

ICEF REPORTS

In October 1980 the 17th Congress of the International Chemical and Energy Workers Federation (ICEF) was held in Mexico City. The ICEF represents 4, 6 million workers in 179 unions all over the world. Three FOSATU unions, the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union (PWAU), Chemical Workers Industrial Union (CWIU) and Glass and Allied Workers Union (GAWU), have links with the ICEF.

In his report to the Congress, the General Secretary Charles Levinson, said that the last few years have been difficult ones for workers in the chemical and allied industries. Workers have been hit hard by rising inflation, increasing unemployment and growing numbers of factory closures. This, he says, is especially true in Europe. Another point made by Mr. Levinson is that with the economic crisis, managements are going on the attack against workers and their organisations. Many companies are moving from areas where there are strong unions, like in the United States, to countries where unions are weak and wages lower. He noted that in many companies in the United States, union breaking consultants have



been called in to try and push unions out of the plant.

The ICEF has been involved in support action for many of its affiliates in their struggles. The report makes special mention of the ICEF support of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union and their struggle for recognition at Colgate.

Another major campaign reported to the Congress is the ICEF campaign on Health and Safety. This is specially important in the chemical industry where new chemicals are constantly being invented and used before safety measures are developed to prevent damage to workers' health.

The ICEF has started a campaign demanding that workers have the right to know about potential dangers to health in their own factories.




FOSATU SPEAKS TO INDUSTRIAL NURSES

At a recent talk to nurses from various Natal factories, Taffy Adler - FOSATU's Transvaal Regional Secretary - pointed out that the answer to better Industrial Health was strong trade unions. Workers see nurses as part of managements, "whose role it was to keep them on the job and cut down sick leave", he said.

Production is the most important thing and too little attention is given to preventing dangers and accidents. Industrial injuries suffered by workers were horrifying especially as too many were unnecessary and often caused by managements shortsightedness and even negligence.

Brother Adler's challenge to the nurses was to stop being used to "patch-up" workers so as to get them back to work. Rather they should support the cause of trade unionism.

The trade unions were more interested in prevention than cure. Their aim was to bargain for agreements that improved safety and gave specially trained Health and Safety shop stewards rights such as stopping dangerous machines.

Agreements such as these would mark real progress where nurses could use their skills to improve the conditions of workers and not be first aid attendants to patch-up workers.

A general meeting of all members of the Leather Workers Benefit Fund is to be held on Saturday the 29th of November 1980 at 10 a.m. at the show grounds in Pietermaritzburg. The meeting is to be chaired by the Advocate Brian Law and he is asking the employers to give the workers time off to attend the meeting.

After months of struggle between two Committees as to who really represented the workers, the members of the Pietermaritzburg Leather Workers Benefit Fund are to elect a new non-racial committee.

NEW COMMITTEE

An old National Union of Leather Workers Committee which was elected only by Coloured and Indian workers was until this year running the affairs of the Fund. When no elections took place this year for a new committee many members got fed up with that situation and elected a new non-racial committee where African workers were also represented. The two committees then got involved in a legal tussle over the control of the Funds. However, in November an agreement was finally reached to let the workers themselves decide whether they wanted the National Union of Leather committee or an independent committee to control the funds.



A WORKER'S SPEECH TO A DOCTOR

We know what makes us ill.
When we are ill we are told
That it's you who will heal us.

For ten years, we are told
You learned healing in fine schools
Built at the people's expense
And to get your knowledge
Spent a fortune.
So you must be able to heal

Are you able to heal?
When we come to you
Our rags are torn off us
And you listen all over our naked body.
As to the cause of our illness
One glance at our rags would
Tell you more. It is the same cause that
wears out
Our bodies and our clothes.

The pain in our shoulder comes
You say, from the damp; and this is also
the reason
For the stain on the wall of our flat.
So tell us:
Where does the damp come from?

Too much work and too little food
Makes us feeble and thin.
Your prescription says:
Put on more weight.
You might as well tell a bullrush
Not to get wet.

How much time can you give us?
We see: one carpet in your flat costs
The fees you earn from
Five thousand consultations

You'll no doubt say
You are innocent. The damp patch
On the walls of our flats
Tells the same story.

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