

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



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MAY DAY CALL FOR UNITY

ONLY a united working class can contain the power of the mighty multinational companies operating in South Africa and worldwide – says FOSATU president Chris Dlamini.

Speaking at the May Day rally organised by the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union held near Pretoria, Brother Dlamini said a worker by himself resembled 'a pawn in a game of chess'.

'Why? Because he does not have the collective strength of workers who together can force management to give in to their demands,' he said.

'I am convinced that we workers, must first be unionised and then we must forge unity amongst all workers in this country,' he added.

Talking to more than a thousand workers, Brother Dlamini said FOSATU had been established to bring about unity among workers in South Africa.

FOSATU hoped, he said, that the recognition of common interest and the need for co-operation would eventually bring into being a trade union movement which would have a clear and workable programme of action.

This movement would have to be controlled by its members and be solely based on class solidarity so as to avoid a workers' org-



HLANGANANI Basebenzi – singing workers at the May Day Rally. May Day is recognised worldwide as Workers' Day.

anisation being hijacked by opportunistic mass movements or political organisations.

Brother Dlamini said it was clear that workers were economically exploited by 'the bosses' and therefore socially degraded.

'If a man is only able to provide himself and his family with the bare necessities of existence then that man and his family are living in poverty,' he said.

He said the workers had helped create the riches of civilisation but were deprived the fruits of it.

Brother Dlamini said that since the birth of the independent trade union movement some changes in wages and working con-

ditions had been seen.

But that had not been sufficient to hold off the fierce attack being made on the South African working class by giant companies and multinationals.

'Obviously this struggle can never be fought and won by individual unions, but only by a disciplined, non-racial, democratic worker movement,' he said.

To end his speech, Brother Dlamini said that there could never be a total stop to the worker struggle in this country while there were industries still existing.

'Forward with the worker organisations. Forward with the worker struggle. Forward with worker power,' he said.

ROMEO'S CHANGED HEART

ALFA Romeo in an amazing turn-around has agreed to recognise the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union and to take back three key union activists.

This Johannesburg-based motor firm was facing charges in the industrial court of victimising union members and of imposing a works committee on its workers.

The company's change of heart came after a meeting in Rome, Italy, between management representatives, NAAWU, the Italian Metal Workers Federation and the International Metalworkers Federation.

At the meeting Alfa agreed

to recognise NAAWU at its Wynberg and Tulisa Park depots.

It also agreed to take back the three union leaders who were fired by the company under the guise of retrenchment.

The company also told the meeting that it was not against NAAWU and that it would not interfere with any of the union's actions at the Alfa plant at Brits.

In turn the union agreed to withdraw its case against Alfa.

NAAWU took the company to court after it had embarked on what appeared to be a systematic campaign to kill the union.

In papers before the court, Alfa had claimed that the union was itself committing an

unfair labour practice by striving for democratic, non-racial trade unions.

Welcoming the outcome of the Rome meeting, NAAWU general secretary, Fred Sauls said it was clear that the only way to counter the power of multinational companies was to develop close links with unions worldwide.

'These links will prevent the companies from playing off workers in another country against workers in South Africa on the pretext of creating jobs and improving the conditions of black workers,' he added.

LIVING WAGE STRIKE

ABOUT 250 workers at G and W Base and Industrial Minerals at Wadeville recently went on strike for two days in support of their demand for a living wage.

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union put forward a wage demand of R2 an hour as workers were very badly paid in the factory.

Management replied by declaring what the increase would be without negotiating with the union.

This was totally unacceptable to the workers and a special meeting was called with management.

At the meeting the company refused to make a better wage offer because they claimed that profits were bad.

This was not believed by the workers as the company had recently built a new plant at Brakpan so they decided to down tools.

Workers only returned to work when management agreed to open its books to union auditors so that profit could be checked by somebody they trusted.

They also demanded that the company negotiate a further increase with the union in October.

Frame workers win first round

WORKERS at the huge Frametex mill at New Germany have won their first round of their battle against the stubborn Frame management.

In terms of an industrial court order, Frame has been barred from recognising its sweetheart union - TUCSA's Textile Workers Industrial Union - until a conciliation board has been held.

Ever since the birth of the National Union of Textile Workers during the 1973 Frame strikes, workers at the New Germany mills have fought for the right to be represented by the NUTW.

