

WORK

IN

PROGRESS



METAL UNION SPLIT

SOUTH AFRICA'S PRESS WAR

BLACK MINERS SET TO STRIKE

SECURITY FOR THE UNEMPLOYED?

Editorial

Observers estimate that there have already been more strikes during 1984 than the record high of 1982. Riots have broken out on the East Rand and in a number of Southern Transvaal townships, as angry crowds have come out in opposition to rent increases. Community councillors responsible for proposing rent hikes have been the objects of violent attacks.

As collective resentment against the ever-rising cost of living increases, progressive trade unions and community organisations are under pressure to find ways of directing and leading growing frustration.

This is the context in which current splits in progressive trade unions must be viewed. While these divisions weaken the independent labour movement, they are also understandable. On the one hand, economically pressurised workers are demanding wage increases, often striking in support of these demands. On the other hand, management is refusing to make large concessions because of the recession. Trade union leaders and officials are caught in the middle, often becoming the victims of frustrated criticism from rank-and-file.

This is a situation tailor-made for disaffected leaders to emerge, promising new and effective organisation without spelling out how they intend to do this.

While the current context may render this inevitable in some unions, breakaways from progressive organisations often create further division and disunity at a time when organisational consolidation is vital.

Contents

MAWU AND UMMAWSA FIGHT FOR THE FACTORIES	4
<hr/>	
P IS FOR PRESS WAR	13
<hr/>	
NUM TESTS LEGAL STRATEGIES	17
<hr/>	
ROOTS OF BC TRADE UNIONISM	21
<hr/>	
DIAMONDS ARE FOREVER BUT IS THE MINE?	24
<hr/>	
UNEMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SECURITY: THE UIF INVESTIGATION	27
<hr/>	
LABOUR ACTION	
Joint ballot at Highveld Steel	31
Penge miners lose battle	32
Hlobane findings and fines	34
Strikes and disputes	37
<hr/>	

MAWU and UMMAWSA Fight for the Factories

The United Mining, Metal and Allied Workers of South Africa was formed after a split in MAWU. INGRID OBERY and MARK SWILLING trace the history of this split in FOSATU's largest union, and discuss some implications.

By the end of the 1970s, the black trade union movement was making itself felt. Many unions were powerless, but even then, the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) was not small. And in the last four years it has grown considerably, establishing itself as one of the more successful of FOSATU's affiliates.

The early 1980s saw growing worker militancy and a wave of strikes in the metal industry, particularly on the East Rand in the Transvaal. Metal workers there joined MAWU in their thousands.

The East Rand has one of the highest concentrations of metal factories in South Africa. Many of them are close together as in Wadeville, where streets are lined with a succession of metal, engineering or foundry works.

A significant number of these metal workers are migrants living in Katlehong hostels. These factors all facilitate organisation. Nevertheless, MAWU was hard-pressed by its rate of expansion, needing to consolidate while facing the effects of a deepening recession.

Rumblings during the past 18 months indicated that all was not well in the model union. On 17 June, things came to a head when four prominent MAWU officials were suspended. On 7 July, a National Executive Committee (NEC) meeting dismissed them from the union.

On 16 June, the dismissed officials called the first of two general meetings to discuss grievances. The possibility of forming another union

was raised. At a meeting on 14 July, they established their own union, the United Mining, Metal and Allied Workers of South Africa (UMMAWSA). The UMMAWSA leadership claims that 40 factories were represented at its formation.

The four expelled from MAWU were general secretary David Sibabi; Andrew Zulu, MAWU vice-president and FOSATU vice-president; Sam Thuli and Enoch Godongwane, both organisers. All four were operating on the East Rand. It is there that the present competition between the two unions for membership is being fought out.

Sibabi, Zulu, Thuli and Godongwane have all been accused by MAWU of corruption and mismanagement of union funds. Whatever the truth of these allegations, it would be a pity if the substantive issues of the dispute become lost, or synonymous with corruption.

UMMAWSA GRIEVANCES

The issues have largely been raised by the breakaway group. These have not been ignored by MAWU, although within the union and indeed within FOSATU, there are differing opinions as to their legitimacy.

