

NATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Women call for organisation and unity

ON August 9, women in the Western Cape gathered in Elsie's River for a full day's programme of speeches, drama, poetry and singing.

The women raised high the spirit of the meeting as the crowd of 2 000 focused on the theme, a Place to live, Izwe Lethu.

The meeting paid tribute to the 20 000 women and their leaders who marched to Pretoria in 1956. "From their determi-

nation and courage, we learn how to organise ourselves in the present", one speaker said.

A mother with her baby cradled in her arms, was one of the hundreds of mothers who have been evicted from Langa and who now face eviction from Crossroads.

"Women who live in houses — even if they are zinc and cardboard houses — do not shut out the suffering of those who have nothing

but tattered pieces of plastic for shelter", she said.

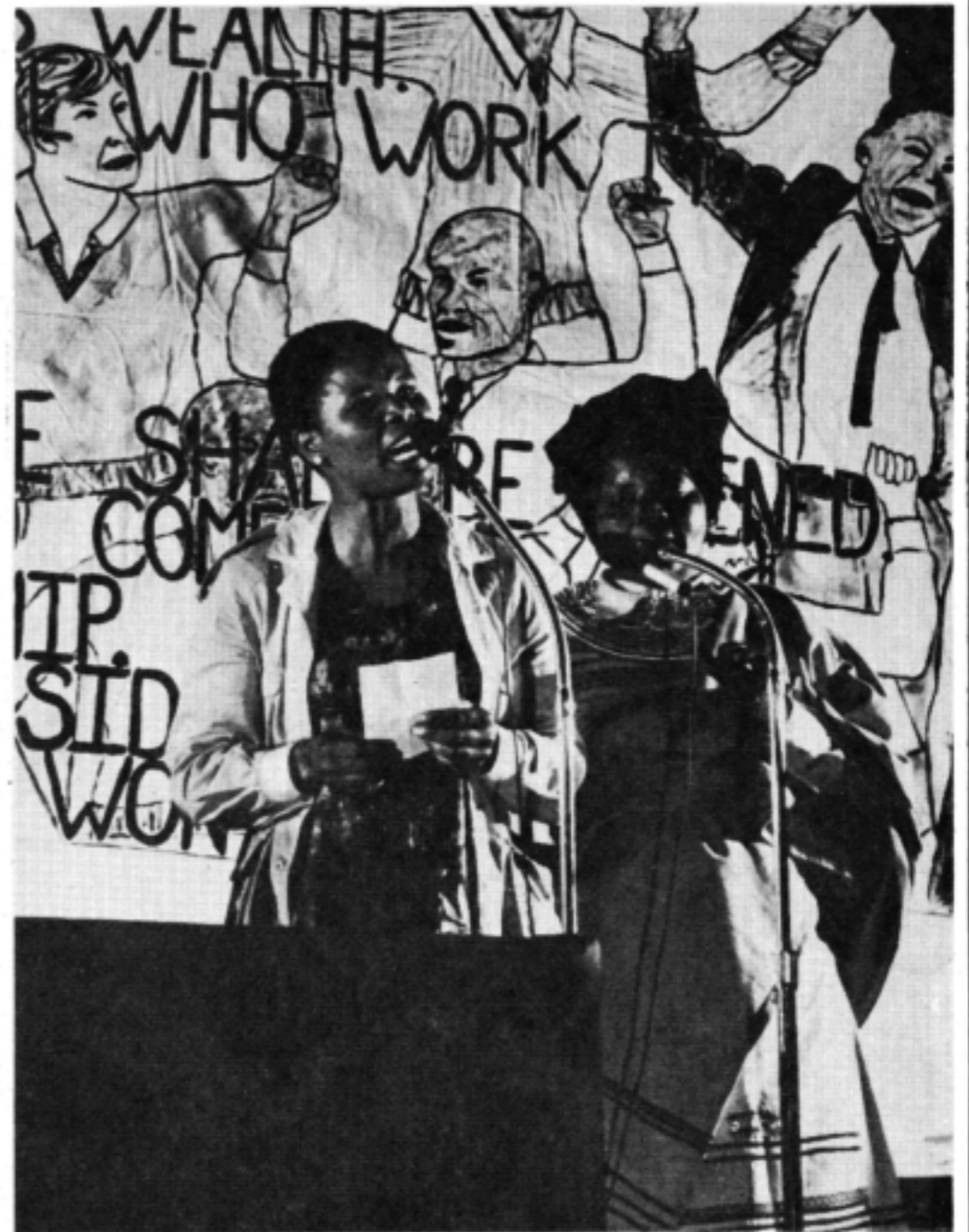
But out of this suffering and hardship, came the message of one mother, whose son is still in detention.

