

Socialism at the Forefront of South Africa's New Political Party

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Global Research, December 20, 2018

[City Press](#) 14 December 2018

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [Politics](#)

*A socialist South Africa led by the working class – this is the vision of the of the newly registered political party, the **Socialist Revolutionary Workers' Party (SRWP)**.*

At the party's two-day long pre-launch conference, which began on Friday at the Birchwood Hotel in Boksburg, over a thousand delegates from different parts of the country congregated to discuss, among other things, what it means to promote socialism in South Africa.

According to SRWP acting spokesperson Phakamile Hlubi-Majola, this was the party's first national gathering since a decision was taken to establish the organisation.

"This conference is an opportunity for us to get a sense of where we are in terms of the work that we have done over the last year. We will also speak about our values and general socialist principles of fighting for a society where land is owned by the working class, where the wealth is shared among us and where the mineral wealth of the country is owned by the people," she said.

At a special national congress held by the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (Numsa) in 2013, the organisation made the decision to start a political party that put the needs of the marginalised and most affected by issues like poverty and unemployment, first.

SWRP national convener, Irvin Jim, explained: "In 2013 the central committee of Numsa resolved that we must convene a special national congress to reflect on the fact that the country was on a downward spiral, but only the working class is affected," he said.

"Workers then decided that the working class must organise itself by forming a worker's party and, we were very clear at the time, that workers must also present a united front to champion their struggles. That is how the party came about."

Hlubi-Majola, who is also Numsa's spokesperson, added, "we had realised that the political system had failed the working class. It was then decided that Numsa would do the work to give birth to a worker's party whose focus would be to drive the agenda for the working class in South Africa and fight capitalism."

According to Jim, the pre-launch conference would see the party make decisions as a build-up to the formal launch, which will take place early next year. Jim, who is also Numsa's secretary-general, said that he was happy with the party's progress since Numsa's decision.

“The party is growing fast and has a presence in all nine provinces. We have a sizeable number of national leadership and branches all over the country,” he said.

Jim said that the “party is registered and we are eligible to participate in the elections next year.” However, he wasn’t able to say if the party will contest the elections.

“As communists we have an old view that elections are not necessarily a solution, however, they are a tactic that can be explored to test if we have the support of the working class.”

Earlier this year, the IEC rejected the party’s application to register due to issues relating to its name and logo. But in November the SRWP’s registration was finally approved.

According to Jim, the party is made up of some member’s of SA Federation of Trade Unions, members of the young nurse’s indaba trade union and members of the working class, who have come from other political parties.

Milo Semenya (48), a teacher in Klerksdorp and member of the SRWP, said that he was tired of a government that had not done enough for educators.

“I was a member of the SA Communist Party since 1990, but now I am a member of the SRWP. As educators we experience things like bullying from students, we lack resources and infrastructure. This is because the government is doing nothing to protect us or supply [us with] what we need,” he said.

“SRWP is my hope now. It represents us, the workers, those who work the hardest. I believe they will bring change.”

Earlier this week, former SABC chief operating officer, Hlaudi Motsoaneng, launched his own political party, the African Content Movement (ACM), which he said would contest Cyril Ramaphosa’s presidency during the national elections next year.

Featured image: SRWP members hold up the party banner at the pre-launch. Picture: Palesa Dlamini

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