Briefly, the grievances raised by UMMAWSA leadership about MAWU and FOSATU are:

1. Bureaucratisation of the union, and the growth of structures which 'cannot take you anywhere';
2. The issue of worker control, or

rather, as they put it, lack of worker control within MAWU;

3. The question of the political direction of MAWU and the Federation as a whole;

4. The role of 'white intellectual bureaucrats' within the union.

MAWU's history of organisation on the East Rand, and importantly its shop steward councils, are necessary background to the dispute. Inevitably questions facing an overextended union intersected with the growing debate in recent years about the political role of unions. The sequence of events that led to the split is also important. As always in such cases, there are at least two versions of 'what really happened'; we have tried to be as accurate as possible in this article.

In 1983, MAWU decided to include the mining industry in its organisational terrain. Two Transvaal organisers, Bernie Fanaroff and Moses Mayekiso, were mandated to investigate the mines and begin organising miners. Some officials opposed this development, among them general secretary Sibabi. He saw the proposed mining project as an alternative power base for Mayekiso and Fanaroff. There were also already disputes over the form and content of union strategies, demarcation of target areas in the metal and mining industries, and precisely how these sectors should be approached and organised.

TRANSVAAL TURMOIL

At the same time, the Transvaal head office came under scrutiny. Certain officials were under suspicion of financial corruption. It also appears that head office communication and accountability to both rank-and-file membership and other MAWU officials had broken down. Mayekiso admits that this state of affairs was not challenged until there was suspicion of financial mismanagement.

MAWU had for some time extended itself beyond the capacity of its resources, and this partly explains the breakdown within the union. This provided opportunities for officials to take union matters into their own hands, avoiding accountability to membership.

At the NEC meeting of February 1984, the MAWU financial statement was

rejected and investigations into union finances began. At the Branch Executive Committee (BEC) elections in May, Sibabi and Zulu were not re-elected to the positions of MAWU general secretary and vice-president respectively. However, they refused to surrender financial control to the new office bearers.

The conflict over finances brought the issue of racism to a head. The present UMMAWSA leaders claimed that the rejection of the financial statement reflected control of the union by white intellectuals. 'White bureaucratic intellectuals' opposed any initiatives by emerging black leadership, they said. 'A tiny white bureaucratic elite tries to dominate the whole Federation. They are trying to direct the Federation towards their direction rather than letting the workers decide'.

CONFLICT OVER THE BEC

Problems in the Transvaal included conflict between the East and West Rand sections of the Transvaal branch. In February the NEC had appointed a committee to investigate problems in the Transvaal, but it was unable to reach a satisfactory conclusion.

Further conflict flared over the election of the BEC committees. An election was held on 18 March. The dissidents who were to become the UMMAWSA leadership claimed that it was invalid, and called a second election on 25 March. MAWU officials say this was done to ensure that 'their own people' would be elected.

Confusion. Two Transvaal committees turned up to elect the NEC. That election had to be postponed until the Transvaal problem had been clarified.

The NEC proposed that the area be divided into East Rand and West Rand branches. Subsequently the BEC decided that factories, irrespective of whether they were geographically on the East or West Rand, could choose the branch they wished to belong to.

This led to a fight for factories. A petition did the rounds of shop stewards, urging them to join the West and not East Rand branch. UMMAWSA officials allege that a white MAWU organiser drew up the petition and forced shop stewards to sign it. At the time they produced letters, purportedly from workers, in support

of this assertion.

MAWU spokesmen respond that the petition was drawn up on shop stewards' instructions after a meeting in the Johannesburg offices. They also claim that the letters were written by secretaries of two shop steward committees in East Rand factories, without the knowledge of workers in these factories. The secretaries were subsequently removed from their positions.

The split of Transvaal MAWU into two branches did not solve the problems, and they were re-amalgamated into a single Transvaal branch in June.

In the course of the Transvaal BEC power struggle there were attempts to oust the established organisers, Mayekiso and Fanaroff, who opposed the dissidents. Both sides did a good deal of lobbying. The established organisers kept their positions in the end. The growing tensions within MAWU had resulted in an organiser, Jabu Radebe, being fired in February. He was subsequently reinstated in July.

