

On 14 February, activists of the Workers & Socialist Party gathered in Johannesburg for a bosberaad (national meeting) to discuss the future of the party. The meeting took the historic decision to begin a new phase in the life of the party: WASP will be built as a revolutionary party the better to continue the struggle for a socialist society. This requires bringing WASP's structures into alignment with its revolutionary political programme by building the party upon the principles of genuine democratic centralism. Further, WASP will seek affiliation to the Committee for a Workers International (CWI – www.socialistworld.net) to assist the struggle for the creation of a global revolutionary party. This process will begin immediately and culminate in a re-founding Congress at the end of the year.

What has WASP achieved?

In WASP's short life it has achieved a great deal. The strikes around the Marikana massacre found their political expression in the creation of WASP. Many strike committee leaders were the founders and first members, including the National Strike Committee which affiliated to WASP in March 2013. At the height of the strikes the National Strike Committee represented 150,000 mineworkers. Mineworkers from North West, Gauteng, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga and Limpopo attended WASP's launch on 21 March 2013.

WASP has led mass protests of the street traders in Johannesburg and communities in Limpopo. We have won important affiliates and members, including the radical NTM transport union and Moses Mayekiso, the first general secretary of NUMSA. WASP has given birth to a youth-wing – the Socialist Youth Movement – which is now a powerful force on the campuses. Above all, WASP showed how serious it was by standing in the 2014 elections.

Why was WASP founded?

We founded WASP to help the working class take a step toward creating a mass workers party. Over the last two years, WASP's existence has sharpened the debates within the working class and acted as a sign-post for such a party. To try and unite as many as possible WASP was founded as a federal party. In other words, organisations that affiliated could keep their own identity. The political basis for uniting in WASP would be agreement with the ideas that: (1) WASP was a workers party, (2) it was socialist, and (3) it was based on the struggles of the working class. WASP would be a 'broad church' as long as there was agreement on these basic

ideas.

But the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM) – the co-founders of WASP alongside the mineworkers – never saw WASP as an end in itself. The DSM believes that the living standards of the majority will only be improved by the working class leading a revolution to end capitalism and create a socialist society. For that the working class needs a mass **revolutionary** party based on Marxism and a disciplined party cadre.

However, the majority of the working class do not yet recognise the need for such a party or have a clear idea about the tasks the socialist revolution poses. Therefore the DSM has argued for the creation of a broad mass **workers** party. Such a party could unite the struggles of the working class – united struggle is the greatest teacher – and allow debates about the society the working class needs and the programme, tactics and strategy to create it. Such debates would raise the working classes' understanding of socialism and Marxism allowing a mass workers party to lay the basis for a mass revolutionary party in the future.

How has the situation changed in two years?

When WASP was created we were alone. But now the EFF and NUMSA, two very different mass organisations, partially fill the anti-ANC landscape. Also, AMCU is a new mass force on the mines with a leadership hostile to WASP. The class struggle never goes forward in a simple way. In one sense, the emergence of the EFF, AMCU, and especially the break of NUMSA from the ANC, and the launching of its United Front, represents a step forward for the working class – the old support for the ANC is gone amongst key sections of the working class and youth and there is a striving for an alternative. But none of these post-Marikana organisations yet answers what the working class really needs. Rather, they are the first experiments.

There are many dead-end roads that we must help the working class to avoid. In the EFF there are the false ideas of the ex-ANC Youth League leadership, such as their partial-nationalisation policy. There are also more explicit anti-working class black nationalist and Pan-Africanist ideas in the EFF. In NUMSA, even though the leadership has decisively broken with the SA Communist Party, sections are still influenced by Stalinist stages 'theories' like the National Democratic Revolution and the middle class and academic left are making anti-party, anti-Marxist, and even anti-socialist arguments in the United Front. The AMCU leadership teaches the mineworkers the wrong lesson from Marikana - that trade unions should not be political. To assist the working class to continue moving toward socialism we must help them

make sense of the new landscape by engaging in this battle of ideas whilst remaining at the forefront of working class struggle.

Forward to the socialist revolution!

To wage this battle of ideas effectively WASP cannot be a 'broad church' too. WASP needs to be a party with a clear political identity. That identity must be based on an explicit revolutionary Marxist political programme that fearlessly points the working class in the direction of the socialist revolution. The vehicle for such a programme can only be a disciplined revolutionary party. Such a step will put WASP's mass work on stronger foundations and allow us to intervene in the present political confusion. We would light the road to socialism by assisting the working class to establish its political independence and coalesce around clear socialist ideas. To assist this we must continue to champion the creation of a mass workers party out of the excellent working class material that has been politically awakened in the dramatic developments of the past two years.

The decisions taken at WASP's bosberaad will allow us to be an effective tool in the battle of ideas and continue at the forefront of the struggles of the working class. We were the first to face-up to the changed political situation post-Marikana and were the first to act upon those changes in launching WASP as a broad party. Now we are again recognising changes in the political situation that necessitate a change in the character of the party. Uniting the forces organised in WASP on new revolutionary foundations – a unity made possible by two years of collaboration in WASP – will see the creation of the most significant revolutionary party in South Africa and the region.