of population. So to that extent we cannot afford a hermetically sealed approach on social transformation to only narrowly be the champions youth plight at the neglect of the broader society affected.

2. Poverty.

It is trite that South Africa had surpass Brazil as an unequal country in the World. It is this reality that summons us to locate the fight against poverty to supreme levels. There is a general consensus from social observers that more than 40% South Africans lives in poverty. This translate to above 18 million in our population. Youth is in the majority to these figures.

In 2010 alone, about 14 million South Africans are on social grants benefit and within that 9 million are children. Government is spending about R89 billion on social grants and this is likely to rise with the new entries to social net including the age bracket increase. The other factor that complicates this reality is HIV/Aids which has produced a number of child headed families as parents died. It is estimated that in 2004 South Africa had 840 000 orphans as a result of the pandemic. All of these factors squeezes the national fiscus so that the

government must extend the social net. It is of course government responsibility to look after for its poor there is no favour at all.

Another dimension to poverty is the teenage pregnancy and the subsequent dropping in school of these is another input factor. Young girls drop in the schooling system to raise babies and rely on child support grant. But more often, particularly in rural areas, these teenage girls do not return back to school and this presupposes their future economic exclusions as there is nothing to guarantee employment. Added, the resilience of patriarchy in rural areas also reinforces this pattern of young women less encouraged to acquire education as compared to men. Young girls sit and do nothing productive except to raise children. Absence of money circulation worsen the situation.

Related to the above is the relevance and therefore the need to intensify our campaign (we started two years ago) of sanitary towel to the areas defined as poor such as our townships, public facilities in rural areas and in schools for girls and women. This distribution must be done in the same fashion as condoms. The Department of women, children and people with disability must be brought on bought in this regard. This is one campaign that must be put at the centre of our government.

The other urgent need is to democratize and ultimately render vainglorious the institutions of traditional leadership. In its current form it is the bearer of rural community backwardness, at times perpetuating outdated practices in the rural poor such as charging household taxes, having judicial powers through tribal courts where unscientific judgements are passed even on serious cases that requires competent courts. Currently, women have no right to sit in those tribal courts as part of community nor can they represent themselves if charged but a husband (if not married an elder man in a family) must appear on her behalf. Even their advisory councils and Indunas are men. As the Young Communist League we proceed from the premise that rural side of our society cannot be an anachronism of the pre -1994; the commitment to build a non racial, non sexist and a democratic society must find expression and permeate through to all facets of our society including rural communities and institutions of traditional leadership. We must break the glass ceiling that is stonewalling the country side so that it is left behind in the democratization process.

By this the YCL should not be read as chauvinist and hell bent on smashing historical traditional institutions. But all that must be said is that it must accord with the current setting if they want to survive.

3. Unemployment

There is a dialectical relationship between unemployment and poverty. The later in the main, is informed by the former. One of the key factors in South Africa, overtime, has always been growth without jobs (jobless growth). Such a phenomena has been underpinned by the economic policy choices we had made in the mid 90's to inform our economy and our

integration to the globalised World economy which is tilted more towards speculative capital in global stock exchanges, than pragmatic industrial and manufacturing driven economy. This artificial, casino-type economic bubble is too mobile across nation states than to be having a capacity to build structural domestic base for sustainable job creation in a country.

The question of job creation has occupied much of our discourse sometime now. The initiatives towards a new growth path must be welcomed to the extent it locates job creation as one fundamental focal point to be achieved. GEAR represented the antithesis of such a pursuit. Even the jobless growth that we periodically achieved under GEAR was not structural but cyclical and subjected to the cold winds of globalized speculative economy, since our main pillar in the GEAR policy was attraction of foreign direct investment (FDI) than driving an export led economy.

Again, currently the unemployment status of South Africa has been worsened by the recent global recession. The recovery from recession has not as yet touched the base of unemployment and shedding of the existing jobs. The statistics SA quarterly labour survey released for the second quarter of 2010 depicts an even gloomy picture particularly as it relates to the youth. Unemployment has risen to 25,2%. This represent in real terms over 61 000 jobs being lost from the first quarter of 2010 to the second quarter in the year.

Sectors with jobs shedding has been Agriculture with 4.9%, Transport sector 4.3%, Manufacturing 3.1% and Construction with 1.5%. It is the informal sector that has compensated the effects of unemployment with a 16% account of job creation and this being linked (to a lesser degree) to World Cup trading activities. This of course is not a sustainable employment but an ephemeral cushion of the time.

In the 25.2% unemployment rate, youth between 15 -34 years of age accounts for 72.4%. This represent a rise of youth unemployment by 12.4% from the first quarter of 2010. We are having at least 6.1 million unemployed but economically capable youth. This represent a huge reserve of army with all the capabilities to trigger social instability. It is in this sector where *lumpen* proletariat is rife.

