

NUM NEWS

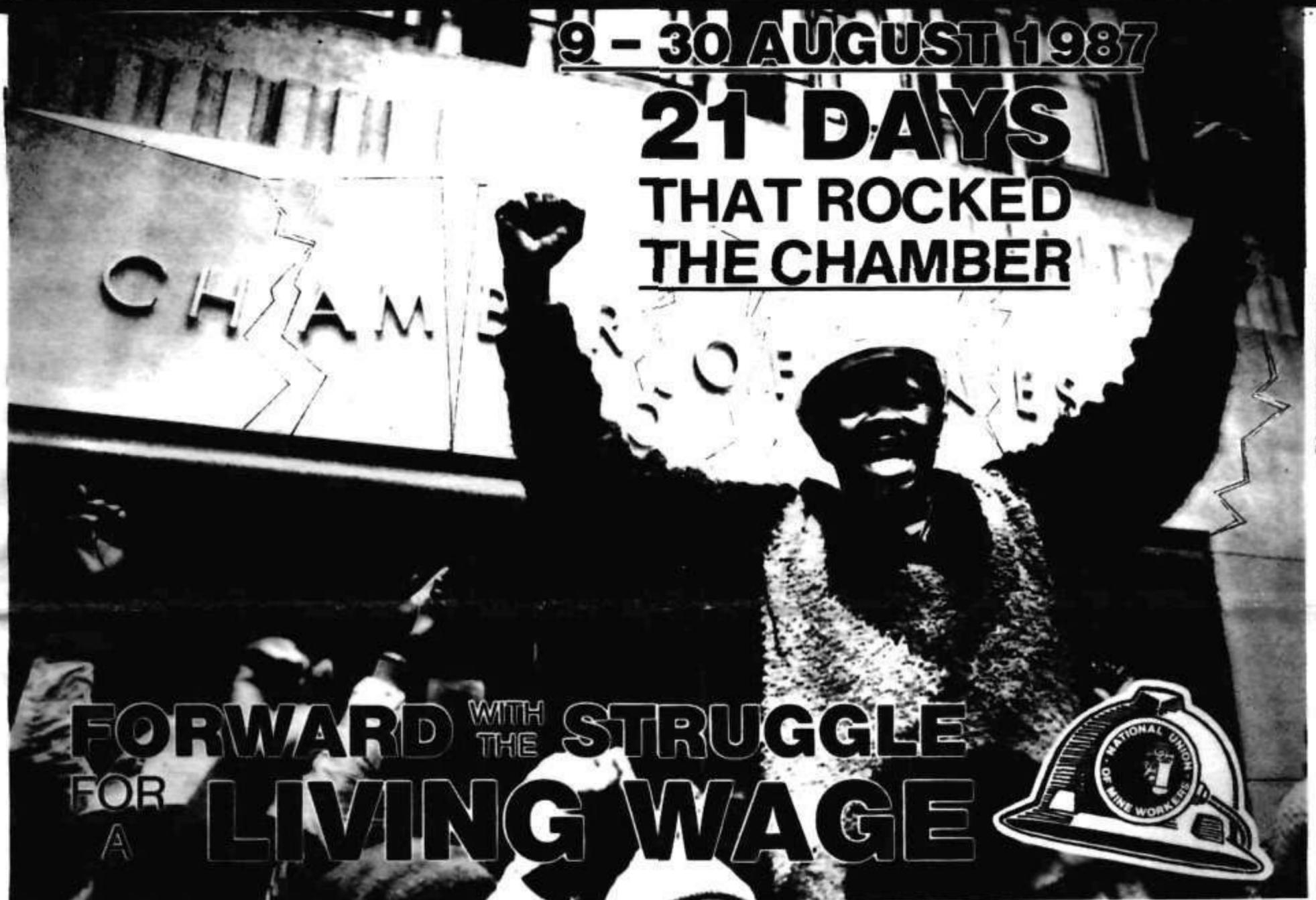


- Women
- COSATU Congress
- Strike Diary
- Freedom Charter
- 1946 Strike

Official Newsletter of the National Union of Mineworkers

9 - 30 AUGUST 1987

21 DAYS THAT ROCKED THE CHAMBER



FORWARD WITH THE STRUGGLE FOR A LIVING WAGE



The strike by 360 000 mineworkers ended in the same disciplined way as it started when agreement was reached with the Chamber of Mines on wages and conditions of employment.

ATTEMPTS TO BREAK THE STRIKE

Despite all attempts by the Chamber and its allies - the State and big business - to break the strike, they failed in the end.

These attempts included:

- Sending out false pamphlets, telling workers that the strike was off.
- Forcing workers underground at gunpoint at Vaal Reefs, Harmony and Western Deep Levels.
- Assaults of individuals and groups of workers by mine security and police.
- Raids on union offices.
- Bomb scares.
- Arrests and detention of stewards, including the

entire regional leadership of Klerksdorp.

In total 11 mineworkers died, 500 were injured and over 400 were arrested. This unmasked the ruthless nature of management.

UNITY AND DISCIPLINE

Despite these attacks the union's strike stewards stuck strictly to the union's strike rules. The discipline and unity throughout the strike laid a firm foundation for a Living Wage campaign in 1988.

LESSONS OF THE STRIKE

As Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the union, put it:

"This struggle was only the dress rehearsal for the struggle in 1988, it has laid a golden foundation for the future."

The strike proved beyond any

doubt that the union enjoyed the support of the workers. It also showed that NUM can continue to strike as long as it wants to. It also showed that the union has an effective and disciplined leadership, at all levels.

The Chamber thought that the union did not have workers' support. They also thought that if the strike did take place, it would only last 48 hours. This proved a costly mistake for them and became a three-week nightmare.

In fact, the Chamber lost well over R250 million during the strike. That is almost twice the amount of the union's wage demand. The Chamber was willing to go all out to destroy the union, but it underestimated the discipline of the mineworkers. In the end, they started dismissing thousands of workers, shaft by shaft, in an attempt to demoralise workers and hopefully break the strike.

But this still did not break the determination of workers, although it was clear that management of the mines was determined to dismiss all the workers.

It was necessary to defend the union because we were not only up against management, but also the State. Our main task became defending workers' jobs, and fighting the dismissals.

LIVING WAGE STRUGGLE CONTINUES

The union remains confident that the strike was an important victory for the mineworkers, COSATU and the workers of South Africa. The strike remains part of a wider struggle and continuing strategy for dealing with the Chamber.

Our struggle for a living wage continues and in 1988 more significant gains will be made.

NUM



News

STRIKE SPECIAL

August 9, 1987



NOW IS THE HOUR!