



Socialist Bulletin

A Monthly Publication from Socialist Labour

EMAIL: SOCIALISTLABOUR.NG@GMAIL.COM

TWITTER @SOCIALISTLABNG

FACEBOOK @SOCIALISTLABOURNG

Briefing on the
Minimum Wage
Page 2

Armed Self-De-
fence Is The First
Step
Page 3

International Capital
and the Local
Economy
Page 5

Summary of
workers strikes
Page 9

THE PLATEAU MASSACRE - A DISMAL SIGN OF OUR TIMES

The sickening death of around 200 people in the villages of Plateau State is an awful sign of our times. Desperation stalks the land, the people are frantic for any way out of the terrible lives they live, mired in poverty, inequality and corruption. Our trade union leaders have failed to provide clear leadership. Their response to the historically huge increase in the price of petrol was slow and indecisive. As a result, many people are searching for alternative routes out of their suffering. We have to organise better to provide a clear collective response.

We have a regional problem that breaks out with unique aspects. Across the Sahel military coups have ramped up a military response to Islamic insurgency and thrown out the French troops. Without addressing the social problems that lead to increased insecurity, the suffering of the common people is only increasing. It is this that leads to the horrifying eruptions of violence. Nigeria foreign policy of withholding electricity from Niger has not helped matters. It is disappointing that the Nigerian ruling class which was ready to lead ECOWAS forces against Niger cannot protect the peoples of Plateau State and the Middle Belt.

Our problem is that the NLC and other trade union leaders are not using our key weapon, strikes, often enough and then they call them off far too early. So around a dozen states owe wages and pensions and/or have not fully implemented the minimum wage - but action was only taken in Imo State.

A general strike was suspended on the promise of N35k for Federal workers. No action was taken when this was only paid for one month. No action was taken when workers were not paid before the Christmas holiday. Action has yet to be taken over the failure to pay lecturers for at least four weeks of their 2022 strike.

We need a strategy for us to begin to win the class war. We are currently loosing. In 1998 the minimum wage could buy 280 litres of petrol, now it will buy less than 50 litres. Over the same period the GDP grew significantly, as a result the rich are fantastically richer than they were 25 years ago.

Rosa Luxemburg said that the future is either socialism (a fundamentally fairer society) or the barbarism that we now have - shown by the massacres in Gaza and Plateau (and in so many other places across the world).

If we can build Socialist Labour, we can begin to build an alternative trade union strategy that is based around winning strikes - class war trade unionism rather than class collaboration. This can provide hope and provide immediate economic gains for workers and their families. It is only this approach of dealing with the underlying causes that can reverse the descent into insecurity and violence in Plateau State and other places.

Visit: socialistlabour.com.ng

BRIEFING ON THE MINIMUM WAGE

We all know that trade union members are poorer now than they were 5, 10 or 20 years ago. And yet the corrupt elite have never been richer – as demonstrated, for example, by the monetisation of the APC and PDP presidential primaries.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), food prices are now more than 20 times higher than in 1998. To be able to afford the same amount of food as in 1998, and to take into account the increase in the wealth in the country the minimum should now be at least N250,000 a month.

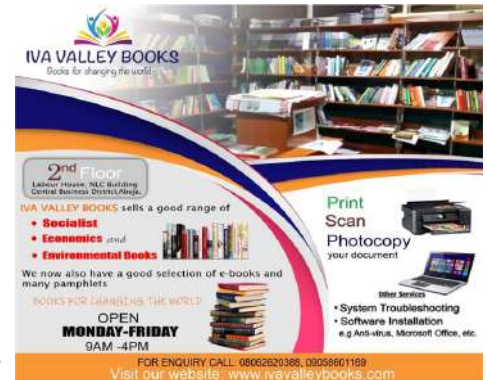
The cost of transport has at least doubled in the last six months. As a result, many civil servants in Abuja, for example, are now only going to work three days a week.

President Tinubu has completely accepted the free market neoliberal policies of the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organisation. During his swearing in ceremony Tinubu announced that fuel subsidy was at an end and he later abolished the official exchange rate. As a result, costs have massively increased.

How can workers afford to buy or cook food for their families if the minimum wage is only increased every five years or more according to the existing law?

