

EDITOR'S NOTE / NOTE DE LA RÉDACTRICE

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This issue of the journal looks at several aspects of labour in South Africa. The series was prompted by the significant events at Marikana, in the North West province of South Africa on August 16th, 2012 in which police fired on a group of among the 24,000 striking platinum mineworkers killing 34, a further 10, including several policemen and security guards were also killed, and many others were injured. The significance of the events is explored in the book published only months later by Peter Alexander and his research team, in which they reconstruct events based on direct interviews with workers and community - *Marikana: A View from the Mountain and a Case to Answer* (Jacana Media 2012). The authors begin by noting the sheer scope of events as those killed represent the largest number of civilians killed in South Africa by security forces since the end of apartheid. Elsewhere Paul Botes explores other elements of their significance in a narrative and photographic project documenting the lives of victims and their families. He notes that Marikana changed families and communities across South Africa, from the mines to the rural areas through family ties on which miners continue to rely, and underlines the need to understand what happens after Marikana: 'to the families... to ourselves and to our democracy'. He explains why it resonated so deeply throughout the country: 'What happened at Marikana was a deep echo from our apartheid past. It was unrestrained and brutal. It was also state-administered' (Paul Botes and Niren Tolsi, *Marikana: One Year After the Massacre*, launched in the *Mail & Guardian*, August 16, 2013).

The significance prompted the South African government to establish the Farlam Commission of Enquiry, known as the Marikana Commission. Initially mandated to report on all the reasons contributing to police firing on striking workers, it has now been criticised for taking too long to report but more significantly for reducing its mandate to enquire only into the most direct reasons, abandoning the commitment to include deeper structural issues, especially the government's role in perpetuating the migrant labour system, inadequate wages and ongoing problems with housing, healthcare and education (*Mail & Guardian*, May 30, 2014).

The depth of the problem re-emerged in the lengthy and costly platinum miners' strike in January 2014. At the time of going to press, the strike was already 5 months old and blamed for the country's national economic contraction in the first quarter of 2014 (*Fin24*, May 28, 2014). This ongoing struggle over wages and working conditions brought platinum workers to the Marikana mountain in 2012, and keep them there in 2014, yet the violent response and the failure to address deep structural issues clearly continue to fuel labour unrest. This goes beyond platinum and other mining sectors as strikes loom in construction, among metalworkers and others. Labour dissatisfaction is echoed in their communities with ongoing protests over failed service delivery as workers and their families are increasingly protesting the lack of real transformation, promised with the end of apartheid. It is not surprising then that the ANC government received a reduced majority in the May 2014 elections, both within Parliament but especially within provincial legislatures.

The articles in this issue look at varying aspects pertinent to a broader understanding of labour struggles in South Africa. Using Marikana as a starting point, Pillay brings a broad perspective of tensions within the South African labour movement by looking at conflicts within COSATU and the Tripartite Alliance. Stewart looks at the roots of the conflict in his detailed analysis of the struggle over productivity and work effort in a platinum mine with the focus on the rock drill operator committee. Tshoedi engages in a gendered analysis of workplace struggles in the mobilization of women workers. Finally, Amoako looks at teachers' unions and public sector strikes. The theme continues with two reviews of South African books, one by Webster and the other by Hermanus.

In addition, we are fortunate this time to have a good collection of books being reviewed, beginning with Rutherford's review article of three important books on Zimbabwe, and a variety of other good quality reviews. Please note, that we also include a list of books available for review. I encourage you to communicate with us if you are interested in reviewing any of these. A more complete list is available on our webpage: www.lcs-tcs.com

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