In a renewed campaign started last year the NUTW signed up more than two-thirds of the workers at this mill in the heart of the Frame empire.

The NUTW called on Frame to recognise the NUTW as the union chosen by its workers to represent them.

However, Frame kept true to its union bashing practice by

resorting to sweetheart unionism. The company brought in the tame TUCSA union.

Frame immediately granted the TWIU rights to organise on factory premises and pressured workers to joining the 'red card' union.

THREATENED

NUTW members reported that they had been threatened with 'retrenchment' and that they had been told that the 'red card' union was the one that Frame wanted in the factory.

In the light of this militant sweet heart unionism, NUTW asked the industrial court to prevent Frame recognising the TWIU.

VICTORY

In this important first-step victory for the NUTW, the court ordered that Frame was not allowed to grant facilities to the TUCSA union that it had not given to NUTW.

NUTW general secretary, John Copelyn said that the TWIU by not contesting NUTW's application had seemingly admitted to workers being forced to join the TUCSA union.

NEXT STEP

As the next step in the fight against Frame, the NUTW has applied for a conciliation board in order to force Frame to negotiate with the union.

WOMENS' OPPRESSION HIGHLIGHTED

THE plight of South Africa's women workers was highlighted at a conference of the International Food Unions held in Geneva recently. Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union general secretary, Maggie Magubane told delegates that women, like men, in this country suffer from oppression and exploitation. 'However, women suffer special discrimination and disabilities because they have less education and training than men,' she said.



MAGGIE MAGUBANE

'PATHETIC' WAGES INCREASED

THE Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union has won a significant wage increase for workers at Tongaat Milling at Estcourt.

In terms of the agreement which became effective from April 1, the minimum monthly wage has been increased by R32.

And on top of this, workers will get a R2 a year service allowance (workers who have worked for the company for ten years, for example, will get R20 extra a month).

A SFAWU organiser hailed the wage increase as a major breakthrough in an area which was known for its 'pathetic' wages.

He said the union was now firmly entrenched as the biggest union in the milling industry in Natal.

'Because of this, they have less opportunities to get jobs and are often the lowest paid workers,' she added.

In her report given at this conference, Sister Magubane said women workers were often pulled in to work in the less lucrative areas of industry particularly in 'border' industries.

'One of the perks offered to industrialists who are willing to move into border areas is that they are exempt from minimum wage determinations.

'This opens the way for paying extremely low wages to the predominantly female workforce,' she said.

Sister Magubane told delegates that management were often reluctant to train women to get better jobs as they said women did not stay in jobs long enough to make training them worthwhile.

She said the question of maternity leave and also that of contraception were two key areas where women workers suffered discrimination.

'The Factories Act made no provision for paid maternity leave nor was their any law which made it compulsory for firms to re-employ women after they have had their babies,' she explained.

Sister Magubane said women workers often accepted unpleasant and unsafe contraceptive methods such as the depo-provera injection from management run clinics.

'For pregnancy in many cases means almost certain job loss,' she said.

The conference was told that the SFAWU negotiated for equal pay for equal jobs regardless of sex and also insisted that training be given to both.

Sister Magubane said that the union, in agreements with the individual firms, sought to introduce clauses which would protect women on maternity leave.

BACK TO THE BAD OLD DAYS OF LIAISON COMMITTEES

FOCUS ON HEALTH

AMONGST the many new laws that are being passed in parliament this year is one that, in time, will affect many of the factories organised by FOSATU.

This is the Machinery and Occupational Safety Act - a new law aimed at reducing accidents caused by work.

New regulations and measures are long overdue - every year 300 000 accidents are reported in South Africa's factories.

These accidents kill 2 000 workers and leave 30 000 permanently disabled every year.

A further 3 000 workers are compensated every year for illness caused by working conditions - far more illness goes unrecognised.

An important way that this new law affects workers and their unions is that it requires employers to establish Health and Safety Committees in their factories.

The way that these committees are to be established and run takes industrial relations back to the bad old days of works and liaison committees.

- management will appoint the worker representatives.

- management will chair the meetings and draw up the

ACT

agenda.

- worker health and safety representatives have no special training, no right to information and no powers to enforce decisions made by the committee.

Organised workers need to think about how the establishment of this kind of committee is going to affect the existing shop stewards' committee in the factory. It is best to have planned your response before management comes up with the suggestion for health and safety committees.

Health and safety at work is an important area of union activity that is still very new to most South African unions.