If the dissident group had managed to wrest control of the BEC from the established leadership, the situation would be very different today. Their failure to gain control must be seen as significant in the decision by the dissidents to form their own union.

The MAWU NEC decided in June to suspend the three officials, Sibabi, Thuli and Godongwane. Vice-president Zulu was an elected office bearer, rather than a union employee, and could not be dismissed by the NEC, which then recommended to the Transvaal BEC that he be suspended. The grounds for the suspension were alleged financial mismanagement by all four. The NEC also judged that the suspended men had acted against union policy and democracy. They claimed Sibabi had acted in a racist manner in trying to oust Fanaroff and Mayekiso. It was also claimed that Sibabi had not followed NEC instructions to include organisers more fully in the running of the MAWU head office in Benoni.

DISMISSAL GROUNDS

This assessment followed the BEC election fiasco. The four had also employed a new organiser, Zwelake Sipetha, without the consent of either the BEC or NEC. MAWU officials say he

was employed by the suspended four while the established East Rand organiser, Mayekiso, was overseas, and instructed to take over the factories organised by the absent man. Sipetha was paid from union funds without ratification from the NEC. He has subsequently been employed by UMMAWSA as an organiser.

The four suspended officials were asked to attend a NEC meeting on 7 July, to respond to the charges against them and to argue against their suspension. They did not turn up. The NEC then discussed the issue in their absence, and decided to dismiss them.



UMMAWSA break-away leader Andrew Zulu

UMMAWSA claims that this was an undemocratic, unconstitutional decision. MAWU officials argue that since the NEC is made up exclusively of worker representatives and has the right to dismiss union officials, the dismissals were both democratic and constitutional. They add that all organisers were excluded from the NEC meeting while the dismissals were discussed and decided on.

On 21 July the NEC called a further election to sort out the Transvaal BEC, and the present Transvaal executive committee was elected. Mayekiso was voted in as branch secretary.

While the specific ins and outs of the MAWU split and the subsequent formation of UMMAWSA are complicated,

they do raise a number of general issues.

INTELLECTUALS

Creeping bureaucracy, the place of white intellectuals within unions, the nature of worker control, and the question of racism of any type are issues that have existed as long as union organisation in South Africa.

UMMAWSA officials say: 'We are against intellectuals intervening in our leadership'. According to their account, both MAWU and FOSATU are dominated by a clique of university-trained white intellectuals who desire a unified political direction for the Federation and the union. The clique actively implements this by educating and guiding selected workers, and by controlling union structures with their intellectual skills and superior organisational training.

White intellectuals have played significant directing roles within FOSATU over the years. They may often have taken particular directions with inadequate discussion among union membership. But it is important not to convert a problem into a conspiracy.

Certainly race is a potential issue in progressive organisations. But it should not be orchestrated to obscure problems such as the role of skilled intellectuals within the working class movement.

For example, after the elections in which he lost his position as MAWU general secretary, Sibabi wrote to the general secretary of the International Metal Federation. In the letter, he said that he had begun challenging the white leadership within MAWU and FOSATU. He listed the white intellectuals he hoped to have dismissed. The list named one of the black East Rand organisers (Mayekiso) as well. Sibabi requested that funds be withheld from MAWU until conflicts were resolved and the listed people dismissed.

Domination by intellectuals within the trade union movement is an ongoing problem. As long as people with specific training and skills work with others who do not have that training, skilled individuals will tend to drift towards bureaucratisation.

Intellectual domination can be seen most clearly in the sphere of union education. Structurally, educational

planning within FOSATU is democratic, but the practice is different. One of the organisers of FOSATU courses says that the content and often the direction of worker and shop steward education courses are controlled by intellectuals, most of whom are university-trained whites. In course planning, he said, intellectuals do dominate debate. Workers on the committee seldom influence the discussion significantly.

The political direction and preferences of intellectuals may then gain dominance, perhaps by default. When workers demand courses on political issues or organisation, it is intellectuals who teach. Consequently their opinions and lines predominate.