We need to increase the minimum wage to N250,000 and move to annual increases at least as high as inflation. A detailed briefing is available for free download from:

<https://ivavalleybooks.com/2024/01/02/briefing-on-the-minimum-wage/>



WHY ARE GENERAL STRIKES SUSPENDED? - Alex Batubo

Around a dozen states owe wages and pensions and/or have not fully implemented the minimum wage - but action has, so far, only taken in Imo State. A general strike was suspended on the promise of N35k for Federal workers. No action was taken when this was only paid for one month. No action was taken when workers were not paid before the Christmas holiday. Action has yet to be organised over the failure to pay the striking education workers for their 2022 strike.

Rosa Luxemburg said that the future would be either socialism (a fundamentally fairer society) or the barbarism that we have now - shown by the massacres in Gaza and Plateau (and in so many other places across the world).

The price of petrol has increased nearly as much in the last six months as during the whole period of Obasanjo's eight year reign. In May last year, the pump price of petrol was below N190/litre, but it jumped to over N600/litre a few weeks after Tinubu became president. We then saw the following general strikes suspended early:

- 6 June – NLC and TUC suspend the strike due for next day after NEC meeting.
- 1 August – rallies held in all state capitals. NLC met with Tinubu.
- 2 August – rally in Abuja. Planned week long strike suspended after talks with the government.
- 5 September – two day warning strike called and held. The major demand was that the Government should take steps "to address the excruciating mass suffering and impoverishment being experienced around the country."
- 15th November – indefinite general strike by NLC and TUC suspended after two days. Federal Government through National Security Advisor apologies for the attack on the NLC President, Joe Ajaero. Strike suspended as it was still being built late on the second day.

We need a well organised general strike that is maintained until the following demands are met:

- A decent minimum wage for all with annual increments!
- Reversal of all hikes in university tuition fees!
- Reversal of recent fuel price increases back to the last regulated price!
- Payment of arrears of salary and pensions in relevant states!
- End, of "no work – no pay"; pay the ASUU strikers & others from last year!

#jointheresistance

ARMED SELF-DEFENCE IS THE FIRST STEP - Izielen Agbon

We need a collective village armed response (like the Joint Task Force (JTF) in Borno State) working alongside the military and the state government under state wide structures, like Ameotukun and Iwazengbe/Atanapka etc if necessary.



The attacks must stop, climate change, poverty etc or not. The middle belt workers and peasants must do all in their power to arm themselves at the village, local government and state levels. This should be independent of Federal, state or local governments and all state, or local government support.

The self-defence groups should start with the hunters and ex-service men (of which they have a lot) in their midst. No Nigerian State authority will defend or save the villagers. They should not have obeyed the call by the Federal Government and their political leaders to hand over their guns a few years ago. The killings have been going on for more than two decades. It is time for autonomous community self-defence.

THERE IS NO MILITARY SOLUTION TO INSECURITY - Mohamed Tahrir

Across the Sahel military juntas have increased the military response to insurgency and thrown out the French troops. But, without addressing the social problems that lead to increased insecurity, the suffering of the common people is only increasing.

<https://www.afriquesenlutte.org/afrique-de-l-ouest/burkina-faso/article/in-burkina-faso-s-blockaded-towns-war-crimes>

We have to admit that there is no military solution, neither across the Sahel nor in Plateau State. The armed services cannot and do not protect the common people - indeed their role is to protect the rich from the poor majority.

The only solution is an end to poverty, inequality and corruption. A decent minimum wage would be a good start and give hope. But this is at least a medium term solution and so appears uncaring and remote. But armed self-defence only leads to on-going communal violence and retaliatory raids, which form part of the problem in Plateau State.

We need community based peace initiatives, not further arming of the separate communities against what they perceive as being the "other".

The military have continued their air strikes despite the horrendous massacre of over 120 innocent civilians in Tudun Biri village, Kaduna State on the night of 3rd December. Barely two weeks later the Air Force bombed suspected bandits in Niger State after tracking them for hours. On Christmas Eve, the air force was out again bombing six local oil refining sites south of Port Harcourt.

During 2023 the military have claimed to have killed well over 6,000 'terrorists'. In reality many were probably innocent poor people caught up in events. Investigations by the PUNCH newspaper revealed that over 425 people including children and women were killed by Air Force bombing raids between September 2017 and 2023.

All six sub-regions in the country are facing security challenges. Boko Haram/ISWAP in the North-east, banditry crisis in the North-west, farmers-herders crisis in the North-central, IPOB in the South-east, oil bunkering and militancy in the South-south and kidnapping and armed robbery in the South-west. This suggests the insecurity is due to the country-wide problems of poverty, inequality and corruption. These must be addressed before insecurity will be reduced.

