

# A letter from South Africa

23 March 1999

Dear WSWS,

The article on Ghana by Simon Wheelan ["Observations of Ghana: A cruel juxtaposition of wealth and poverty"] dated March 4 is very interesting. You find the same situation here in South Africa. Black townships are that of absolute squalor and filth. Schools have no windows and the sewerage system is leaking everywhere. People are crowded in very small areas, the result is gangs organised along political affiliations for space. Change a few town names like Johannesburg, Sandton, Alexandra, Soweto, Tambo Camp, etc., and the article describes South Africa to the T with taxis, hawkers and beggars.

Policies of the ANC government on education and jobs have made conditions worse. Under Mandela the old system of race has been replaced with that of class to determine the quality of education children will receive. As a cost cutting measure they introduced "a pupil can fail only once" policy. If the child has problems in primary school, the child could be only held back for only one grade for his school life. The net result of this policy is that the former black schools had a very low pass rate in Matric last year (about 20 percent).

The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), whose former president Cyril Ramaphosa is now a major businessman, decided several months ago to solve the employment problem by having workers contribute one day's wages. The fund is to be administered by Mandela's main fans--Desmond Tutu, Albertina Sisulu, Rabbi Harris and a number of others. The workers are aware of the fraud, nepotism and corruption amongst the new elite and objected to this measure. With big fanfare Mandela tried to neutralise the workers by being the first to contribute to this fund. Workers then demanded from COSATU that they should demand from the bosses that they also contribute one day's profits for labour intensive job creation. The captains of industry refused because

according to them they are overburdened with high taxes. Workers are unhappy about this.

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South Africa



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