At present most intellectuals within FOSATU are university-trained whites. This is more a result of historical accident than intention. Not all intellectuals are white, nor university trained. As the union movement develops, more 'organic' intellectuals emerge.

This type of intellectual has to be as carefully controlled by worker structures as those trained in a university.

Fanaroff told WIP: 'It has been difficult to develop proper democratic structures. We outgrew our resources, and didn't develop the structures to facilitate our rate of growth. Also there is no real tradition that organisers are controlled by the BEC in the Transvaal. Each organiser can do his own thing.

'It is encouraging, though, that particularly over the last year the shop stewards have realised that they must really control the union in the Transvaal. If we contrast Transvaal and Natal, it's clear that in Natal workers rather than the organisers control the union. Workers discipline the organisers and make them accountable. As a result they won many victories, and have developed a very stable leadership. And this is only because the BEC in Natal controls the organisers'.

DEMOCRATIC FORM

This suggests that, when considering MAWU in the Transvaal, one must distinguish between formal and substantive democracy. Anyone can plan

a union structure on paper, and staff it with organisers committed in principle to democracy. But there is no guarantee that this will be attained during the practical process of co-ordinating a very large organisation against the background of an oppressive state.

Democracy does not simply unfold unproblematically as an organisation expands. Substantive democracy only develops as workers demand it in the process of struggle.

MAWU organisers suggest that the split was no solution to problems within the union. They argue that the real challenge would have been to remain within the union and fight for real worker control. The question is then raised whether UMMAWSA will be able to build substantive democratic structures. It may face the same problems its leaders left MAWU over, particularly after its anti-MAWU unity is succeeded by the need to construct positive organisational direction.

WORKER CONTROL

Worker control is a crucial issue, affecting the problems of bureaucratisation and union democracy. It seems a simple enough principle on the face of it, but is often a focus of debate and conflict. Worker control is vested in the will of union members. Workers as a collective body therefore decide direction and strategy.

A union cannot claim worker control simply because workers from the shop floor have been elected into official positions, even if they have been elected by the rank-and-file. As with intellectuals, it is the control of officials which determines the extent of worker control in the union.

The example of the chemical workers on the East Rand demonstrates that worker control of union organisers is possible. Organisers in the Chemical Workers Industrial Union must account for every moment of their time. They detail their movements, the factories they visit and the issues which come up on each visit. Their logs are scrutinised regularly by the BEC, and they are then directed to fulfil tasks emerging from BEC evaluation.

THE EDUCATION ISSUE

Education has a role to play in building worker control. But this role can be ambiguous. In the Transvaal, the labour studies course is the vehicle of worker education. Primarily shop stewards attend, and only a small proportion are able to. Only top leadership has the benefit of intensive educational training.

There are occasional lectures or seminars which large numbers of workers do attend. But their infrequency, and the lack of follow-up, means that these lectures do not play a particularly significant role in building up middle levels of worker leadership. Developing this leadership level would ensure a greater degree of informed worker control. But, as one of the course organisers noted, there is an inherent tension between allowing workers to develop independent thought and direction, while at the same time having them attend courses run by people with a particular political position.

This tension, he said, is still more manifest when it comes to politics. Who is to give political direction within the union movement? It is undesirable for a small intellectual elite to do so.

UMMAWSA accuses certain white intellectuals in FOSATU of prescribing a political direction. These individuals, they argue, have tried to divorce the unions from the political arena. Indeed, FOSATU has been repeatedly accused of 'workerist' trends. Such criticism may have been too harsh. But there certainly is too close an identification of trade unions with the working class movement. Not all members of the working class are employed, organised workers. The working class includes the unemployed, people involved in the informal sector and certain groupings of women. Working class organisation also takes forms other than trade unionism - for example, women's co-operative groups and various kinds of community organisations.

THE POLITICAL ARENA

This separation of trade unionism and politics is too severe. Yet the problems with popular opposition

politics that FOSATU has expressed have a basis. An important question for trade union members is who controls the working class movement in the political arena. If trade unions adopt a political line and engage in political struggles, it is not in their interests to be subsumed by petty bourgeois-led political organisations.

