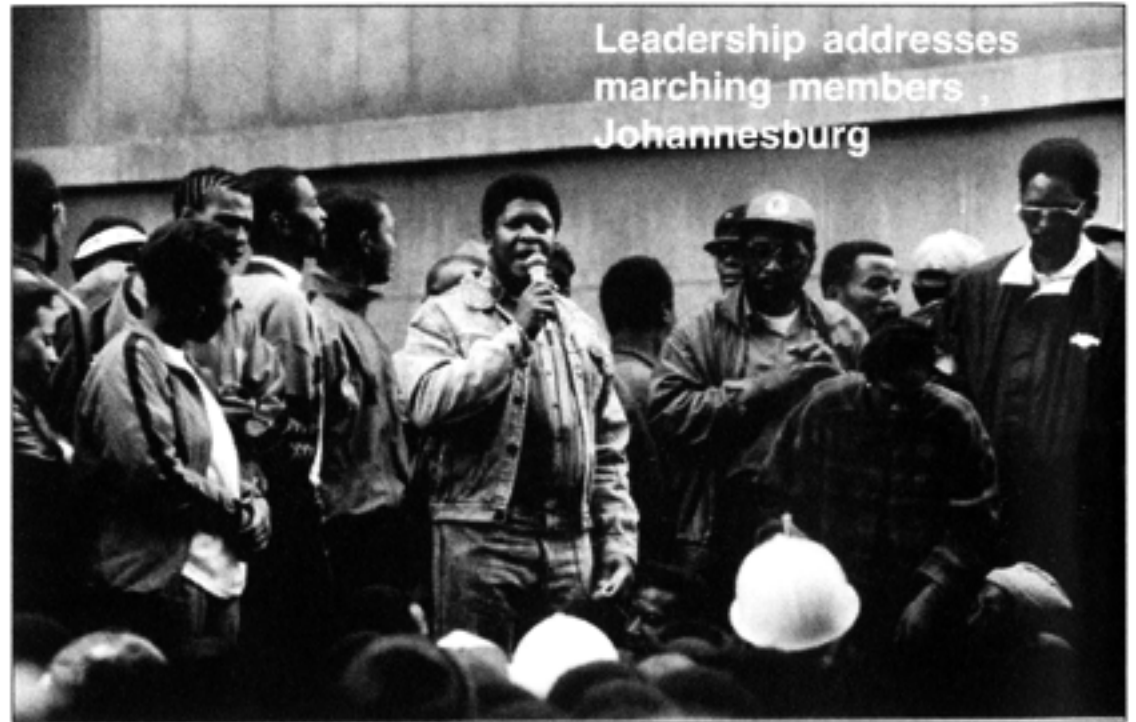


## Unfinished business in the engineering sector

Wage negotiations in the steel and engineering industry were marked by deadlock and a threat of strike action driven by the two biggest regions of NUMSA, Wits East and Wits West. NUMSA, CWIU and MEWUSA reached deadlock with employers on two issues: the final offer (9% against the union demand for 12%), and the demand by employers from Border and Natal that their regions be exempted from the settlement so as to negotiate lower rates.

According to Bethwell Maserumule, regional secretary of NUMSA Wits East region, members were unhappy at the course of negotiations and angered by employers' final offer. This led to a mass march on SEIFSA's headquarters organised by the two Wits regions, accompanied by a "stayaway" in the engineering plants. The wave of militancy caught leadership unawares, says Maserumule. He believes it was sparked by the bitter Pick 'n Pay strike, a sense that there is "unfinished business" after the defeat of the 1992 strike, and a sense that the new government should mean a living wage.

Other regions of the union were keen to settle at 9%, however – some even called



Leadership addresses marching members, Johannesburg

on us to cancel the march". But, the Wits regions were reinforced by Natal and Border's rejection of separate regional deals. And so deadlock was declared.

