

# FOSATU WORKER NEWS



## UITENHAGE STRIKES — VICTORY FOR A LIVING WAGE



The 3 week long Volkswagen strike and the wage settlement reached earlier this month mark a great break through for workers. The settlement marks the end of minimum wage negotiation and a hope for real collective bargaining in the future.

The Volkswagen strike started on Monday 16th June after the Uitenhage magistrate unwisely banned the report back meeting to have been held on 15th June. On the Monday the 3500 Volkswagen workers came out on strike followed on Tuesday by SKF workers. By Friday 20th the strike had affected about 12 factories and involved probably about 10 000 workers. By Wednesday 25th June nearly all workers had returned to work except Volkswagen.

Workers in other factories made similar wage demands in sympathy with the motor workers demand and widespread wage negotiations in Port Elizabeth/Uitenhage are continuing at present.

The Unions reached an agreement with the Companies that was accepted by workers. This gave a minimum of R1,45 per hour plus a service attendance allowance. There were also across the board increases for all workers and increases in the minimum reaching R1,60 in January 1981, R1,80 in July 1981 and R2,00 in January 1982.

These increases are the largest achieved by the Union but more important the companies accepted that a reasonable living wage must be paid. They also agreed that there would be an independent enquiry into what is a reasonable wage.

FOSATU has welcomed this as a great victory for all workers and a guide to future negotiations. FOSATU said that a reasonable wage:



VW Factory at Uitenhage

- must cover workers actual needs not the minimum required to keep him alive.
- must provide for a reasonable standard of living and not a continual struggle with poverty.
- must provide a secure income which means that a

- worker must also have job security; there should be training, service allowances, redundancy pay and benefits such as pension and medical schemes.
- must be more equitable compared to company profits.

## LEATHER WORKERS REGAIN CONTROL

For almost two decades the National Union of Leather Workers (NULW) dominated the administration of benefit funds established for leather workers in Pietermaritzburg. Recently however workers themselves have reclaimed control of the funds. Last month the NULW called a meeting to try and stem the tide of discontent against their administration. However, General Secretary Jordaan was refused a hear-

ing by angry workers. The meeting was first postponed for a week and then quietly dropped.

An encouraging development in the workers attack on the alleged corruption in the fund's administration has been the non-racial organisation of their effort.

The NULW bureaucracy have supposedly been investigating these allegations for

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## BMW — UAW negotiations continue

BMW (SA) is a German owned assembly plant in Pretoria. UAW started organising there in 1978 and had 56% membership by mid '79. However efforts to meet management failed. On the 28th January 1980, the company agreed to give the Union stop-order deductions for members of the Union Benefit Fund. This was to start in the first week of March 1980.

### FURTHER NEGOTIATION

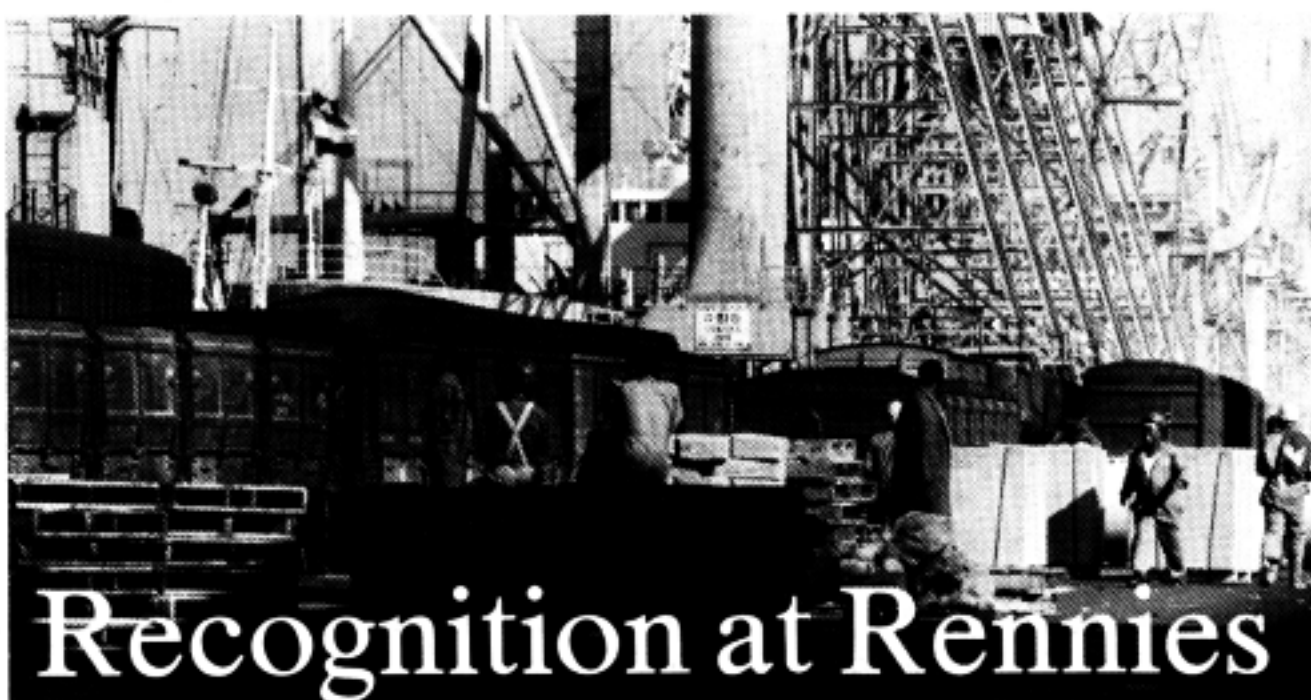
The Union was dissatisfied with the process of verifying requests for deductions. At a meeting between the union and management on the 24th April it was agreed that a union organiser would be present at such verification.