The course organiser admitted that developing advanced political understanding within an underdeveloped trade union movement remains a problem. For all the advances of the past decade, South African trade unions are still weak. While this does not imply that unions should avoid political issues, it does mean that political direction often filters from the top down rather than rising from rank-and-file.

Unions also have to establish some relation to community organisations, as most leadership now accepts. Members are increasingly involved in matters concerning their communities. Such issues often have direct political content and affiliation. Unions cannot control either members' activities within community-based organisations, or the organisations themselves.

This suggests that the working class extends beyond trade union membership, and that trade unions are not necessarily the only representative form of worker organisation.

In the MAWU-UMMAWSA split/breakaway, the above issues have come to the fore. Within FOSATU, some argue that the issues could have been raised within the Federation, and that it was not necessary to take the drastic step of forming a new union.

It remains to be seen exactly how the new union will cope. It begins at a disadvantage. MAWU is one of the best-established unions on the East Rand. Further, to keep alive, unions must have funds. Can UMMAWSA generate enough stop orders in a relatively short space of time to be able to employ sufficient organisers to break into the metal and mining industries as a significant force?

On the other hand, the breakaway union has an experienced leadership. UMMAWSA has also taken some experienced shop stewards from MAWU in the East Rand factories. Such factors must operate in their favour.

UMMAWSA has stated that it wishes to

remain within FOSATU. Its officials say that their problem is not with the workers of FOSATU, but with its leadership.

But the allegations of financial mismanagement are important - the four leaders were dismissed from a FOSATU union. And while the new union insists it does not seek to compete with MAWU, a clash is inevitable as to who organises which factories where.

The final decision rests with the workers. Time, and stop orders, will tell.

UNION EVOLUTION

The conflicts in MAWU (Transvaal) give an idea of some of the dynamics that have operated, and will continue to operate. In 1981 there were a great many strikes in the metal industry on the East Rand. At least half of these strikes involved dismissals. The rest had to do with wages and management practices. Over 10 000 workers were involved in the strike wave, many of them being MAWU members.

By 1982, the economy was beginning to fade into recession. Metal employers were rethinking strategy. A major tactic was retrenchment, and thousands of metal workers were dismissed. Management embarked on rationalisation and reorganisation of production. They used the slump period to establish and train workers for new, more advanced technology in anticipation of the next boom.

Unions are often forced into defensive positions during recession. This was true to some extent in 1981-2, but MAWU continued expanding rapidly. The wave of strikes persisted, the issues including retrenchment, wages, unfair dismissals and management practices.

But the union faced consolidation problems, along with a concerted management strategy to undermine its power and credibility. Management also used strikes to dismiss 'troublesome' or 'unproductive' workers.

MAWU had only one full time organiser on the East Rand at the time. The job became far too much for one person, though the general secretary organised factories in the Springs-Benoni area, and the Transvaal organiser was responsible for some East Rand factories. The union's resources were spread thinly. The organiser describes the 'madness' of the time, the rush from

factory to factory during strikes - and the lack of control or direction that characterised the strikes.

SHOP STEWARD COUNCILS

Lack of resources in the face of rapid expansion generated one of the most significant developments in worker organisation - the shop steward councils. These councils consisted of shop steward representatives from all FOSATU factories in areas like Germiston and Wadeville.

The councils were formed by the shop stewards and rank-and-file members, who felt that in the absence of sufficient organisers, shop stewards should undertake organisation both in their own and in unorganised factories. The councils were initially autonomous of formal FOSATU structures, but were brought into the FOSATU constitution at the 1982 FOSATU National Congress.

The councils embodied in practice the principle of worker control, facilitating development of worker leadership from the shop floor. Shop stewards effectively controlled the direction, policies and strategies of the union on the East Rand during the strikes. Their effectiveness derived from direct day-to-day contact with membership.

The council structures were new, however, and shop stewards were only beginning to come to grips with the complexity of their role in a difficult time. Consequently, many strike actions were relatively undirected, and effective follow-up organisation and consolidation was lacking.

The best example of the way overloaded trade union resources resulted in inadequate direction is the April 1982 strike at Scaw Metals.

