

HIGH COURT GRANTS CONTRACT WORKERS PERMANENT RIGHTS

THE highest court in South Africa – the Appeal Court – has granted migrant workers who have worked for the same employer for more than 10 years permanent city rights.

This decision strikes a mighty blow against the hated influx control system.

With section 10 1 (b) rights, contract workers will now have the right to:

- look for work in the towns.
- if they find work they do not have to go back to the labour office to get registered.
- they can move from one area to the next as long as they have legal accommodation.
- they can live permanently in the city.
- they cannot be sent back to homelands if they become unemployed.

But in order to get these rights workers must go to their nearest pass office with a letter from their employers proving that they have been registered with the same company for 10 years or more.

FOSATU unions, particularly on the Reef where there are thousands of migrant workers who now qualify for 'city rights', have appealed to employers to assist their workers to get these rights.

Since the decision of the Appeal Court, the government has been threatening

to block it, but recently the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr Koomhof, announced that it would implement the Court judgement.

However, for the past few weeks the Administration Boards themselves have been blocking people getting their city rights.

On the East Rand, Administration Board officials have been telling workers that they can only take eight people a day.

And even then, the officials are only giving the workers a

number and telling them to come back next month for their Section 10 stamp.

Adding to fears that the government will only allow a very few of migrant workers to get their section 10 rights, Koomhof said as little as 5000 out of the 143000 might be given city rights.

But unions and civil rights organisations are gearing themselves up for a fight.

Black Sash said if city rights were not granted, it would set up a panel of lawyers and fight each case in court.

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THE MUCH SOUGHT AFTER SECTION 10 1(b) STAMP

POLICE MINISTER ORDERED TO PAY R500 TO FOSATU NATAL CHAIRMAN



JAMES NTSHINGILA

THE Minister of Law and Order has been ordered to pay R500 to FOSATU's Natal regional chairman, James Ntshingila for wrongfully imprisoning him.

Brother Ntshingila, who is also a senior shop steward at Progress Knitting, was arrested shortly before last year's strike at this Hammarsdale factory.

He was taken from the company premises by the police, as management said he was encouraging workers to strike.

However, workers only went on strike three days later, while he was still in jail.

In terms of the law, Brother Ntshingila should have been brought before a court within 48 hours.

But he only appeared in the Camperdown court on May 4 – four days after his arrest.

The charges against Brother Ntshingila were later dropped but assisted by National Union of Textile lawyers, he took the Minister of Law and Order to court for wrongful imprisonment.

Recently the court ordered that the Minister pay him R500 for damages.

TRANSPORT UNIONS SPEEDY EXPANSION INTO BUS COMPANIES

THE Transport and General Workers Union has made huge strides in organising bus companies in the Natal region.

It now stands on the verge of having all the major companies organised – more than 3000 bus workers have been organised out of a possible 4810.

The major expansion has been into the KwaZulu Transport Group and the union is now recognised at KwaZulu's Trans Mzimkulu Transport at Port Shepstone, at Sizanani Mazulu at Pietermaritzburg and at Ezakeni at Ladysmith.

SHORTLY

TGWU branch secretary, John Mawbey said the union would shortly be negotiating preliminary agreements with other companies within the Group which would make TGWU the majority union.

'This will put us in a position to negotiate a full recognition agreement covering all operating centres,' he said.

The union is also on the verge of having majority membership in at least two of Putco's Durban depots.

NOT EASY

However, organising bus companies has not been all plain sailing for TGWU. There have been a number of sharp conflicts with

management.

Last year at Sizanani MaZulu Transport the behaviour of the Engineering manager sparked off two strikes and in February the workers organised a petition demanding that he be removed.

TENSE TALKS

After a series of tense negotiations, management was finally forced to transfer him.

And earlier this month at Trans Mzimkulu, the workers staged a four hour stoppage in the three engineering workshops over the dismissal of a breakdown mechanic. He was later taken back.

But the sharpest conflict has been in Pietermaritzburg's Transport department.