After two days mediation, settlement was finally reached on 12 August. Terms of settlement included a 9,5% wage increase backdated to 1 July; no exemption for regions, but individual employers in those regions may apply for exemption to the industrial council; expedited exemption procedures for small employers; agreement that a framework document for productivity bargaining will be negotiated by the end of the year.

SEIFSA believes the agreement shows "increasing awareness of the need for flexibility in wage arrangements" – especially for small business and those in financial difficulties.

NUMSA's Chris Loyd says

the union is glad exemption procedures have been tightened up, and that employers will have to make our a serious case for exemption – particularly as the agreement provides for arbitration if no agreement is reached at the IC.

Maserumule believes increase is much smaller than could have been won. "The failure of our union to campaign cost our members a better deal." He also believes the commitment to agreement on a "productivity framework is "very dangerous" Negotiators will not have a mandate because there has been insufficient internal debate.

Maserumule argues for "proper campaigning" and "creative strategies" in the engineering sector. It seems "unfinished business" may rear its head again - both within NUMSA and in next years' negotiations.

(Karl von Holdt)

**S**ACTWU and clothing employers have agreed to establish a single industrial council for the whole country by next year.

Up until now, the union has had to bargain at five regional industrial councils. This year, wage increases were negotiated at a national bargaining forum. A committee has been set up to work on the constitution of the national council.

Wage parity will be investigated by another sub-committee. While this year's negotiations brought the wages in the different regions closer, areas such as the Eastern Cape and OFS/Northern Cape are still way out of step with the rest of the

## Bargaining breakthrough in the clothing industry

### What a machinist in the clothing industry will earn from 1 July 1994

Region	Old Wage	New Wage
Natal	R240,50	R265,50
W.Cape	R240,00	R263,00
Tvl	R224,50	R247,50
E. Cape	R218,20	R240,50
OFS/N.Cape	R185,90	R204,90

country.

Another issue which will need to be addressed is the national council's jurisdiction over areas which have traditionally been excluded. These include areas such as Isithebe and Ladysmith in

Natal, where wages are notoriously low.

In this year's negotiations SACTWU achieved increases ranging from 9,25 to 10,4 % for its members. The increases are effective from 1 July 1994.

*(Deanne Collins)*

## Mining disputes

**T**his year's wage negotiations in the mining industry have been characterised by deadlocks, leading NUM to declare disputes, most of which have been referred to conciliation boards.

1. NUM and the Chamber of Mines reached agreement on wages and other conditions of employment after the deadlock was referred to the conciliation board. The parties settled at 10%.

When talks deadlocked the Chamber was offering a 9,25% on gold mines and 10% for collieries, as opposed to the union's demand of 11%. Fourty five gold mines and 24



coal mines, accounting for approximately 300 000 workers, were affected by the dispute.

Agreement was also reached on these issues:

- Unpaid paternity leave of three days per annum;
- Maternity leave: 15% of pay for three months;
- Funeral transport: management will pay for

the transportation of the bodies of dead workers to their home areas;

- Information on NUM membership: mine management will provide membership data to the union on a monthly basis.

NUM refused to negotiate any profit sharing schemes this year. The union's membership had raised objections in 1991 with the scheme, arguing that this caused problems for workers because management applied this selectively, thus sowing confusion and division amongst workers.

2. The dispute between De Beers and NUM has been referred to the conciliation board. NUM is demanding a 17% increase, whilst management is offering 8%.

**Continued on page 13**



## New farmworkers union for COSATU

Farmworkers lay foundation for new union

About 80 farmworkers organised under three COSATU affiliates gathered in Johannesburg on 20-21 August to lay a foundation for a farmworkers' union. The workers are currently organised under FAWU, PPWAWU and SACTWU, with a combined membership of 40 000. The three unions have agreed to transfer their members to the new union.

One of the major decisions of the conference was that a farmworkers union should be launched in February next year, and a steering committee of six people, all of whom are workers was elected to oversee the process. A draft constitution was also adopted, subject to ratification by the launching conference. A final decision on the name will be

taken at the launching conference.