In addressing these issues we need to visit the resolutions from our Jobs for Youth Summit held in May this year and the imperatives of IPAP 2 as explicitly laid. Amongst areas of focus should be:

3.1 Green Jobs.

We need as a country to enter into this new economy arising out of new responses to environmental protection. Green economy is emerging as a new area of exploration and where focus seem to be directed now.

China, annually, employs more than 100 000 employees in the Green economy. Germany is having more than 500 000 workers in this economy. It carries a huge future potential as many industrialists are getting conscious of global warming and other environmental issues and therefore switching to this type of jobs option.

The Department of Trade and Industry and Economic Development Department must play a facilitating role in this regard so that more youth enters in this economy as but one intervention.

3.2 Sector Education and Training Authority's (SETA's).

It has to be welcomed that the Minister of Higher Education and Training has made a review of the SETA's and therefore reduced them in a way that has amalgamated those that were defunct.

The critical task is to make them work and have strategic capacity to absorb en masse graduates from all disciplines such that they are integrated into workplace skills development. There should be a strong emphasis and a monitoring that the real and actual skills are acquired and, a clear case of employment of those Learners post the program must be made.

SETA's must be an important bridge from college, University and world of work. Related to this is YCL call for the programme in the department of Defence and Military Veterans to absorb youth after grade 12 and graduates to military training and various skills offered within the national army. Now that the Minister has embraced the programme and there is detailed work in that regard, YCL must work even closer with the Ministry to make it succeed.

3.3 Cooperative Movement

It is a fact that the working class depends on commercial banks for banking and their mortgage bonds including other various loans such as car finance. This has been the basis of banks profitability and the financial sector as a whole. It is the same banks that instead of financing development in townships and in rural communities but instead finance projects in up-markets where the well off reside. It is workers monies that finance building of malls and acquisition of commercial properties.

As a first instance, we need to support and campaign further for the ANC NGC resolution of the establishment of state bank particularly revisiting and expanding the mandate and capacity of the post bank as an immediate existing bank.

But more fundamentally, we need to build cooperative banks located and focussed on to our communities and regions. These cooperative banks must be beyond the structure of Ubank (former Teba bank). They must serve as money catchment from our communities so that various burial clubs, stokvels, street vendors, taxi operators, cooperatives and workers money are banked where they live. This will fundamentally delink the working class with the established commercial banks and therefore weaken their hand. This financial autonomy from seasoned capitalist financial institutions and counterpoising them with community controlled and driven cooperative banks will guarantee sustainable livelihood through local circulation of economy which in turn will finance local development.

From the vantage point of the FSCC led by the SACP a need to rekindle this fight even to greater heights against commercial banks is more than needed. This indeed will find resonance with the 2010 Red October campaign on financing development.

As part of rural development, cooperatives of various specialities must be encouraged. Strong education by line departments must be encouraged so that it is perfected. State Cooperative support centres at local level under DTI auspices need to be explored for nurturing, coaching and assisting in finding markets so that capacity is expanded for cooperatives, particularly in rural settlements. An aggressive approach is required in building this arm of economic activity for our people.

In this regard we must call for the SACP to revive Dora Tamana cooperative centre (DTCC) and mobilize resources for its capacity so that it becomes a driver on this campaign. We must also revive National Cooperative Association of South Africa (NCASA) as a coordinator of cooperative movement in the country.

National Youth Development Agency (NYDA) must also be mobilized to be an active player in this regard in ensuring that young people are assisted in terms of start up capital for cooperatives. This should be a key program for the NYDA and less in business finance and such initiatives that tainted Umsobomvu youth fund.

4. Fighting crime.

The issue of crime is derivative from such factors as unemployment and lack of skills which excludes in particular young people from economic participation such that the only option is to hustle for a living. Whilst seeking to address these systemic issues but we need to focus on immediate crime combating particularly violent crime.

It is lamentable that Community Policing Forums (CPF's) seem to be weak and in some areas collapsed. Again we will have to look at the issue of practicality and how we can sustain the call by the ANC President of the formation of street committees that will safeguard committees and (for us) also look at various issues of immediate communities along the lines of Cuban community in defence of the revolution (CDR's).

The key question is what becomes of the YCL role in reviving these civil society type structures and their integration with SACP program of "Knowing your neighbourhood campaign" (KYNC). And as for the SACP and YCL, it links directly with one important pillar of our sites of power – the communists influence in the community.

Police stations in townships are ill equipped than those in the leafy suburban settlements. Even the response capacity is hugely disproportionate and this represent a serious problem. The fact of the matter is that crime in township is more rife than the suburbs where security electric gates and huge walls cordon households.

5. Education

We are still sitting with conspicuous under resourced schools in black communities and on the other hand, highly resourced schools in white, coloured and Indian communities. This has an impact in the kind of product teachers produce in a schools. A school with Laboratory and with Learners exposed to Laboratory experiments is different in quality than the one that theorises experimental reactions. The science pass rate is likely to be lower in those under resourced schools than the resourced.

