



James Motlatsi

**COMMENT BY  
NUM PRESIDENT  
MOTLATSI**

IT is clear for everyone to see from the reports of mineworkers that mine bosses and the state are out to reverse all the gains made since we organised ourselves into the National Union of Mineworkers.

The bosses want the NUM to operate as a form of a toothless welfare association of mineworkers. They have been entertaining this myth since our union was formed barely 6 years ago.

Our conditions then were so terrible that we could be likened with modern day slaves.

We were virtually owned by mine bosses without a say about

our working conditions and wages - let alone political rights.

The brutal exploitation which has been going on since the birth of mining industry in South Africa has created massive wealth for a few white multi-millionaires. This at the expense of millions of mineworkers.

Our union became an indispensable weapon against the cruel treatment we got from mine bosses.

The mine bosses appeared to be tolerant of union activities so long as we were not disrupting the huge profits reaped from our cheap labour.

The historic 21 days struggle with mine bosses - supported by the state - exposed the real character of this section of the

bosses.

We met fierce resistance from the mine bosses backed by the notorious mine security and the apartheid state.

Since the strike the mine bosses in collusion with the state have been hell-bent on disorganising mineworkers by delivering vicious blows at NUM.

The message is loud and clear - eliminate NUM from the mines and go back to slavery, then a continuous flow of super profits will be ensured for ever.

Our main weapon against the bosses is organisation. We must accept the challenge of organising every mineworker into NUM - our only shield that can absorb all hammer blows delivered by mine bosses and the apartheid

state.

It is only when we are organised that we can act as a united force against the rule of capital and gun.

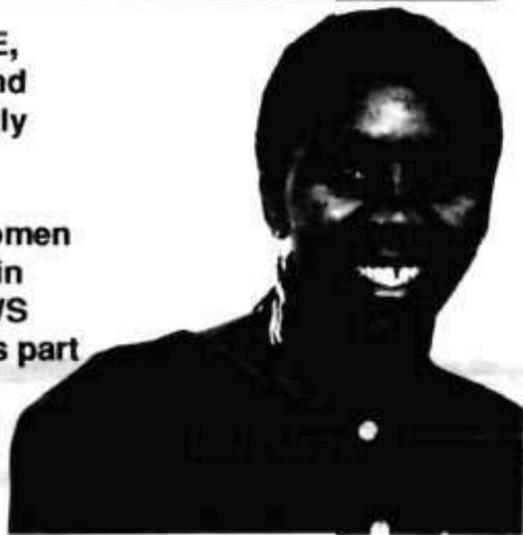
And it is only in a non-racial people's democratic state that we can gain full control of our lives at the workplace and at home.

The road might be long and difficult but the march has begun. Sacrifices have to be made if we are to save ourselves from the cruelties of the apartheid system.

James Motlatsi

**PEOPLE IN THE UNION**

**MANOKO NCHWE,** NUM organiser and negotiator, recently returned from an international conference on women and trade unions in Ghana. NUM NEWS interviewed her as part of a new series introducing union organisers to our readers.



*Manoko, describe your childhood.*

I come from an ordinary family in Soweto. When my father retired in 1981 from his job as a foreman the meagre benefits he received for his working life left a long lasting impression. My mother was in and out of work, fulfilling her role as a worker as well as a housewife.

I started school at the age of seven. One would wake up in the morning to find both parents gone to work, would wash up, dress up and leave for school without breakfast.

My parents used to come home tired from a hard days work between 6pm and 7pm. But despite the fact that not everything we wanted was given to us we were a close happy family.

*Did your parents have an influence on the fact that you became a trade union organiser?*

From my childhood I always had this sense of questioning. My father who once belonged to the ANC Youth League told us about injustice, the problem of the urban bantu councils and why they did not enjoy support, about homeland systems etc. This instilled a sense of analysing issues and discussing my opinion with others.

*What made you become involved in the workers struggle?*

I became involved in the workers' struggle because of the experience of others, namely my parents, the community I lived with and my daily interest in following the development of the then so called black emerging trade unions.

*What are your best moments in working for the union?*

I always feel victorious when workers take up a political demand and win - for example May Day. That marks a sure important slow, steady development of progress within our national struggle for freedom from oppression, apartheid and exploitation.

*What does your job in collective bargaining involve?*

We collect information, advise the union and workers and assist in negotiations with minebosses.

*Do you have strong views on the rights of women?*

My views on the rights of women are personal and very

strong. Women must be part of the mass movement, and organise themselves nationally and regionally.

Cosatu has expressed itself clearly on women's issues. Women in the unions should take the initiative and combine their efforts with those of women within the community structures.

Women should be at the forefront of fighting factory floor injustices such segregation of occupation based on both race and sex. Women are employed in a limited range of jobs, that are badly paid, repetitive and boring. They suffer sexual harassment during recruiting and whilst in employment. And most women do not have full maternity rights. Cosatu has guidelines regarding women's issues and campaigns which provide a starting place.

*Tell us about your trip to Ghana?*

Our trip to Ghana was interesting in that it was the first country to receive its independence from the British colonialists in 1957. The labour movement in Ghana, the Ghana Trade Union Congress is large and organised mainly in the public sector. But it is quite weak and there is a lack of shop floor power.

Workers in Ghana are not militant, but maybe this goes with tripartite workings (government, employers and labour unions).

*What are some of the problems faced by Ghana?*

Ghana's economy is experiencing difficulties. The country is heavily in debt to the IMF (International Monetary Fund). This results in everything being run down, low wages, extensive informal sector activity. There have been several coups since Nkrumah. The present government is a military government. People are unwilling to talk "politics" or express political opposition.



Mineworkers want their families close to them

## Families of mineworkers resist forced removal

**FAMILIES** of NUM members living at Port Nolloth, Namaqualand face forced evictions and removal.

There are about 400 people from Soweto, Crossroads and Transkei and Namibia living in tents on a salt pan in Port Nolloth.

"We want to know where we are supposed to go", said the squatter community of Bloukamp and Tent Town in a press statement. "We are South Africans".

Residents have taken their case to the Supreme Court after the local municipality issued eviction notices.

The nearest township where the people of Bloukamp and Tent Town can live in terms of the Group Areas Act is Upington, which is 550 kilometres away. There is no proclaimed area for Africans in the whole of Namaqualand.

The mineworkers want their families to live close to them. "The struggle of mineworkers is not excluded from the struggle of the community", said union members in a statement. "We are going to fight together until they get settled."

Conditions in the tenttown are harsh. In winter the salt pans flood the tents. Numbers are strictly controlled and residents are not allowed to build permanent structures. If they build structures for visitors over the weekend these have to be demolished before 7am on Monday morning.

### Mines won't help

There are about 120 tents and shacks in Bloukamp and Tent Town. Over half the households receive income from workers employed on the mines. The workers are employed by De Beers at Kleinsee and Consolidated Diamond Mines at Oranjemund. When workers approached the companies for support, the companies referred to the Group Areas Act and told union members that they are not prepared to interfere in matters other than work related matters.

While the community is not rich and housing conditions are appalling, it contributes to the economy of Port Nolloth. This was proved when 19 out of 26 businesses in Port Nolloth signed a petition calling for the residents to be allowed to stay.