HOW CAN WE MAKE THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT STRONGER?

We need all readers of this Socialist Bulletin to be more active in their local trade union branches. It is this well organised base that can re-invigorate the whole trade union movement, improve democracy and ensure that we start to win our demands.



We need to expand the number of public sector organisations where the trade unions are properly organised. This will give confidence to the private and informal sectors to build more effective trade unions.

We need to be able to make it easier for casual staff to join the trade union, especially where services like security are outsourced. Security guards should be able to join the same union as the staff in the building where they work.

We need to organise trade unions in organisations where they are banned, like Customs, Central Bank, EFCC IPCP etc. The list is now far too wide. Staff of many such organisations are organised in trade unions in other countries. Prison staff, for example, are members of a TUC member union in Britain.

We need to take action when full salaries are not paid on or before the 25th of each month. Even the Federal Government has allowed to let this slip. The NLC General Secretary said at the 2023 Harmattan School - "once any workers have not been paid for a month, then a strike should start automatically. This is a standing order"

We need to ensure that arrears of salary and pensions are not allowed to develop and are paid off as quickly as possible. All Governors have enough money to be able to pay these arrears in at most a few months.

We need to ensure that no-one is suspended as a result of a verification exercise until the case has been fully investigated. Any removals from payroll have to be agreed with the relevant trade union.

Basic state level trade union organisation needs to be improved by checking that the check-off dues are received accurately each month from all the relevant organisations.

If these basic steps are taken then the vitality of the whole trade union movement will be improved and we will all benefit. More details are available from the following pamphlet:

<https://ivavalleybooks.com/2024/01/03/unity-and-solidarity-how-we-can-win-strikes-2/>

VICTORY FOR PROTESTING UNICAL STUDENTS OVER FEES HIKE



The management of UniCal increased school fees at its emergency meeting on 1 December.

The students quickly reacted to the development by embarking on a massive protest that brought academic and other activities in the institution to a halt.

As a result, the Vice-Chancellor directed that the new fees be put on hold until further notice.

INTERNATIONAL CAPITAL AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY- Izielen Agbon



Nigerian capital is dependent on international capital (World Bank, IMF, WTO and national capital of western nations) for the management of class relations and the generation of surplus value from the working class (waged and unwaged) and the peasant class. Local capital acts as a mediator between international capital and the Nigerian labouring classes.

Nigerian capital has its own interests as it strives to take a larger share (than international capital) of the surplus value generated by labour. It has some degree of autonomy. However, it is faced with the military and financial powers of international capital and the resistance/struggles of Nigerian labour against its continuous domination. Its ability to impose the strategies/policies proposed by international capital often meets with resistance from workers.

The Nigerian working class and peasant class has the autonomous capacity to struggle for their class interests (often as classes in themselves and sometimes as classes for themselves). This autonomous capacity is dependent on the level of composition of the Nigerian labouring classes and their power relative to that of Nigerian and international capital.

The autonomous capacity of Nigerian capital (despite its class domination of the Nigerian society) to struggle for its class interests depends on its prevailing composition and its power relative to that of international capital and Nigerian labour. The relationships between international capital, Nigerian capital and the local working/peasant classes are fluid, dynamic relations of struggle.

Nigerian capital, with the help of international capital, attacks and decomposes the power of the Nigerian working/peasant classes by imposing inhuman neoliberal strategies/policies (SAP) that maximizes the appropriation of surplus value. What follows is a period of low intensity of struggles, reflecting the decomposition of the power of the Nigerian workers/peasant classes as a precondition for the recovery of Nigerian capital from crisis.

We are in such a period today. Nigerian capital is in crisis and with the help of international capital is striving to recover by decomposing the power of the labouring classes with the imposition of surplus value maximizing neoliberal policies.

Historically, what follows is the increased resistance of the working/peasant classes, high intensity and frequencies of struggles and their class recomposition during these struggles. We need to prepare to engage productively in this upcoming period.

NATIONALISTS AND THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES-Izielen Agbon

Nationalists want to develop the productive forces in Nigeria under capitalism and the dominance of the Nigerian capitalist class. Nigerian capital also wants to develop these productive forces. This is not historically possible today because the development of the productive forces in Nigeria will enable Nigerian capital to interfere in the access of International capital to the raw material/markets in other African nations.

Nigerian capital, with increasing productive forces, must expand, seek more raw materials for its factories, more markets etc in order to grow and generate more surplus value. Therefore, there is a low limit to the rise of the organic composition of Nigerian capital under globalization (understood as the imposition of work on workers and peasants on a global world level by international capital).