In Britain the Trades Union Council (a federation consisting of all the major British trade unions) has itself trained more than 100 000 shop stewards as health and safety representatives over the last eight years.

These representatives are backed up by a Health and Saf-

ety at Work Act that gives workers a lot more power than South Africa's Machinery and Occupational Safety Act does.

British health and safety representatives are entitled to -

- be elected by the workers if they are organised by a union.

- investigate and inspect the workplace (for example they can leave work and go immediately to the scene of an accident where someone is injured)

- inspect managements' documents that are relevant to the workers' health.

- one week's paid leave a year to attend union health and safety training courses.

- sit on health and safety committees where there is 50/50 worker/management representation.

- meet and consult with government factory inspectors and to file complaints with these inspectors.

These are the kinds of rights that workers can gain if the establishing of a health and safety committee in their factory is negotiated and not just left to be a management initiative and a disruption to the activities of the union inside the factory.

SELECTIVE INCREASE SPARKS OFF MILL STRIKE

ABOUT 350 workers at Premier Paper Mill at Kliprivier went on strike for over a week at the end of last month in protest at management giving a selective wage increase.

The dispute was sparked off when the company gave wage increases to only 48 out of the 350 workers at the mill.

Management tried to shrug off the workers' outcry by saying that the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union had agreed to the increases - a blatant lie.

The selective increase came shortly after workers' demands for a reasonable increase had been turned down by the company which said it had 'no money'.

In the light of the company's reported profit of R3,2 million and this selective increase workers felt this was not good enough

so downed tools.

Workers slammed Premier for using the recession as an excuse to negotiate low increases.

Although the company negotiated the return to work with union shop stewards, Premier cancelled the recognition agreement with PWAU and then tried to get the workers to elect a workers' committee.

Workers angered by this 'trick' refused to take part in any new elections and said they wanted to be represented by their shop stewards.

STOP PRESS: Premier has backed down and decided to negotiate with the shop stewards and has offered to negotiate recognition with PWAU. But in wage negotiations it has offered a measly 10c an hour increase and negotiations were heading towards a deadlock.

EDITORIAL

ON May 1 workers everywhere in the world, including here in South Africa, celebrated May Day. We did so to remember past struggles and to gain courage for the battles ahead.

During May workers were harshly reminded of that ugly face of capitalism against which we have to struggle.

When economic times were good for companies and they made giant profits, workers did not get a fair share of these profits. We were told that those profits would be used to make more jobs.

Where are those jobs now that we need them?

And now when times are bad, workers are told that they must accept low wage increases. In May, SEIFSA — the largest employers' association which covers the entire metal industry — offered their lowest paid workers an increase of 5 percent (R3,15 per week).

What nonsense is this? Workers are asked to take 5 per cent when inflation itself is 13 percent. Workers are asked to accept R3,15 a week when companies still make millions of Rands profit even in bad times.

When we ask them to prove to us that they have problems then we are told that they cannot do that because to give information is a management prerogative. What is this word prerogative — is it the right to hide employer greed and to treat unions like children.

We are not children and employers will learn this to their cost in the future.

In May, the cowardly destruction of shacks at KTC in the Western Cape harshly reminded us of the ever increasing problem of housing. Employers want our labour in the factories but don't want to hear from us when we are outside the gates. How can we be expected to provide our own housing on the measly wages employers insist on paying us?

South Africa's apartheid system has developed this particular form of exploitation, where men are forced into the cities to work. But their families must remain behind — condemned to a sure death in the drought and poverty stricken homelands. While back in the cities men live in hostels that are little better than worker prisons.

When they try and escape this and get their families to join them, they must live as criminals in shacks. At any time their shacks can be destroyed and all human pride and dignity crushed in rain, mud, bulldozers and tear gas.

Workers know where the problem lies. Employers want our labour for their profits but don't want to bear the costs of a decent life for our families. But our strength is growing in the factories. FOSATU will not hesitate to push employers to push their government to stop this oppression. Employers have the power to do it but like to hide behind the government.

What is done by employers and their Urban Foundation is only a small drop in this ocean of misery.

FOSATU unions will survive this recession and these problems but we will not forget the bitterness of these times. This May Day we faced the challenges of these obstacles but in future we will look back at our victories.

Bus companies wash hands of drivers facing criminal charges

THE lack of protection for bus drivers involved in accidents has been put under the spot light by the Transport and General Workers Union.

