

posedly non-racial Namibia and a PFP constituency as of 1981, should also be included in this category).

4. Certain laws, such as the Mixed Marriages Act, should be repealed forthwith, over the whole country.
5. Parliament must grant all local authorities the right to suspend or repeal any race laws remaining in effect in areas under their jurisdiction. Cape Town, for example, could then immediately scrap the Group Areas and Separate Amenities Acts (unless, of course, these had already been eliminated under 4).
6. A representative National Convention must be called to make recommendations on the constitutional future of the country, but without any pre-conditions. The outcome might then form the basis for a subsequent election platform, and Bishop Tutu's forecast of a black Prime Minister within ten years might even become a peaceful reality.

I know from discussing this type of approach in the past with white liberals that they are very uneasy about it, particularly

insofar as it may be regarded as a compromise of principle which would lead to an alienation of black opinion. I can only say that such people should discuss the matter with blacks and not make the paternalistic assumption that they know the answer. My own finding is that blacks regard the politics of protest as irrelevant, and would greatly welcome a bold approach such as outlined above. They generally don't want violence anymore than whites do, but the past ineffectiveness of protest politics has merely made violence seem inevitable. In any event, as blacks obviously read this journal, let us hope that they will contribute their opinions to this dialogue.

Finally, I believe that those white liberals and radicals who reject the above approach should indicate an alternative peaceful route to non-racialism, which I for one would very much like to hear about. For if they were to reject it without offering an alternative, they will have to bear a heavy share of the blame for the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives which will of necessity be one of the consequences of violent change. □

FOSATU

Perspective on a non-racial trade union

by John Passmore

This article is the first in a series on South African non-racial trade union movements. The purpose of the article is to provide an introduction to FOSATU. Should the reader desire a more detailed and analytical study of FOSATU and non-racial trade union movements in general he/she should consult the South African Labour Bulletin.

"It is on men such as these that the South African economy ultimately rests; it is they that dig the diamonds, uranium, copper and platinum. The world gold market and thus, in part, the world's monetary system rests on them too, for it is they who dig the gold, as also the coal to provide electricity for the gold mines. They are the unsung (and poorly paid) heroes of every Anglo-American report, every de Beers balance sheet; it is the fruits of their labours which have, over the years, filled the vaults of Fort Knox, bought race-horses for the Oppenheimer family, endowed Rhodes Scholarships, and provided Elizabeth Taylor with her jewellery".

(from "How long will South Africa Survive" by R. W. Johnson)

"Mechanisms are proposed by means of which all systematic changes that are in any way significant can be introduced gradually and circumspectly, thus limiting the possibilities of disruption"

(from the Wiehahn Commission report on existing labour legislation)

"This (labour integration) was not National Party policy and, if it should be allowed, it would create an extremely dangerous situation. We must remember that we have in this country a labour situation that could lead to white-black confrontation.

This we must avoid at all times In South Africa, labour could only be accommodated on a differential basis" (Fanie Botha)

"His (Wiehahn) report is a very skilled, very clever and highly sophisticated recipe for national disaster" (Sheena Duncan of Black Sash)

The above quotes are indicative of the vast manoeuvring taking place in and around the South African labour scene. South African labour is certainly standing at the crossroads insofar as a future for non-racial trade unions is concerned. The Wiehahn and Riekert Commissions (even in their emasculated parliamentary form) have given the non-racial trade unions vital elbow room in which to secure strategic advances as regards securing government recognition of sorts.

On the other hand the non-racial trade unions have to face the fact (as they have done) that the purpose of the commissions was, and is, to gain greater control over labour and to secure the interests of white capital by creating a black middle class and granting non-racial unions token recognition. The commission reports are attempts at (1) modernizing the apartheid infrastructure to some small extent and (2) giving non-racial unions an apparent concession in order to neutralize the possibility of labour unrest sparking off populist outbursts.

Aside from the problems sketched above; the non-racial trade unions are faced with the difficulty inherent in organizing a worker movement and pursuing worker interests in the face of tight legislation.

Another problem is consensus as regards strategy. Some unions feel that workers issues should not be expanded into the community as this could result in the issues being

deflected from the factory floor into the community where these issues could be controlled by a non-worker organization.

Others feel that worker issues and populist issues cannot be separated as the two are interlinked.

Fosatu (Federation of South African Trade Unions) is one of the relatively new and expanding Trade Union organizations faced with these problems. The purpose of this article is to give a brief and general account of Fosatu's formation and development.