Socialists, on the other hand, want the development of the productive forces of the nation, under working class rule and domination, because poverty is a weapon of bourgeois class rule in African ex-colonies and its elimination is a precondition to the development of humanity. The development of the productive forces does not inherently mean the increased appropriation of surplus value or that it is only possible under capitalism. There are other more human ways of organizing society (than organizing society around the imposition of work and appropriation of surplus value under capitalism).

Socialists support the development of productive forces under existing bourgeois class dominance because it will also give the working class more power to struggle, more resources, a higher level of existence... even as it generates more surplus value for Nigerian capital. Furthermore, it will provide a higher level of development of productive forces to sustain the defence against the ferocious attacks from international capital that will follow the capture of state power and all attempts by the working/peasant classes to build a more human society.

Since socialism cannot be built in one nation, how will the society survival under the rule of the working class with global domination by international capital? I think the key questions should be:

What will the developed productive forces be used for? Generating surplus value as under capitalism or for the benefit of humanity to create a socialist society? How will the productive forces be developed? Is it possible to develop these productive forces under neocolonial Nigerian capital? Which class will control these productive forces? What are the concrete objective conditions facing Nigerian workers and peasants? Will the development of the productive forces benefit these classes, now and in the future?

Red Africa - reclaiming revolutionary black politics-by Kevin Ochieng Okoth A review by Tokunbo and Tahrir

Unfortunately the last sentence in the book is where we need to start from: "It is up to us to build a communism for our times from the ruins of Red Africa." (page 101). We need an approach that starts from the history of working class struggles, for example the general strike that came close to becoming a national insurrection in Nigeria in January 2012. It is this type of struggle of the organised working class that we need to learn from.



Surplus value is referred to as being extracted from the continent "due to the super-exploitation of Africa's labour" (page 101). If this is the case, why is capital leaving the continent? Why do the Nigerian corrupt elite take their loot to London or Dubai rather than investing in Nigeria?

The book emphasises the anti-imperialist struggle for self-determination, rather than the collective struggles of the African working class. It refers, for example, to "anti-colonial Marxists, too, grappled with the question of how to take democratic control of the continent's resource's while developing a 'counter-extractivist' practise" (page 101).

Okoth writes of a time when the ideas of classical Marxism: the idea that the self-emancipation of the working and oppressed classes was the task of the working classes themselves, were weak globally and as a result, to paraphrase Jack Woddis, there was the search for new theories (agents) of liberation outside of the working class. Thus, activists looked towards guerrilla warfare, military vanguardism etc.

During this same period, socialism was equated with economic development in line with Stalinist Russia's state capitalist project. Despite this, the working class actually played a prominent role in colonial and post-colonial struggles, albeit imbibing another Stalinist canard of lining up behind a progressive section of the African petty-bourgeoisie rather than developing and putting forward an independent programme for self-emancipation.

It was the working classes that put colonialism on notice. In Nigeria it was through the general strike of 1945 that lasted for 44 days. The anti-colonial struggles put left nationalists like Nkrumah, Modibo Keita, Lumumba or Ahmed Sekou Toure in power.

Whatever social progress Africa experienced in the post-colonial years, the organised working class were at the forefront of these struggles. This included the struggles against economic decline and the implementation of the various IMF / World Bank structural adjustment programmes.

It was the organised working classes that removed the stultifying one party states and sent many a kleptocratic authoritarians, like Mobutu, packing. It was the working class that smashed apartheid and placed Nelson Mandela firmly in power in South Africa.

However, the problem was the absence of an independent programme for power based on the self-emancipation of the working and oppressed people. This is what is also missing from Okoth's book.

Whilst, after a long hiatus, we should welcome the return of Marxist scholarship and perspectives to Africa, Okoth's work as represented in Red Africa is far away from the genuine understanding of Marxism that we need.

10 REASONS WHY STUDENT LOANS ARE A SCAM!

The Government's answer to escalating tuition fees in tertiary education institutions is its planned student loans. This pamphlet shows that this is a scam that will still withhold tertiary education from children of the poor masses.

"The students loan policy is based on a lie that Nigeria is too poor to fund public education, but this is not true. We have enough resources to fund public education if these resources are democratically-planned and managed instead of being stolen by the corrupt capitalist elite."

