

Marikana a political watershed in SA

ELAINE SWANEPOEL

THE Marikana massacre may have far worse political implications than the Sharpeville massacre, because the former had been carried out under a democratically elected government.

This was the message of the general secretary of the Democratic Socialist Movement, Weizmann Hamilton, at the launch of the Workers and Socialist Party (Wasp) yesterday.

"After the Marikana massacre the working class came to realise that the government supports a small minority of the capitalist class." He said workers had realised they were on their own and had no other option than to take back their class and political power.

"That is what Wasp will aim to do. Wasp will be a party that stands for genuine democratic socialism and the interests of the majority.

"The ANC can no longer claim to

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represent working class South Africans and workers are getting organised in opposition to the ANC to hammer that point home," Wasp spokesman Mametlwe Sebei said.

ANC spokesman Jackson Mthumbu disagreed and said the party had not been threatened by Wasp. "We wish them well and will meet them where it matters the most, in the hearts and minds of our people."

Wasp will also aim to unify all service delivery, student and workers' struggles to "form a mighty river of workers' class struggles to sweep away the capitalists" and strive for

the complete emancipation and freedom of the working class and the poor, Sebei said. "The vast amount of the country's money is in the hands of a small minority. It is time we take political power into our own hands."

Joe Higgins, an MP for the Socialist Party in Ireland, also attended the launch yesterday. "All over Europe there is a major crisis as far as parties representing the working classes are concerned, that is why I fully understand the need for, and support the construction of, a mass worker's party," Higgins said.

The new party supports the nationalisation of mines, banks and agriculture.

A party leader for Wasp has not been elected yet. "Wasp only has an interim committee at the moment but we will announce the date of the conference during which a party leader will be elected soon," Weizmann said.

Holomisa praises Marikana 'bravery'

RUSTENBURG – Mineworkers in Marikana had taken a brave step by fighting for better wages without their trade union, United Democratic Movement leader Bantu Holomisa said yesterday.

"It was brave of you to bypass the middleman, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), when you realised that it was no longer serving your best interests," he told around two thousand people at a Human Rights Day event near the Marikana koppie where 34 miners

were shot and killed on August 16 last year.

"It is encouraging to see that you continue to fight for your rights despite the challenges facing you," he said to applause.

He commended the NUM's rival, the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union, for its work during wage negotiations with platinum miner Lonmin.

He said only a few were benefiting from the country's mineral wealth.

"It seems that we were foolish to

think that after 1994 things would change.

"Instead we see a selected few, parachuted into the mining industry under the guise of black economic empowerment, who have absolutely no ownership and no control.

"The debate around the nationalisation of mines has been raging for some time and I bet that last word was not said at (the ANC policy conference in) Mangaung."

– Sapa.