



## Editorial Comment

# ORGANISE OR STARVE!

The month of March is of great significance in the history of the labour movement and the entire oppressed and exploited masses of our country. It was in March 1854 when the stevedores in Cape Town put down tools protesting against slavery wages. Thus the first strike was recorded in South African history. The heroic working class of our land had discovered that wonderful weapon - the strike weapon.

March 5 this year marked the 27th anniversary of the foundation of the ever-resilient South African Congress of Trade Unions. From its formative days SACTU occupied its respective position in the Congress Alliance and lived to her declared objective of organising and leading the South African working class in the struggle against capitalist exploitation and national oppression. From the Congress of the People, the Anti-Pass Campaigns, the £1 a day demand, the potato boycotts and many other battles of the 'roaring fifties' and yesterday Matola, to the present day, SACTU has, together with other organisations, of the Congress Alliance, always been at the forefront of the people's struggles against apartheid tyranny for the establishment of people's power based on the aspirations of the people as enshrined in the Freedom Charter, thus writing exciting pages in the history of the fight of the African masses for economic and political emancipation. And internationally SACTU

has played an outstanding role in the campaign for the total isolation of the apartheid regime in the economic, political, diplomatic and cultural spheres. The importance of the role of SACTU in shaping the destiny of our country is indisputable and its history is, in both word and deed, a proud record of struggle.

The recent past has seen our country engulfed by a wave of workers struggles in a way unprecedented in the history of our struggle. The shootings of strikers, the killings in detention, mass arrests and numerous other repressive measures from the state on one hand and employers on the other have failed to cow our heroic working class. The pace-setting battles at Firestone, Ford, Sigma, Leyland and many other places throughout the length and breadth of our embattled motherland and the enormous growth in trade union membership indicate that our working class, the main driving force of our national liberation revolution is fast assuming its correct position in our battle formations. Today, however, as our working class stand poised for a new round of class and national battles, the tasks and challenges that confronted SACTU 27 years ago, as one of the resolutions adopted at the inaugural conference reads: "This conference affirms that its main task in the coming period is to initiate, stimulate and to undertake the organization of trade unions where none exist amongst South African workers and to strengthen trade unions which are in existence but require support" still remain valid and urgent as ever. The imperative upon all of us is to reach out to the unorganised workers in the mines, docks, railways, farms and in every factory floor and workshop.

In this Year of Unity in Action, a year designated by the National Executive Committee of our vanguard organisation, the African National Congress to be the year of the most powerful offensive our country has ever seen, let us, drawing ever increasing numbers, employ to the full and without fear the strike weapon and deliver crippling blows at the racist enemy. Added to our power is the striking ability of our army, Umkhonto We Sizwe which has pledged to see to it that our right to strike is defended. Action in unity and unity in action around all issues, be they of immediate or national interest is the surest and shortest way to victory and therefore a burning demand of our struggle. We have the basis. The strike by Ford workers in solidarity with the workers sacked at Fire-

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be implemented with haste because the boer-fascists fear the heights to which the Year of Unity in Action might elevate our struggle. In this connection the feverish doings of Pretoria, abetted by Washington are to be seen as an illusionary counter-strategy to the ANC's 1982 campaign at home and abroad.

The enemy anxiously works to defeat Unity in Action by attempting to split the ranks of the oppressed into pro-communist and anti-communist forces - a futile campaign since it is not new and has only yielded unmendable fissures within the boer top-brass in the past. Pretoria has a 'short memory! Since their enactment of the 'Suppression of Communism Act' of 1950 they have sought justification of their draconian act by dangling the anti-communist bogey without let-up. So, we are not surprised by the current fervour - after all we shall, as we have always done, know the vile schemes behind every new wave of enemy lamentation.

Our ranks will remain compact. We shall never be divided by slanders and distortions, no matter how concerted the campaign might be. The world revolutionary movement, comprising of the Socialist Community, the Working Class in the capitalist world and the Liberation Movement will continue to dog imperialism and reaction everywhere in the world. Our strength and support will continue to grow as we escalate our offensive and no force on earth can ever bog us down. We are at the hub of a just struggle for a better future for mankind.

**FORWARD TO VICTORY OVER REACTION!**

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stone has set us a precedent. Let us, combining our industrial actions with other community struggles raise our struggle to majestic heights by marching into the battlefield immediately ahead of us with the motto of SACTU: "AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL" as our battle-cry.

To unite and co-ordinate our actions the establishment of a single Trade Union Front for all progressive trade unions is vital. The Langa conference on Trade Union unity could not have been more timely. Let us in that spirit throw in all effort towards the revitalisation of our tested trade union vanguard, the South African Congress of Trade Unions. This is a task of utmost urgency for all the patriotic forces of our land.