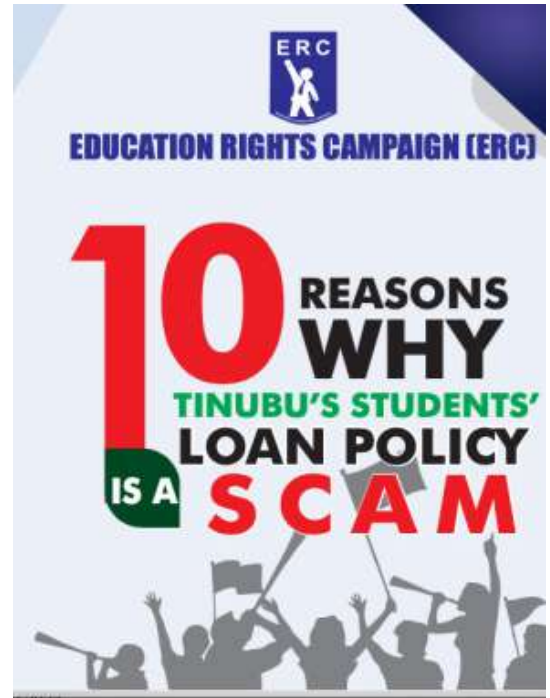
The pamphlet demolishes the student loan policy as follows:

- (1) It is a gimmick by government to evade its responsibility towards funding of public education
- (2) It is a smokescreen to take public education out of the reach of the poor
- (3) It will transform public education into a business and students into customers
- (4) It has not worked anywhere else
- (5) It will only cater for a minority of the students population
- (6) It will not resolve the problem of access even for the minority of students that are able to obtain it
- (7) It will subject beneficiaries to lifelong indebtedness
- (8) It will lead to mass drop out and decline in enrolment
- (9) It will lead to job loss for education workers
- (10) It is based on false assumptions that Nigeria is too poor to fund public education.

We need all students and their parents to read this pamphlet, understand the arguments and to join the campaign against the hikes in tuition fees.

The pamphlet is available for free download from:

<https://ivavalleybooks.com/2024/01/03/10-reasons-why-student-loans-are-a-scam/>



In the Dark in Nigeria - What poor electricity does to our minds-

Immaculata Abba

We all know the inconvenience that lack of electricity causes and we can only imagine the impact all the generators have on the environment and climate. Immaculata explores the impact the lack of electricity also has on our mental health.

"We just keep talking, talking, talking our way through the challenge, the depression, the trauma."

<https://popula.com/2023/07/29/in-the-dark-in-nigeria/>



#jointheresistance

STRUGGLE AGAINST ANTI-LABOUR LEGISLATION BY THE NLC – WHERE NOW OVER DE-REGISTRATION OF CUSTOMS AND IMMIGRATION UNION?

Abdulkadir Isa, Ag President of CEIMSU at dissolution



The Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) leadership has not done enough to ensure that all workers benefit from being able to join a trade union. This basic right needs to be extended across both the formal and informal sectors. Some new sectors have been able to organise recently, for example, Uber and similar taxi drivers. But even in the public sector, the NLC leadership seem to have accepted wide spread restrictions on trade union membership.

For example, the NLC has not campaigned consistently against Decree 25 of 1989 that de-registered the Customs and Excise & Immigration Staff Union (CEIMSU). Even though certain members of the de-registered Union maintained a struggle against the law up to the point when the Labour and Justice Ministries were involved in the request for recognizing CEIMSU as a trade union. Since this time, workers in these major public sector organisations have not been allowed to join any trade union.

The NLC was approached to take the issued further, but it did not show appropriate concern. Since the Central Working Committee of the NLC in 1990 where the de-registration was tabled, none of the Congress organs was drawn in to this struggle for basic trade union rights.

Attempts to be accorded observer status to the leaders of the de-registered body were never given the desired consideration. Worst of all, during the “40th Anniversary of the Statutory formation” of the NLC (1978 – 2018) the de-registered CEIMSU Union did not feature. Sadly enough, the then General Secretary, Peter Ozo-Eson, refused to receive a complaint for inclusion of the former Union activists in his office in January, 2019.

In this context, how can CEIMSU be exhumed and be given life? An injury to one has become an injury to all.

ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise is explicit. Article 2 states: “Workers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organisation concerned, to join organisations of their own choosing without previous authorisation.” The only exceptions are the operational staff of the police and the armed services.

Adams Oshiomole, then NLC President, received a COSATU delegation of trade unionists from South Africa, including members of the South African Policing Union (SAPU) - www.sapu.org.za This is a proof sufficient of the right to champion the quest for abrogating the aspects of the obnoxious Decree denying trade union rights to so many public sector workers.