Workers at Scaw wanted a 10c an hour wage increase, which was less than management was prepared to concede at industrial council level. Their objective was to force management into plant-based negotiations instead of following them into the undemocratic bargaining system embodied in the industrial councils.

Scaw management understood the strategic significance of this action, and responded by dismissing the entire work-force. This smashed MAWU organisation at Scaw, and broke the demand for plant-based negotiations.

A general regional strategy was not developed by the union to support the Scaw workers. MAWU was only just coping with its new enlarged membership, let alone finding time and energy to respond to this event in a coherent manner. After this defeat and an

overall lessening of worker power caused by the recession, workers began to depend on the organisational direction and strategic experience of union officials and leading shop stewards. This resulted in these people playing a more direct role in the post-strike wage negotiations and organisation.

POLITICAL SHIFTS

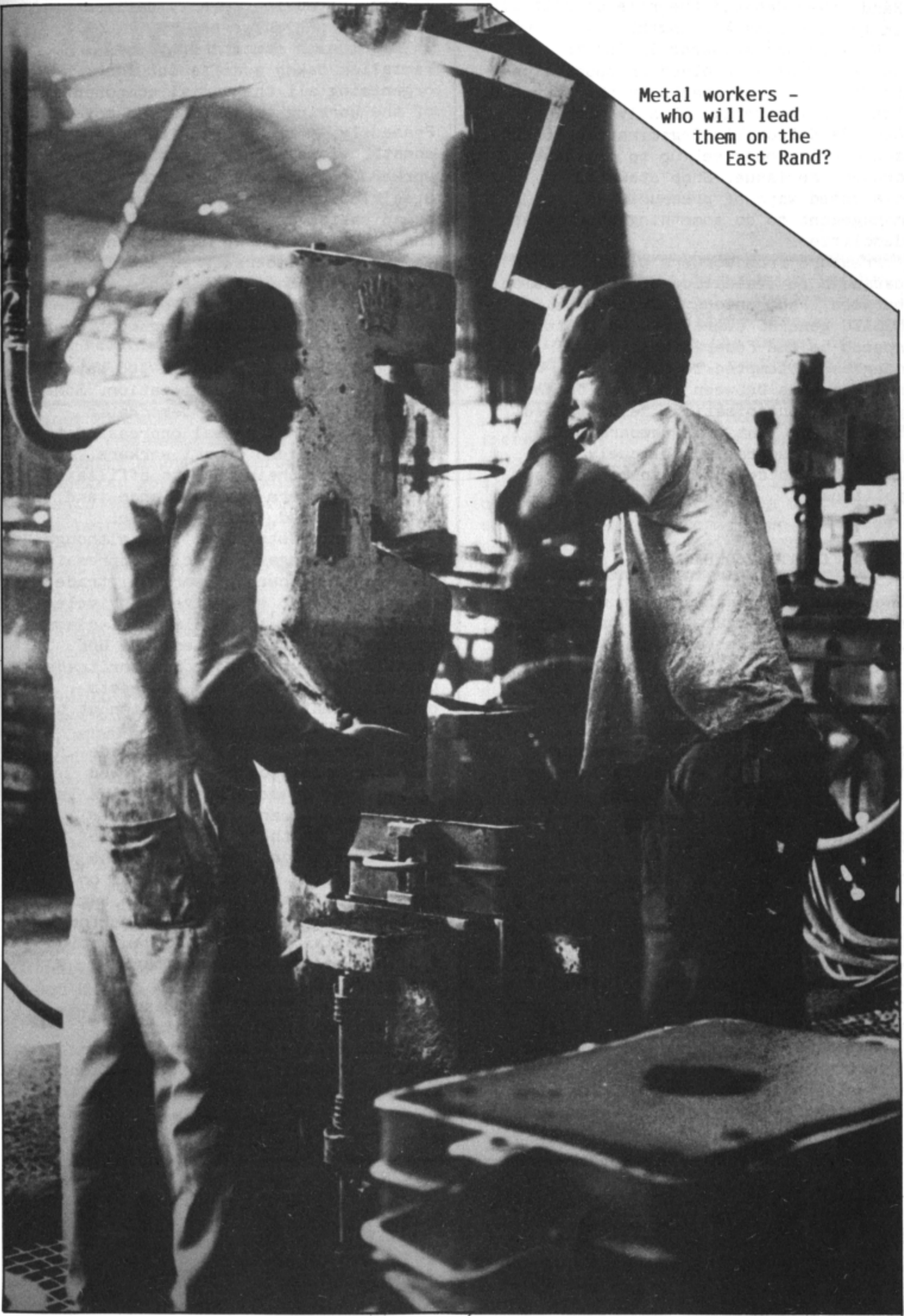
At the same time, the political terrain was shifting rapidly. The post Soweto 1976 political lull was ending with the Anti-Republic Day campaign of 1981. Community organisation became an important 'site of struggle', as did education. Politics was on the agenda for community, student and various union groups. High rents, the cost of living, transport, group areas, influx control and community councils were among the issues that became 'political' foci of resistance.

