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Workers' Solidarity Federation

Unemployment

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Unemployment is always a direct effect of living under capitalism, it is used by the bosses to depress wages “there are plenty of people out there who work for less money than you” is a common threat as is “behave yourselves or I’ll close down” as we saw above, the chaotic nature of capitalism also leads to regular crises and attacks on workers which cause massive unemployment. This is especially true of South Africa where the crisis of the racist capitalist system has caused massive job losses. Elsewhere in Africa, the economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, which was caused by recession in the imperialist world capitalist system and by the mismanagement of the economy by the ruling class, has led to ESAPs and job losses.

Unemployment will not be stopped while the capitalist system exists but there are immediate demands that can be put forward. Any workplace threatened with closure should be occupied. The workers should demand continued employment whether it be under a new owner or by nationalisation. We believe it makes little difference because, for us, nationalisation is not a cure-all. It is no guarantee of better wages or job security and it does not bring us any nearer to socialism. There is no essential difference between a boss who is a civil servant and one who is a private employer. However, we oppose all privatisation that leads to job losses, worse working conditions or less services for the mass of the people. We also call for a shorter working week, an end to systematic overtime and double jobbing and an end to all productivity deals. Basic wages should be high enough so that workers do not need to work excess hours.

We believe that the unemployed should accept no responsibility for the situation. Unemployment payments should be increased substantially. Where possible, the unemployed should organise themselves to defend their rights and link up with the broader trade union movement. We think that the employed and the unemployed have basically the same interests, and these are to resist the ruling class which oppresses them.