"When they took my son from me, they took the bread out of my stomach. There was no breadwinner in the house. I feared we would starve. But people whom I have never seen before, came forward and helped me. The United Women's

Organisation has been with me since my hardship began. When we unite, we are strong," she said.

Leyland Workers

Messages and speakers from SAAWU, the Leyland workers and the workers of Wilson Rowntree saluted the women and the UWO which has supported the struggles of the workers for higher wages and better work-



ing conditions.

In turn, the SAAWU speaker urged the community to support the women.

"Do not undermine the women — they are leaders.

In the factories, women always get lower wages, simply because they are women.

We should remember that we are all human beings, regardless of colour, race or sex. We need to come together to fight common problems. To the women we say, the workers are with us today."

"A woman's place is in the struggle for a democratic South Africa", one speaker said. Many women are kept out of this struggle for different reasons: Women are kept out because they work long hours in the factory. Women are kept out by the practice that women's place is in the home. Women are kept

out by the lack of facilities for their children. Women in the homelands are kept there by laws that prevent them from going to meet others in the cities.

But, the speaker said, women have managed to overcome these problems. In 1956, many thousands of women came out to protest against passes. Our task today is to draw in all women through our women's organisations.

UNITY

The guest speaker, on behalf of the Federation of South African Women, appealed to women from different organisations, women from the rural areas, women from the bantustans or so-called homelands, the domestic workers and the masses in general to be united.

"We must unite and work on a common programme of action.

Let's work on tangible issues that affect black women and women in general.

"We must not let our differences deter us from fulfilling our obligations towards the struggle for a democratic South Africa.