Questions arose on the appropriate forms of political organisation to deal with such issues. And how were the unions to take up political issues? On the broader political front, organisation was taking a 'national democratic' approach. The Freedom Charter, formulated by the Congress Alliance in the 1950s, became symbolic of the minimum demands of the oppressed majority. The symbolism and rhetoric of the Congress Alliance again became part of the politics of the oppressed.

Divisions emerged between 'political' unions engaging directly in the political arena, and those unions which maintained that their first allegiance was to the factory floor. They argued that the question of political organisation should be delayed until a strong and durable trade union base had been established.

FOSATU has often been seen as the main representative of this position. While there were elements in the Federation which held this view, it was not a monolithic position. This was particularly evident among the shop steward councils. On the East

Metal workers -
who will lead
them on the
East Rand?



Rand, they debated the role of politics in trade unions at length.

Workers and stewards living in Katlehong were involved in opposition to demolition of shacks in the township. The councils worked closely with the East Rand People's Organisation (ERAPO), a community body set up to organise around the issue. Shop stewards discussed ways of pressurising management to do something about shack demolition.

Pressure from workers within FOSATU caused a re-evaluation of the relation between trade unions and politics. FOSATU general secretary Joe Foster's speech to the Federation's 1982 congress attempted to define the relationship between trade union and political organisation. He distanced FOSATU from 'national democratic' politics, and rather obliquely attempted to define a 'working class politics'.

THE AFFILIATION DEBATE

The United Democratic Front was formed nationally in August 1983. It was set up as an umbrella body for organisations mobilising against the constitutional proposals for a tri-cameral parliament. With time, the UDF has operated less as an umbrella organisation, taking on a momentum of its own. It is now generally seen as separate from its constituent parts.

With a political programme based on principles similar to the Freedom Charter, and a multi-class appeal based on the unity of the oppressed, the UDF shares with most unions the principle of non-racialism. But they implement this principle in different ways.

The UDF practises non-racialism on a national level, defining the 'oppressed nation' and its allies as all those, irrespective of colour, who consciously reject apartheid and its racially exclusive democracy. Most of its constituent member organisations

remain rooted in racially defined organisations, however.

Trade union commitment to non-racialism takes a different form: organising all the racial components of the working class into one movement. Presently, most unions with non-racial constitutions mainly organise African workers. But recent events at Highveld Steel indicate some potential for organisation across racial lines. Here the majority of MAWU members and the majority of members of the white Boilermakers Society together voted in favour of industrial action when they reached deadlock with management over wages.

Unions have responded in two ways to the question of UDF affiliation. Some feel that the national democratic struggle against racial oppression is a central concern of all workers. It is therefore their duty to affiliate, allowing workers to experience, and ultimately lead, this struggle.

Other unionists argue that although the struggle against racial oppression is a major concern of workers, trade unions have not been given a privileged position within the UDF's multi-class populist structure. Unless the UDF establishes such a position for trade unions, petty bourgeois interests could dominate the organisation at the expense of worker interests.

The upheaval in East Rand trade union organisation must be viewed against the present state of flux in both political and trade union movements. As the giant new trade union federation emerges, and the effects of the new constitution on popular political organisation begin to be felt, the question of the form of non-racial democratic organisation will become a central strategic concern.