This follows a case involving Putco bus driver, Victor Phalandwa.

Brother Phalandwa was involved in an accident where a woman was killed.

He was hauled up before a Springs magistrate and granted a R200 bail.

JUSTICE MISUSED

But it appears that the prosecutor was not satisfied with this and brought him before another magistrate where he was refused bail.

The TGWU angered at this 'misuse of justice' approached the Legal Resources Centre.

The LRC appealed to the Sup-

reme Court to set aside the second magistrate's order and to re-instate the R200 bail. This was granted.

INSTANT DISMISSAL

TGWU general secretary, Jane Barrett said in the case of accidents not only did bus companies 'wash their hands' of a driver involved in a criminal charge, the driver also faced instant dismissal.

She said in Britain the bus drivers were protected by the company against charges for damage to property or people while driving.

'If the accident is the drivers fault, he can have his licence endorsed by the police but he will not be fired by the company unless his licence has been endorsed often,' she said.

SEIFSA's 'wage game'

THE giant metal industries employers' association, SEIFSA, has abandoned its earlier refusal to negotiate wages this year.

This change of position was made at the first industrial council meeting attended by the the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

Setting an example for the other unions on the council, the entire National Executive Committee of MAWU attended the meeting and all were allowed to speak.

The established unions tend to be just represented by union officials and have only one spokesman.

Although MAWU is not yet a member of the industrial council it was granted full speaking rights.

In its opening speech, MAWU attacked the employers for refusing to negotiate wages and asked what had happened to all the record profits that metal companies had made over the

past five years.

'It seems that SEIFSA does not care about the retrenched workers and their families who are literally starving in the rural areas,' a MAWU representative told the council.

MAWU speakers accused the employers of 'playing games' by trying for years to get MAWU on to the council and now that the union was present, refusing to negotiate.

MAWU reported that after a 'long and difficult' meeting SEIFSA agreed to recommend to its members that they change their position.

STOP PRESS: SEIFSA has come back with an offer of 5 percent — R3,15 per week. This is way below the MAWU demand of an across the board increase of R18 a week and is likely to be rejected by metal workers.

BRAITEX WINNERS!



THESE women workers sure have something to be happy about. After all its not every day you receive part of the largest pay out in a labour dispute in South Africa — the pay out was the R40 000 won by Braitex workers. Joining in the fun is the National Union of Textile Workers' Transvaal organiser, Bangi Solo.

LABOUR COURSES START UP AGAIN

THIS year's Labour Studies Courses will go ahead in spite of the set-back caused by Wits University cancelling its contract with FOSATU.

The Labour Studies Course was initially set up using Wits facilities but in a surprise announcement last year the university cancelled its contract.

However, FOSATU has re-organised the course with the help of the lecturers who were involved from the beginning.

The first course for 1983 is due to start on May 23 and will continue until June 5.

To run the three courses planned for this year, FOSATU has employed a full time co-ordinator.

She is Adrienne Bird who

started literacy programmes in FOSATU unions way back in the 1970's and has since studied worker education methods in Britain.

FOSATU Education secretary, Alec Erwin welcomed her return and said that her position was a challenging and exciting one in worker education in South Africa.

The two-week courses will be each attended by 14 people from all regions of FOSATU.

They are a unique opportunity to study wider theoretical and political developments affecting trade unions.

No doubt the 'graduates' of this year's courses will join those who already play an active role in FOSATU unions.

Unity wins pay rise

WORKERS at Smith Industries in Pinetown have recently won major wage increases from the company after long negotiations and two work stoppages.

The eventual increase agreed to ranged from R12 to R14 per week across-the-board.

The company also guaranteed a further R2 per week increase in August and agreed to negotiate further increases in October.

In order to close the gap between women and men workers, the women have been guaranteed a minimum increase of R4 per week across-the-board in November.

Shortly after negotiations began three weeks ago, a deadlock was reached when management refused to negotiate further.

Workers downed tools and refused to return to work until the company had agreed to re-open negotiations with the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

The managing director was called in to address workers and after promising to negotiate further, workers returned to work.

However, at the next meeting between shop stewards and management wage talks again broke down when the company refused to increase its offer.

R26 000 BACK PAY VICTORY

THE Chemical Workers Industrial Union has won a massive back pay claim at Chesebrough-Pond's International at Wadeville which will cost the company about R26 000.

