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FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Fosatu salutes workers of the East Rand

THE LATEST centre of worker militancy is the East Rand where more than 10 strikes have taken place in the last two months.

The workers at Salcast, Hendler and Hendler (H and H), Bisonboard Coigate Langeberg, Kellogg's Plant protection, Reef Chemical and Telephone Manufacturers of SA (Temsu) all downed tools during July and August.

FOSATU unions have been operating in the area since 1976 and all these factories, except Temsa, are unionised.

The major issue for workers at these factories was the need for higher wages. At Salcast, H and H and Bisonboard, workers had received adjustments to their salaries but they said these were too low.

COST OF LIVING

The wage increase did not cover the rise in the cost of living, which hits lower paid workers hardest.

At Bisonboard, workers were given a COL adjustment of R3,23. As one worker put it: "How can that begin to cover the increases in rent, transport, food and fuel. Paraffin alone went up by 7 cents last month."

The problem highlighted by the strikes is not only that wage increases are lower in times of rising prices and high profits for the bosses. The problem is also the way these increases are given.

In the case of Salcast and H and H, both organised by the Metal and Allied Worker's Union (Mawu), the increases were negotiated at the industrial council.

FIXED WAGES

Mawu has rejected the industrial council in its present form (see page 2) but the bosses still insist on fixing wages there, forcing workers to strike.

At Bisonboard, wages are fixed by a government-appointed board, without reference to the workers. The bosses believe once these wages are set, there is no need for further negotiations and it can decide on wage increases as it likes.

At the Colgate factory striking workers adopted the slogan "No Nocker, no worker". They were demanding that Mr Nocker, managing director of Colgate Palmolive, listen to their grievances personally.

This demand came after weeks of frustrating delays in the implementation of Colgate's agreement to recognise the Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU). Shop floor grievances were not being heard because of this delay.

This strike showed the growing demand for negotiation and consultation.

NEW CHAPTER

The recent strikes have opened up a new chapter in the history of

worker organisation on the East Rand.

The growing strength and experience of FOSATU unions has been demonstrated by the ability of workers to take disciplined mass action both in striking and returning to work.

DISMISSED

A more equal bargaining situation is being created as a result of worker strength and because of

reduction of police and Labour Department harassment

Only last year workers from Rely Precision Castings in Boksburg were dismissed, arrested and beaten up after a dispute with their boss.

NO VICTIMISATION

But in the recent strikes:

All workers were taken back

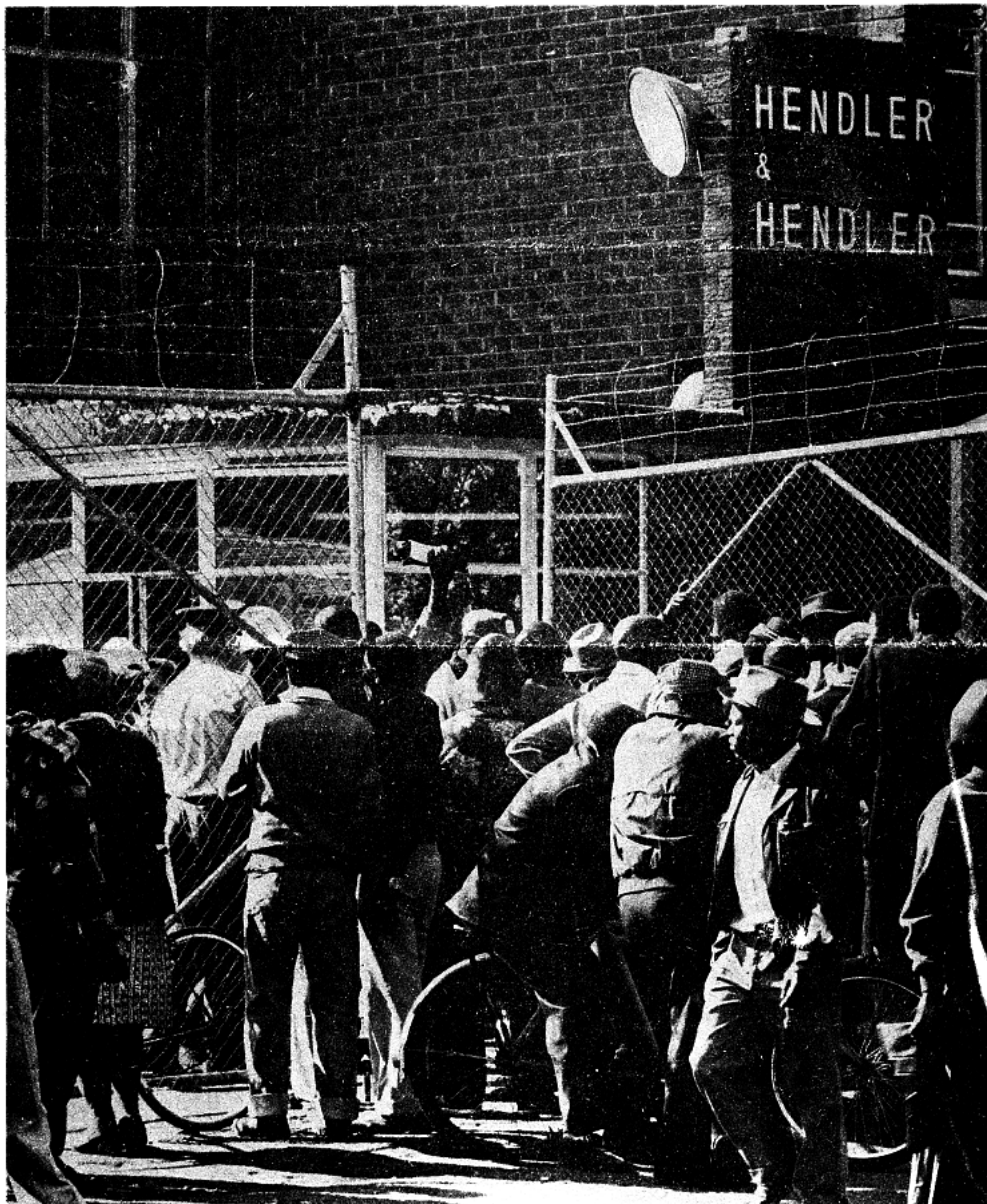
No victimisation took place;

The bosses were forced to

continue negotiations with the unions, and
The union stayed strong.

MAJOR ADVANCE

FOSATU salutes the workers of the East Rand. At a time when the most common response to strikes elsewhere in the country is still intimidation and selective re-employment, East Rand workers have major made major advance.



Workers gathering outside the gates at Hendler and Hendler, one of the more than ten factories hit by the recent strike wave on the East Rand.