This therefore sustains the reproduction of school dropout or poor Matric results that does not permit University entry in the black youth; but also it reinforces the race base skills and therefore the drivers of our economy which are by no means black Africans. Under normal circumstances, such a pattern in the economy, given years after 1994 would have never been expected in 2010.

Related to the above is need to expand Dinaledi schools which focuses on producing good mathematics and science results. Focussed resources to ever expand such schools in poor communities cannot be emphasized. This must be coupled with a No fee school expansion, which for us, must graduate to free education even at this level.

Our campaign against shebeens in vicinity to schools remains relevant. Seminal work that need to be taken forward such as engagement with Liquor boards under the auspices of provincial Departments of Economic developments so as to amend liquor Act to give effect to these demands; and such issues as the definition of a Learner who must not be allowed to enter a shebeen or tavern and other related issues. The campaign against drugs and therefore violence in schools including the issue of teachers sleeping with Learners are all YCL issues to fight against. In circumstances where these social ills plays themselves in our schools, we must pose a question that what therefore becomes of the Young Communist League branch operating within the area where such a school exist.

As part of developing the rural side of our population, could it be impossible for the extension of University and FET satellite branches in strategic rural areas so that studying occurs there with no need of relocation to cities?

Know your Neighbourhood Campaign (KYNC).

It is important that the YCL does not let this program slip. The YCL where it organizes must have their hands on the deck. They must be the pulse of the communities; that they must strive to know how many deserving old age pensioners, the children and disable; the poverty stricken families that sleep without food. They must be the first to rid the communities of criminals; drug merchants.

Linked to the KYNC is the integration of the Community Development Workers (CDW's) who are foot soldiers of development facilitating it in the community and serving as links with government institutions in all three spheres, particularly local government. Again we

will need to find integration of Community Healthcare Workers (CHW) whose tasks is to look after those who are ill particularly having HIV/Aids. These are health activists deployed in communities to perform these tasks. The YCL must find creative ways from the point of view of Know Your Neighbour Programme which should be a permanent feature of the branches and Districts programs.

These government activists (CDW's and CHW's) will complement the Leagues work and relevant statistics to work on in the community where the structure exists. Issues of health and development would be a well articulated program.

6. Crass materialism.

Again the culture of conspicuous materialism in South Africa has deepened such that it is accepted as a norm to wield wealth and hoist it high for all and sundry to observe the new acquired status. The emerging, mostly young by age, wealthier black Africans do not see their acquired wealth as should mean ploughing back or contributing to the fellow poor. But to them it is a status to be dangled and showed off. For them those who are poor, are so because they are lazy. And indeed they must be condemned as such.

So the wheeling through expensive powerful cars (though not entirely wrong), throwing of expensive parties with half naked women as a show of power and dressing up with expensive designer outfits becomes a priority. This tendency is underpinned by neo liberal offensive that has overtime targeted young people to be standard bearers of a new culture that pays less emphasis on collective society but individuals and their cooption to international commercial brands and products. It is a cultural tendency (Social Darwinism) that runs counter to our long term ideal of building a collective society that is in one, organized in such a fashion under the leadership of the proletariat.

This group of conspicuous-display of wealth are youth. Whilst they are not at the core of capitalist relations in terms of the real ruling class stranglehold (monopoly capital), but they have been seduced and co-opted in the fringes of capital and they represent an opposition to any form of fighting to abolish capitalism. they are in the front line defence of capital by virtue of minimum wealth they hold.

We need, as COSATU has been vocal, to expose and sally this worshipped new phenomenon underway in our sight. The YCL must discourage young people from seeing these actors as role models in our society.

7. Conclusion

For us as communists, the question of social transformation cannot be seen outside of the implementation of an important site of power – the hegemony in communities so that they ultimately live out of our image. Social issues at a community level are very important to an

organization of class. They present an opportunity to demonstrate failures of the current system and therefore propagates alternative options to a system.

The issue of youth and an employment requires our determined efforts in engaging government and the private sector so that a social pact that commits, in measurable terms, the creation of youth jobs (not a wage subsidy two tier system as proposed) is reached. NYDA will have to earn its stripes in this regard, small scale businesses and more cooperatives will have to be piloted not in ad hoc fashion but very structural in both urban and rural youth where they are, so that more cushioning is achieved. This, in the long run, will address issues of crime and other *lumpen* activities.

The Young Communist League must be the drivers of social transformation because we are indeed not leaders of tomorrow held in reserve for future unleashing but are leaders of the current conjuncture bestowed by history to unleash our full potential in the now.

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1. StatisticSA (Quarterly labour Survey) 27/07/10.
 2. Child Headed households , Zamani Maqoko and Yolanda Dreya (University of Pretoria).
 3. Jobs for Youth Summit , speech by Ibrahim Patel, Minister of Economic Development.