Fosatu was formed at a congress of unions at Hammanskraal in April 1979. 13 Unions from different parts of the country were responsible for the formation of the loosely knit federation. Four of the unions had originated in Natal after the 1973 strike in the province. They were part of the Trade Unions Advisory and Co-ordinating body. In 1973 T.U.A.C. dissolved as the co-ordinating body of these four unions which, in turn affiliated to Fosatu where they were influential in shaping Fosatu policy.

From the Transvaal came all the reef-based unions who had broken away from consultative committees or Urban Training Project unions, who had emerged from the struggle in a rather fragmented state and were thus less influential in shaping Fosatu policy.

The remaining unions were registered unions who were disenchanted with the existing trade union federations due to the latter's markedly conservative orientation.

At Hammanskraal the nascent federation resolved to base itself on the five principles enunciated at the congress.

The first principle adopted was the principle of **non-racialism** which was embodied in the constitution and policies of the federation. Fundamental to Fosatu's formation was the strong belief that racial divisions which divide the workers in this country could only be combatted by making non-racialism the prerequisite basis before any dealings could be entered into with government and business.

The second principle was **worker control**. In terms of this all unions under the Fosatu umbrella would work towards worker leadership. This principle stressed direct worker participation in the decision making process as well as direct worker control of all affiliated unions.

Thirdly, the unions had to be strong on the **shop floor**.

The base to effective organization lay with workers at factory floor level. This principle underlined the necessity of having shop stewards and re-iterated their importance in the bargaining process. This principle differed sharply with the attitudes prevalent in the conservative Trade Union Council of South Africa. The registered Tucsas federation was clearly bureaucratic in nature and Tucsas officials had become the centre-pins of the unions and bargained on behalf of the workers. Tucsas operated at a level far removed from the factory floor and the bureaucratic nature of the federation minimized the role of the shop steward to a considerable extent.

The fourth principle was that Fosatu should be a federation consisting of broadly based industrial unions. This principle was adopted in contradistinction to Tucsas which was a narrowly based predominantly craft-based union grouping and other non-racial unions where the tendency was to form general worker unions. Implicit in the formation of a broadly individual union grouping was an acknowledgement on Fosatu's part that workers share experience which cut across industries and the formation of a federation of broadly based industrial unions did not exclude this factor.

The final principle adopted at Hammanskraal was that Fosatu should be a tightly-knit federation.

The federation provided for union autonomy, nevertheless the intention was to promote close union co-operation at all levels, hence the sharing of certain facilities, the pooling of certain resources and common decision-making at certain levels. A tight policy was adopted as to financial matters.

All finances had to be channelled through Fosatu and not individually to affiliates.

The federation adopted this policy regarding the channelling of funds in order to prevent individual unions developing at a quicker rate than other unions as well as to prevent a union becoming beholden to an individual sponsor whether these sponsors were overseas organizations or not.

GOALS

Fosatu is committed to far-reaching goals for workers in South Africa and, in pursuit of such objectives, has followed a path aimed at avoiding open confrontation with government and big industry. Consistent with this approach all Fosatu affiliates decided to apply for registration after the Wiehahn report and subsequent amendments to the Industrial Conciliation Act which made it possible for the first time for non-racial unions to be registered. A number of conditions were laid by the federation. Affiliates would not accept registration if

- (a) it was not non-racial.
- (b) If the government attempted via the process of registration to impose even greater control over labour beyond the already unacceptable degree of control the government has.
- (c) Fosatu would only accept final registration and not provisional registration. This last stipulation is crucial.

Midway in 1980 all Fosatu unions were given permission to apply for registration on a non-racial basis. At the end of 1980 Fosatu's application for membership had been duly gazetted. Early in 1981 the federation's unions had been registered but on a racial basis. This action on the part of the government was a direct violation of the first condition. Fosatu affiliates thus rejected their registration certificates. Nearly all the federation's affiliates stated that they would appeal against the racial certificates and, failing that, would reconsider their decision to register with a view to de-registering. At present the appeals are in the process of being heard.

Fosatu's attitude towards Industrial councils is highly significant insofar as it reflects what the federation sees as the concept of a trade union.

Fosatu's attitude to the Industrial Council system becomes obvious when the I.C. System is analysed. The system is an attempt to elevate negotiations between capital and labour to national or, at least, regional level. This process leads to a situation whereby bargaining is distanced from the shop floor with the result that the workers' participation in the bargaining process is severely undermined if not done away with altogether. Because the Industrial Council system has a regional and national character it cannot deal quickly and effectively with grievances at shop floor level. Fosatu regards the whole Industrial council system as cumbersome, unwieldy and ineffective in that a more efficient means for the negotiations over, and resolution of, grievances, would be throughhouse agreements entered into between individual companies and their respective shop-steward groupings. □