Progress has been achieved but workers remain wary of management's reaction to the union. Management stalled over a request for union officials to visit their own committee members on factory premises saying that the board of directors would not agree to this until the union was registered! In contrast to this was management's undertaking that no workers' position would be adversely affected by union membership or activities in lunch breaks or outside working hours.

Surprisingly the personnel manager has questioned the steering committee chairman about his involvement in union activities suggesting that since the chairman worked in the work-study department he should not be a union member as he is supposed to share ideas with management.

### THE IMMEDIATE TASKS AHEAD

The most important task is for the union to take over the company liaison committee. This has been changed by management to an employee council comprising 8 whites and 8 black workers with a rotating chairmanship. Management meets with this council only on its request. Recently the company has made concessions to workers through this council by raising overtime pay. The union has only 4 members on this council and so much organising has to be done before it succeeds in demands for full recognition.  
Nelson Rakau — UAW.



## Recognition at Rennies

July 1980 saw the Transport and General Workers Union reaching a 3 point agreement with Rennies Bulk Terminal in Durban.

. Union officials will have access to company premises during lunch hours.

. Union Shopstewards and officials will hold monthly meetings with the company.

. The company will deduct union dues by stop order.

The agreement comes as a break through for the Union. "We've spent five years organising stevedores at Durban harbour and we've got 148 members of the 170 wor-

kers at Rennies" comments Connie Khumalo. "What workers want is a harbour wide agreement" she says, "and we won't rest until we make it all the way."

In the entire history of the development of Durban's harbour, unskilled and semi-skilled workers have never had a union recognised by employers and certainly harbour work has not had its first day under a Union agreement. But the tide is clearly turning as the TGWU commences negotiations with several other companies serving the harbour.

### LEATHER UNION - (cont. from page 1)

over a year without reporting any findings to date. A worker spokesman says that they are calling for an open investigation into the fund. The fund has up until now been open to workers of all races and to both members and non-members of NULW. However, following the worker campaign the NULW Executive apparently changed the constitution of the fund. The changes make NULW the permanent administrators of the fund and make only NULW members eligible for membership.

However, workers strongly deny that these changes were ever discussed with them yet despite this the NULW Branch Secretary appears to have informed the registrar of the changes.

The dispute between the NULW and leather workers, both Indian and African, also comes as a bitter blow to TUCSA's mixed union policy. The NULW is a leading TUCSA affiliate and it appears that their attempts to quietly push African workers into the tail end of their union by means of employer stop orders and without discussion is now back firing badly.

The events are likely to increase the worker suspi-

cion about many TUCSA unions that in practice they are controlled by union bureaucrats and not workers. Leather workers in Pietermaritzburg have watched as the NULW have changed their tune from saying that unions for African workers are illegal to saying "join NULW now or loose your benefits."

Now workers are reclaiming control of the benefit fund into which they have all paid for many years and as we reported in the last edition they have also formed their own truly non-racial Tanning, Footwear and Allied Workers Union.

As one worker summed-up events "You can't fool all us workers all of the time".

### HOW DO YOU RATE AS A UNION MEMBER?

1. What is your union's full name?
2. When and where was your union started?
3. How long is your shop steward's period of office?
4. Where does your union bank its money?
5. Who was Clements Kadalie?

See page 4 for your rating.