The struggle for unionizing employees in certain government establishment is not limited to employees in the Customs, Immigration and other para-military bodies. It also includes the anti-corruption bodies EFCC & ICPC, Federal Road Safety etc. The Trade Union Act, 1973, (Section 11) denied the fundamental right to join a trade union to workers in the Customs Department, the Immigration Department, the Prison Services, the Nigeria Security Printing and Minting Company Limited, the Central Bank of Nigeria and Nigeria Telecommunications Limited (and every public body where the employees are authorised to bear arms).

It is an important component of the fight for genuine democracy and all democrats and socialists are thus challenged to take up support for this struggle. If major areas of the public sector deny basic trade union rights to their workers how can we extend these rights further across the formal and informal sectors?

WOMEN FOR A FAIRER AND MORE JUST WORLD

Across Africa we have witnessed women taking to the street to reclaim a fairer and more just world. In these protests and movements woman have often played a leading role. In interviews conducted by Rama Salla Dieng, young African feminists discuss how they are theorising their practice and philosophies.

<https://roape.net/2019/11/01/talking-back-african-feminism-in-dialogue/>

See also an interview with Rama Salla Dieng about her book "African Feminisms – a decolonial history":

<https://roape.net/2021/11/19/african-feminisms-a-decolonial-history-an-interview-with-rama-salla-dieng/>

Archive of writings by Nigerian feminist Bene Madunagu: <https://socialistlibraryandarchives.org/category/essays/author/bene-madunagu/>



Summary of Workers Strikes - December 2023

We need your assistance to ensure that this monthly report is comprehensive. Please submit details of any strikes in your state or community. All these strikes need our support and solidarity. We call on all trade union branches to send messages of support and to organise solidarity visits to any strikes in their localities.

The Colleges of Education Academic Staff Union (COEASU) directed its members to work only two days a week from 19th July. COEASU is demanding a 200 percent increase in the salary of its members.

The Judiciary Staff Union of Nigeria, JUSUN, in Osun State, declared indefinite strike action from 23 November. This was over the seizure of wardrobe allowances, suspension of their colleagues, and the Chief Judge's refusal to lift the embargo on worker's training. The strike continued until Christmas.

Members of NARD Enugu State University Teaching Hospital (ESUTH) chapter started a strike from December 1, 2023 over the refusal of the state to employ more doctors.

Socialist Labour-JOIN US

The economic, environmental and Covid-19 crises show that society is a conflict between two classes: the vast majority who create the wealth, and a tiny minority who profit from our work. Reform attempts have failed: the only solution is a truly democratic socialist society. The corrupt elite will only give up their power if forced to do so. We need a mass democratic movement to bring about socialism. Events, such as Russia in 1917, the January 2012 protests in Nigeria and the mass uprisings in Sudan and Algeria from 2019, begin to show what we need.

For more details of the basic ideas and policies of Socialist Labour see:

www.socialistlabour.com.ng/about-us/

Join the Socialist Labour supporters WhatsApp group by clicking this link:

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/KiOyN3OKGBllvtuh0ycDaU>

We would love to receive letters, comments or suggestions from our readers. We want to hear from you with suggestions for articles for our future editions or questions on any articles in this issue. Please contact us via WhatsApp of 0916 693 3998

We especially welcome news about protests and strikes in your community or town.

Socialist Labour Depends on its Supporters for Finances

Socialist Labour depends on its members and supporters for funds. We need more financial support so that we can be more active, expand and grow. If you are able to make a modest financial contribution that would be really helpful. We would also like all readers of this Bulletin to consider fully joining Socialist Labour by paying monthly subscriptions.

The standard rate is N1,000 a month, with a lower rate of N500 for students or unemployed and N5,000 for higher paid comrades. We can all afford something - every little helps.

Please make your contributions to the following bank account:

First Bank Nig. Ltd. Account No. 3158880328

Account Name: Aborisade Albert Femi

The account is only used for Socialist Labour purposes.

Please join Socialist Labour, by submitting the following details:

Name: _____ **Email:** _____ **WhatsApp number:** _____

State: _____

Workplace address/university/school: _____

Trade union: _____

Minimum suggested monthly subscription levels are:

Employed – N1,000

Well paid – N5,000

Unemployed/student – N500

EMAIL: socialistlabour.ng@gmail.com

TWITTER: @SocialistLabNg

FACEBOOK @socialistlabourng