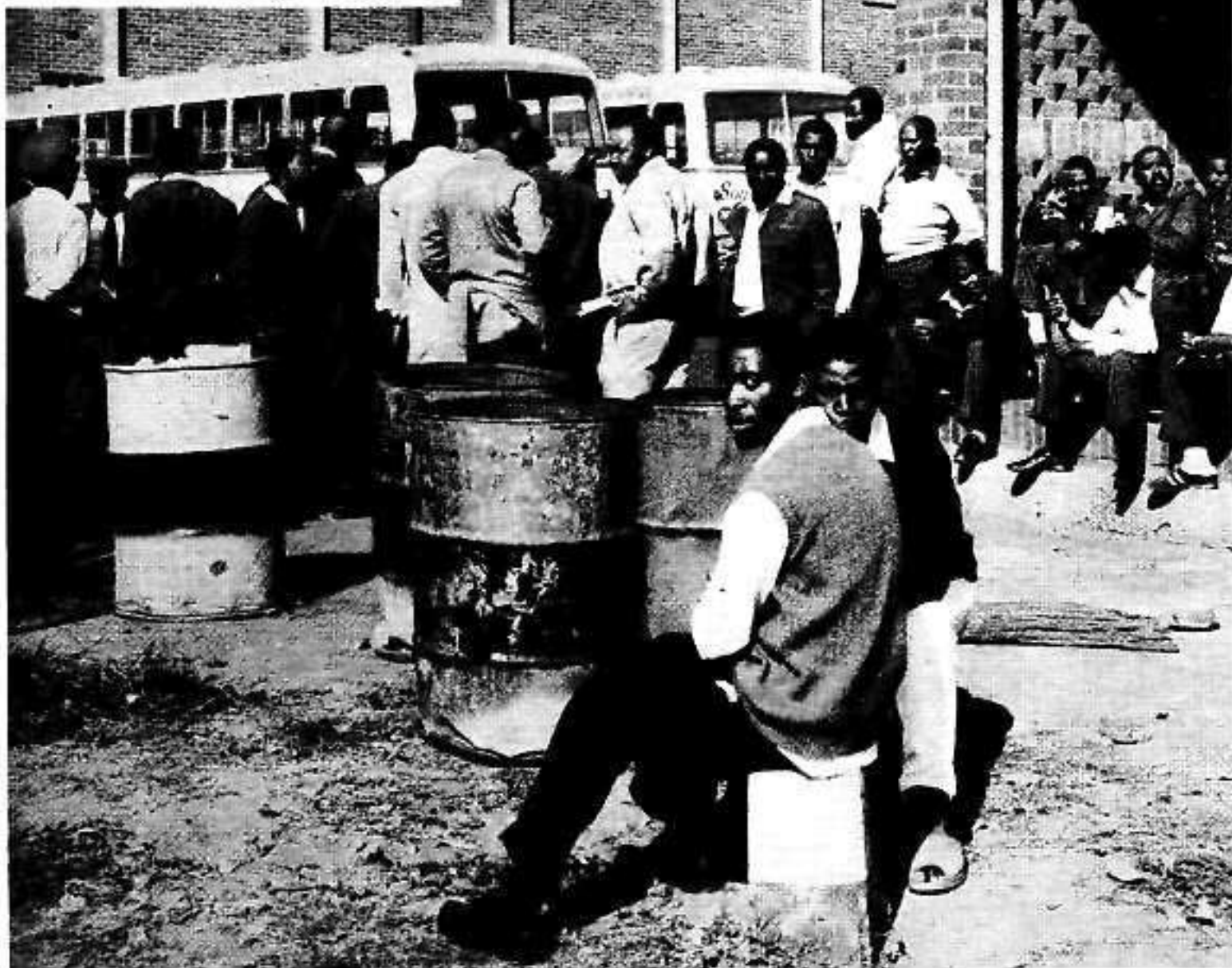
NEW TIMES

In March, management attempted to introduce new schedules for the drivers without consulting them.

After the buses had done their early morning run, the drivers instructed their shop stewards to tell management to return to the old schedules.

The TGWU negotiated with management and they were forced to agree that the confrontation had been caused by their failure to negotiate the new schedules with the union.

In April and May a series of



Pietermaritzburg Bus drivers await the outcome of talks between the City Transport Department and the TGWU during their recent stoppage. (Photo courtesy of the Natal Witness).

meetings were held in an attempt to find an acceptable new schedule which covered a number of the drivers' complaints but no final agreement was reached.

However at the end of May the Transport Department announced that from June 2 the new schedules would be introduced.

After six days on the new schedules the drivers again decided to stop work saying the running times were inadequate and they were being confronted by hostile passengers.

STILL UNITED

Brother Mawbey said the drivers eventually decided that it would be better to return to work united rather than to continue the strike against the combined might of the City Council and the Police.

'But the situation remains very tense,' he said.

UNION'S NEW BRANCH IN SOUTHERN NATAL

THE Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union has opened a new branch in Southern Natal.

Since the union started in the Transvaal in 1974, it has opened branches in Northern Natal and now in Southern Natal.

It hopes to open one in the Eastern Province later this year.

Already in Southern Natal, the PWAU has majority membership in six factories and members are being recruited in four other factories.

At by far the biggest paper factory in the region – Mondi at Merebank – the union has 850 members. This includes nearly 500 Indian workers.

Mondi has gone out of its way to encourage workers to join the TUCSA union which sits on the Industrial Council but this has not discouraged PWAU members who say that Mondi has had it too easy with the vast majority of its workers non-unionised.

So far the union has won stop order rights at the Mondi mill and discussions about recognition are due to start.

At the inaugural meeting of the new branch, the Northern Natal Chairman, Brother Ngwane especially welcomed the 500 Indian members saying that this made PWAU a truly non-racial union in practice.