The back pay claim results from shop stewards at the company discovering that many workers were not being paid the correct rate for the job.

This information came to light when the company gave the CWIU an official list of jobs, job grades and rates of pay before this year's wage negotiations.

After many frustrating delays the management finally sat down with the shop steward chairman and a union organiser to check all rates of pay.

It was discovered that out of the 250 workers at the factory, 80 were being underpaid.

Management agreed to correct the rates and to back pay the workers to October 1982 — the date that the CWIU took over from the South African Chemical Workers Union as representatives of the workforce.

FIRING BLOCKED BY UNION

AN attempt to fire two senior shop stewards at Triomf Fertilizer at Richards Bay has been blocked by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union.

The chairman of the shop stewards committee, Emmanuel Mpanza initially faced three charges at a disciplinary inquiry.

He was represented by the senior shop steward, Elphas Mbatha and was acquitted.

NOT THOROUGH

However, a few days later the Triomf production manager decided the first inquiry had not done 'a thorough enough job' and instructed Brother Mpanza to appear before a second inquiry.

At the second inquiry the shop stewards tried to get management to follow the correct procedure but this led to the senior shop steward being thrown out of the inquiry.

That afternoon both Brother Mpanza and Brother Mbatha were told that they had been suspended — Brother Mbatha was also barred from company premises.

ANGRY WORKERS

The company's transparent attempts to fire these leading shop stewards dragged on through six inquiries and was watched closely by angry workers.

Finally in an important victory for the Triomf workers and the CWIU, the company dropped the cases and Brothers Mpanza and Mbatha returned to work after two weeks of suspension and inquiries.

WE WILL NOT GIVE IN!

IN a tremendous show of solidarity, 300 workers who were unfairly dismissed from B & S Engineering and Steelbrite in September, have met together every single day since then. The workers have faced terrible hardships but they have all continued to resist applying for selective re-employment at the Brits factories. In tribute to this solidarity, FOSATU Worker News here carries an interview with the B & S workers' committee.

How did you first begin uniting the workers?

In the beginning workers began going back to the factory to be reemployed and some of them just went back to their homes. We decided to organise them together and we felt that if people could report daily we could discuss with them their decisions.

How many people did go back in the end?

Up to now about 600 went back and about 400 of those were actually not taken back at the factory. The 300 here never returned to the factory to seek re-employment - in fact we only collected our wages in December.

How did you survive from September to December?

At the time some of us had savings and we lived on these and also shared them out. Also people in the community were initially willing to help us out, as well as some of the other workers in the area.

How did you plan all this?

Well we decided that people should report everyday and in fact they began coming from September 8 as this was the place where we normally held meetings.

What was discussed and planned in the first few weeks?

We began discussing how we were harrassed by management and how workers in other factories were also harrassed such as FEMCO where they retrenched also to break the union. We would take examples of people's experiences and get workers to talk and comment. We discovered that if we want to survive here we will have to stick together as this will be the only way to keep the organisation strong. If we depart then it would all break up and people would be weak if they were alone. Actually we spent a lot of time asking people how they felt about the dismissal - whether they thought it was unfair or fair - finally we all agreed it was unfair and we all decided to stick together.

What were the problems you encountered?

After the first meetings we discovered it was possible to motivate the people and not to separate ourselves from one another by being Xhosas or Tswanas - finding that each and everyone of us is useful to the others. On the other hand by doing so we discovered by sharing the information and our feelings about the situation in the factory - the bad conditions - people shared their experiences and exposed the way in which they were treated. This type of discussion helped a lot because it showed people that if they went to another factory the situation would be exactly the same and we thought we should rather stick together and fight the situation at B & S.

How did you begin dealing with problems of survival?

The committee planned that we should begin asking for help from the local churches and we got all the people involved in this by asking each and everyone of them to take a letter to the church in their particular area. We also planned to get some help from other workers in the area. At that time we had no idea we would be out for so long and we also depended on our savings.

Have there been any problems between the workers and the committee?

No never. In fact when the entire committee was dismissed in July - management forced workers to vote for a new committee after we were re-instated but the same people were voted in. So all we did was bring in some new people. There were a few problems when we started getting money from outside as some of the workers did not trust that they were going to benefit - they thought that the money would just go to the committee. This led to a lot of discussions where we explained exactly how the money was going to be used. We explained that we were all in the struggle.