In an attempt to maximise workers' participation and input, the conference broke into four commissions dealing with campaigns, the establishment of the union, the constitution and servicing and recruitment.

Immediate priorities were identified as necessary for the successful launching of the union. These are the establishment of regional structures in accordance with the geo-political boundaries; stepping up recruitment in the OFS; as well as striving towards pulling in other independent farmworkers' unions into the process.

No decision has been taken yet on the number of organisers the union will have. However, PPWAWU

has six organisers for its forestry members, FAWU employs seven farm organisers, while SACTWU has one farm organiser. COSATU has allocated 30 delegates to farmworkers in the September congress. Motha said that 20 of the delegates will be workers and the rest officials. Although they will have speaking rights, they will not be allowed to vote, since the union has not yet been formed.

Delegates highlighted the repressive conditions under which they work. One worker pointed out that although farmworkers are now covered by the Agricultural Labour Act (ALA), other prohibitive regulations still apply on the farms. "The trespass act is still in place, thus limiting



access to farms for union organisers to recruit members and conduct other union business.”

Other delegates raised concerns about the shortage of organisers. Low wages, long working hours and lack of job security were also among the grievances raised.

The participation by workers in debates was impressive, especially with

regard to issues of working conditions and experiences learned on ways of organising under the many prohibitive regulations/laws.

Delegates at the conference displayed a determination to move fast in the direction of uniting under one union, indicating that there is a will among farmworkers to change their unsatisfactory situation.

Motha said NACTU's National Union of Farmworkers and another Western Cape-based independent union were invited to participate in the conference, but both failed to arrive. The determination showed by COSATU's farmworkers will be negated by divided organisations in the sector.

(Zolile Mtshelwane)

**Continued from page 11**

About seven diamond mines employing nearly 10 000 workers are affected.

According to the union, De Beers also rejected all the other demands for an improvement on working conditions.

3. About 20 000 Impala Platinum workers have reached deadlock over a demand for a 15% increase. Management is offering 6%.

The dispute also centres around other working conditions like maternity leave, sick leave, etc.

Since the old bantustan laws have not yet been changed, the union has not been able to apply for the conciliation board, as the former Bophuthatswana laws do not provide for this. The union has met with the premier of the North-West region to find a way of

addressing the dispute.

4. Rustenburg Platinum Mines and the union reached a settlement on wages after the dispute was referred to the conciliation board. The settlement is for an increase of between 8,5% for workers in higher categories and 8,8% for those in lower categories. The company also agreed to recognise one full-time shopsteward for each of its mines, as well as a 12 months income security for injured mineworkers. The agreement will only be applicable to NUM members.

5. About 15 000 Eskom workers embarked on an illegal strike ranging from one to three days at the end of June. The workers were demanding an increase of 15% across the board. The strike was settled at 9,5% for the highest paid workers, and 13% for the lowest paid. The new minimum will now be R1 450 per month, from the old one of R1 300. Agreement was also reached on a 40-hour working week.

(Zolile Mtshelwane)

**Inflation Monitor: May 1994**

Area	Consumer Price Index (1990=100)	Annual rate of inflation (%increase over 1 year)
	May 1994	May 1994
Cape Town	156,6	7,6%
Port Elizabeth	153,7	7,6%
East London	154,9	7,3%
Durban	151,4	7,8%
Pietermaritzburg	156,2	7,1%
Witwatersrand	154,0	7,2
Vall triangle	146,9	6,2%
Pretoria	154,6	7,4%
Klerksdorp	153,5	7,1%
Bloemfontein	149,8	6,7%
OFS Goldfields	154,3	5,9%
Kimberly	155,3	6,6%
<b>SOUTH AFRICA</b>	<b>154,1</b>	<b>7,2%</b>

Source: Central Statistical Service