ORGANISE

"Let's organise women who are working as farm labourers

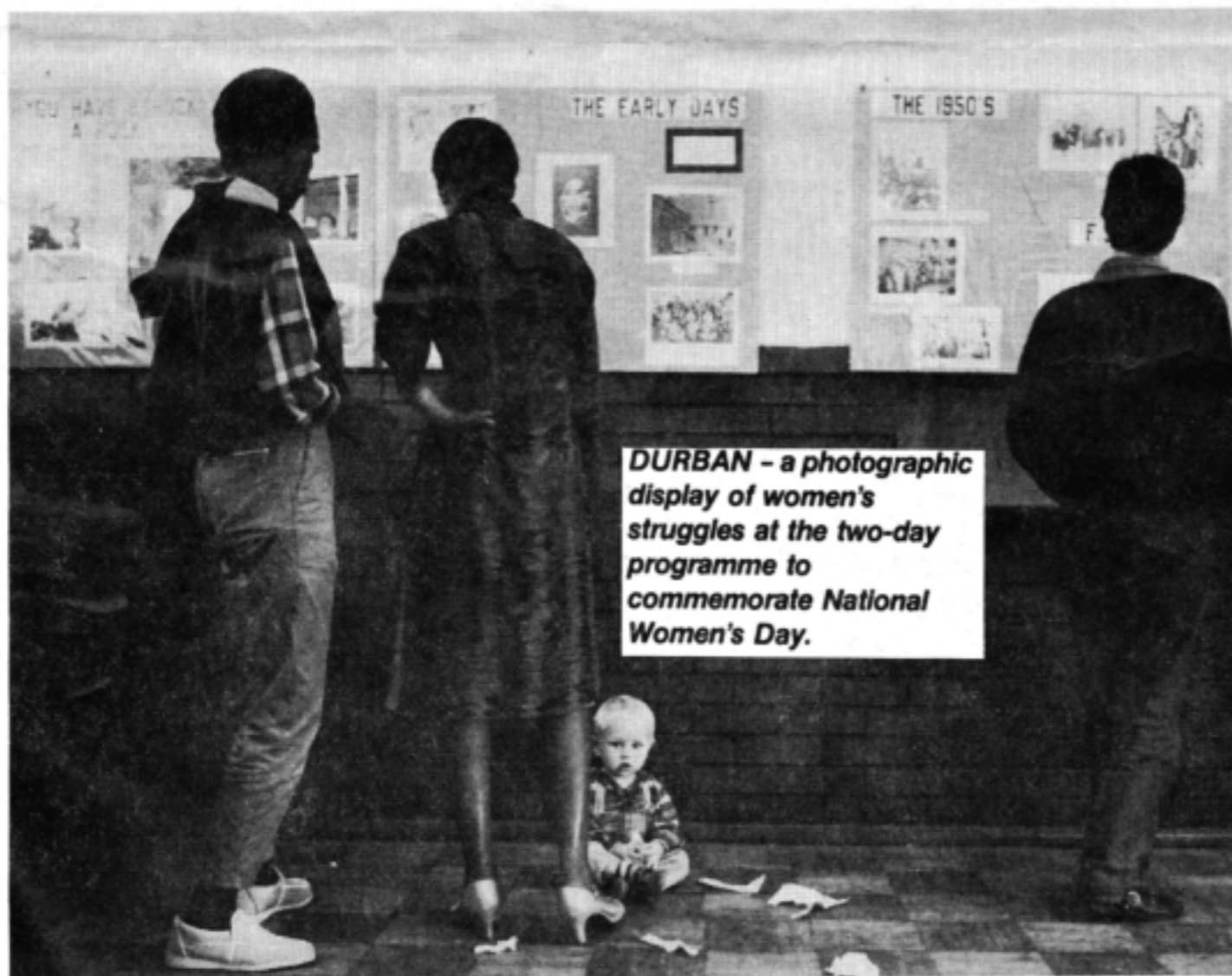
Let's organise women to be aware of their working conditions and their unhealthy situation in the working set-up.

Let's mobilize working women to see and know their rights

Let's organise women to join the trade unions.

Let's organise women to help our men who are migrant workers.

Let's organise women to fight the mass removals of people from places like Crossroads and Kliptown".



DURBAN - a photographic display of women's struggles at the two-day programme to commemorate National Women's Day.

Council workers in pay dispute

THE demand of some 10 000 workers employed by the Cape Town City Council for higher wages has still not been met.

Reporting on the fact that conciliation proceedings had failed, one worker said that he has had enough.

He pointed out to GRASSROOTS that the law says that municipal workers may not

go on strike. "They say that we are an essential service and therefore we cannot strike.

"But what do they expect workers to do when they don't pay workers a living wage?"

Another council worker told GRASSROOTS that the position of labourers was becoming critical. "Most of the members of our union, the Cape Town

Municipal Workers' Association (CTMWA) are the lowest paid workers.

"How are we going to pay the higher rents, bread and bus fares?"

"Must our children starve?"

GRASSROOTS has been reliably informed that the parties, that is the CTMWA and the City Council met at a

Conciliation Board meeting but that no agreement could be reached.

This meeting took place on Tuesday 28 July 1981 and ended in complete deadlock. This means that if the union wants to take the matter further according to law, then it must apply for the matter to be resolved by the Industrial Court.

Questioned by GRASSROOTS, Mr J Ernstzen, Secretary of the Association, said that there was no other way out and there was no other legal procedure by which workers could take up their case. Mr Ernstzen refused to comment on press reports that the White workers of the City Council who do not belong to the CTMWA

but have their own organisation for Whites only, namely the South African Association of Municipal Employees (SAAME) had threatened to work according to rule.

This means that there was a threat by some White workers at least that they will not work overtime.

However, Council

workers generally say that if they cannot get a fair deal, then they will have to think what other steps they can take to get a fair deal.

In the meanwhile thousands of council workers and their families are anxiously waiting for the outcome of the arbitration proceedings for which the Association has already asked.