What was the money spent on?

Well to get to the place where we met. Some of us had real problems with transport and some of the money first went into making sure that those who wanted to come to the hall could. In fact what we used to do was share tickets. One day I would come and the next my neighbour would.

THE EVENTS...

MAY 1982 - the Metal and Allied Workers Union begins organising B & S Engineering and Steelbrite at Brits in the Transvaal. These two factories have a total workforce of 900 who produce steel and wooden furniture for the retail market, the building industry, provincial administrations, offices, government departments and the Defence Force.

After gaining about 70 percent membership, a committee was elected and the union made several attempts to negotiate a recognition agreement with management.

JULY 1982 - the whole committee was fired by the company which said they had been retrenched. This led to a work stoppage at both plants, forcing management to reinstate the committee. All 12 members were taken back and management agreed to discuss some of their grievances. However, management refused to recognise the committee as a union committee and called it a liaison committee. The committee con-

tinued to approach management for recognition but meetings were always postponed. **SEPTEMBER 1982** - at last a date was set for discussions on grievances. This was to be held on Tuesday September 7. But a few days before this, management called in the vice-chairman of the committee and threatened that if he did not leave the union he would be transferred to Johannesburg. According to the vice-chairman, management said the 'union was putting nonsense into my head'. He replied that if he was going to be dismissed this should be discussed before the whole committee. Management refused.

The day before the meeting was due to take place, September 6, the vice-chairman was fired for allegedly refusing to work when he was ordered to move to another department.

The following day workers said management came into the factory and switched off the machines. Workers waited until late in the afternoon when they were called to the gates and told by management that the factory

was going to be closed for three days and that all 900 had been dismissed. If they wanted their jobs back, management said they could apply for selective re-employment on September 10.

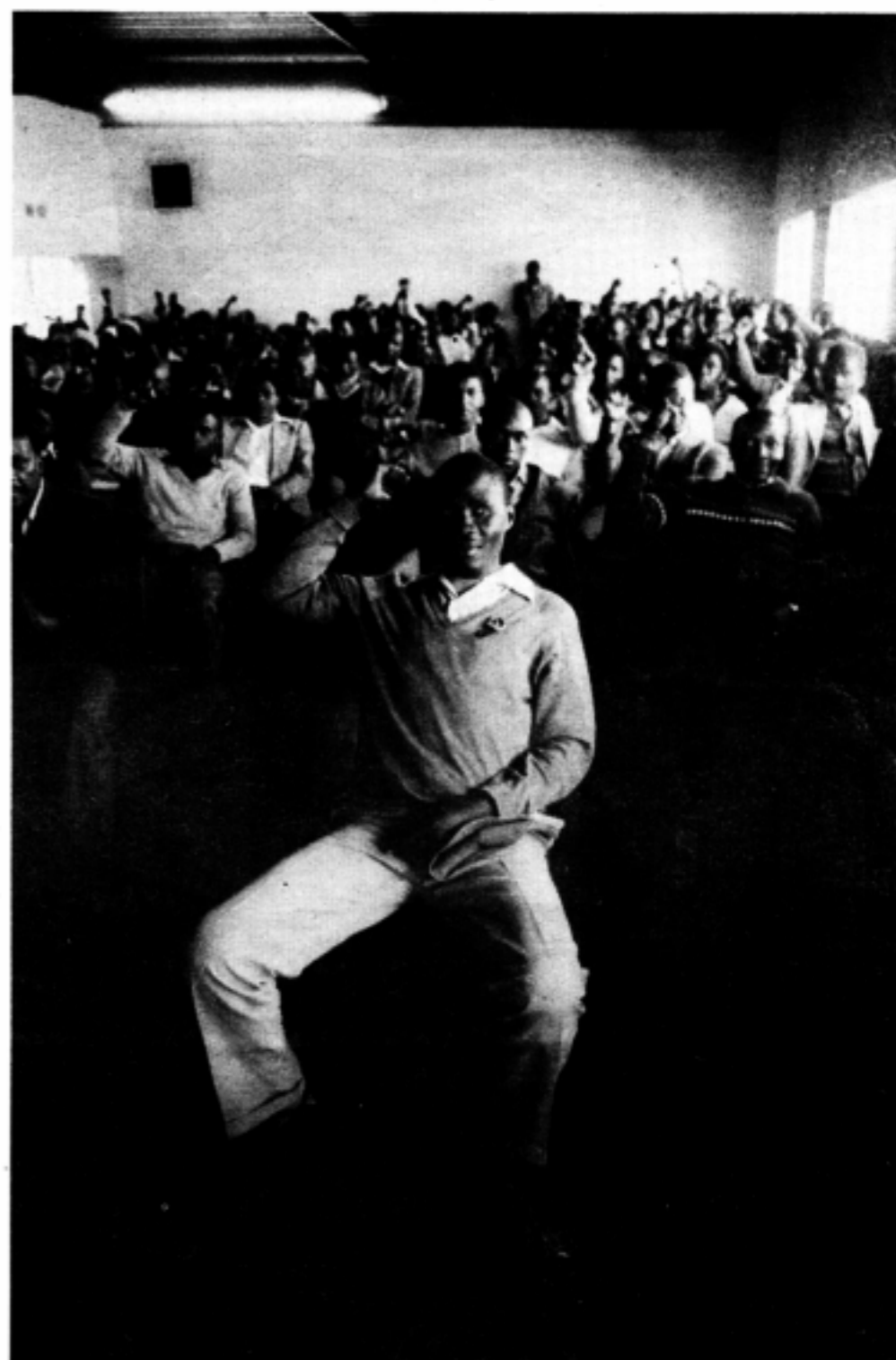
Management has claimed that workers were fired for participating in a go-slow but workers argue that the company wanted to get rid of the union.

