Trade unions will raise living standards

AS SOMEONE who had protested against apartheid, I was interested on my recent visit to see how much had changed in post-apartheid South Africa. The Sowetan provided me with a bigger picture of conditions. While apartheid laws have been rightly consigned to the dustbin of history and there have been changes in the cities, particularly in public services, economic change appears to lag behind political change.

This is obvious in rural Afrikaans-speaking regions and in areas such as car ownership and the clientele of country lodges.

The days for outsiders involving themselves in your affairs ended with the ending of the old regime and the introduction of universal franchise.

But I would agree with your editorial on August 4 about an opposition.

A credible alternative government is healthy for the democratic process, if only to keep governments on their toes.

Fikile-Ntsikelelo Moya suggests that the DA is not regarded as such, but the trade union movement appears to be filling the vacuum and providing constructive criticism, particularly Cosatu-affiliated unions, which in their tripartite arrangements have played the role of a critical friend.

Their constructive role was acknowledged by Zizi Kodwa.

As a former council employee who has participated in industrial action, I see similar issues raised on Samwu's website as those I faced at work.

I see hope for South African trade unions. Collective bargaining offers a sustainable means of raising living standards and addressing economic divisions. Ultimately, economic issues will become more important than any racial divisions.

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