Over the next few days the committee and organisers approached management for discussions on reinstatement for the entire workforce but met with no success.

Two of the committee members were arrested under the Intimidation Act but charges were later dropped.

Management began hiring selectively but 300 workers have resisted and have met every day since then.

JUNE 20 1983 - B & S Engineering and Steelbrite are due to appear in the Industrial Court where workers are charging them with 'unfair labour practices'.



STILL united after nearly nine months - the B & S workers.

Was the committee under a lot of pressure - did the situation become very demanding?

Yes there were some problems especially emergencies - people who could not pay for treatment, kids who were sick. The way we would deal with this was to all come together and make a contribution from our savings and then if we got money in from the churches these people would be paid back.

Also the committee found that people were complaining that their families were putting them under a lot of pressure, telling them to go back to work. The problem is that some of us are the only member of the family with a fulltime job and consequently the families had to make sacrifices for this struggle. This is why we are so close now. Anyway when there were problems in the families we would send a few of the committee members to talk to the whole family and explain the struggle and what it was all about.

So the group has got stronger?

Yes we started quite strong and now we are even stronger.

What else have you done all this time - nine months is a long time to meet every day?

Each day we would report what we had heard about the factory - you see many friends working there and they tell us exactly what is going on. We would get stories from our brothers on the production problems - the amount of rejects that have been sent back, who they have hired, whether the factory is losing or not. For the first few months we knew that the trucks delivering were only half full. Production is still low - they are not producing the same number of units and they still want some of the skilled workers back.

All of you here are from different positions in the factory - did you always trust each other?

It is true, some of the supervisors were not trusted because they used to work very closely with the white foremen and management. But they have shown that there is no difference - they are not brothers of the foremen but workers like all the others. We have begun to discuss this question of how management tried to divide us.

What has been the role of the union in all of this?

Sometimes the workers would ask where the organisers were and whether they had forgotten us as they did not come here very often. We had to explain that they were very busy and that they were proceeding with the discussions with the Industrial Council and the Court case. When two committee members were arrested under the Intimidation Act and the charges later withdrawn - this gave us faith in the union that something could be done for us.

What have been the main sacrifices?

Well some of us do not eat properly and cannot feed our children like we used to - some of us have sent our children away to our parents. Many of us have had to sell our belongings such as clothes and bicycles and watches and some of us have had goods repossessed. We also now have spent all our savings some of which we had saved for many years and were hoping to buy better things for our children. Some of us have had to sell our goats and cattle and this was very difficult as we sold them for very little.

Do you think the workers have changed over the nine months?

Yes people have changed through all the discussions. We have come to realise what it is to sacrifice and stick together and to trust one another - that an injury to one is an injury to all. Most of us only knew in the beginning that we were employed and that we should accept our situation and what they give us. Most of us were not aware of our rights. We learnt that by being alone nothing could happen and that the only way was to stick together. We are all suffering and sacrificing.