The MAWU - UMMAWSA split suggests that without structures based on worker control, neither unions nor popular struggle can be viable agents for working class organisation.

P is for Press War

South Africa's press war has implications beyond entertaining polemics in the Sunday papers. The media giants' battle for larger shares of a diminishing advertising market makes them increasingly eager to woo higher-income readership. The black media market is changing shape under the impact of Nasionale Pers's politically motivated entry. In both cases, controversial news coverage is the first victim.

Cabinet Minister Chris Heunis announced baldly a few weeks ago that he expected the country's press to promote Nationalist government policy. If he had said the same thing five years ago, press response would have been deafening.

As it was, casual newspaper readers might have missed Heunis' statement altogether - unless they also happened to be SABC TV watchers. Then they would have seen the editor of the country's biggest paper, the Sunday Times, defending Heunis, and the editor of the country's biggest daily, the Rand Daily Mail, apparently lacking ammunition to respond.

Admittedly, the press had far weightier matters on its mind than a challenge to its integrity: Would Zola win the gold? Barefoot or in spikes? Would she come home afterwards?

Heunis knew his editors well enough to demand that they promote consensus, and got little more than a half-hearted verbal wrist-slap from those who didn't actually defend him. This says much about the state of the South African commercial media.

The opposition press once stood firmly astride the middle ground of South African politics - safe in the knowledge that no-one else wanted it. Now it finds itself an insecure 'bywooner' on that very ground, unsure even as to how the take-over was effected.

It was easy, in the heyday of liberal newspapers, to snipe at the crudities of Verwoerdian apartheid. Now having helped - through its exposure of the Information Department scandal - to replace Vorster with PW Botha's

verligtheid, the opposition press increasingly finds itself unable to oppose. Faced with an opponent who denied the possibility of losing debates by stolidly refusing to debate on any but his own terms, the press has retreated, leaving for the victors a full dictionary of liberal platitudes with which to belabour their opposition.

For years the press pleaded, cajoled and demanded that a Nationalist government 'take the first step', and 'show its good faith'. Now it faces a Nationalist government which aggressively promotes its every action as an act of good faith - and the press, uncomfortable, has no response other than a pained 'yes, but ...'

Just how far this process has gone is glaringly demonstrated by two recent police public relations telexes, one to that flagship of South African liberal journalism, the Rand Daily Mail.

The Mail burned its fingers - and was publicly burned in the streets of Soweto - over its enthusiastic description of ANC cadres killed in the Silverton Seige as 'terrorists'. It then evolved a policy of describing only those attacking civilians as 'terrorists'. Often honoured only in the breach, the policy was duly applied to a group of insurgents referred to in a recent statement from the commissioner of police.

While referring to 'terrorists' when directly quoting the commissioner, the Mail referred to 'insurgents' in the same article.

The police PR unit responded smartly, saying in effect that whomsoever the commissioner describes as terrorists are just that - so the Mail has no

right to describe them as anything else. This has since become Mail policy.

Less than a week later, the police PR unit sent out a pleasantly worded 'request' in a confidential note to editors: in keeping with interdepartmental communications, when newspapers in future referred to police, would they do so with a capital 'P'.

Both incidents are relatively trivial. But they demonstrate that the police and other state departments - notably the military - are not only attempting with increasing success to define what is reported, and how it is reported, but even the linguistic technicalities of those reports.

But simply to cry 'sellout' is to misunderstand the nature of the institution which supplies South Africa with its daily portion of information. Newspapers are commercial enterprises, intended first to make money, and only secondarily to supply information.

Newspapers do not try to increase their circulations to offer more people their package of information, but primarily to offer advertisers a wider audience. In return for this, advertisers will obviously pay higher rates. And it's not just any audience that's wanted, but one which can afford the advertisers' product.

Throughout the 1960s and most of the 1970s, the South African press existed in a press paradise - there was no TV with which to share the advertising. Advertisers were to a large extent a captive market. If they didn't like a newspaper's policies, and didn't want their product identified with strident editorial messages, they could try something else - billboards, for instance.

The picture changed significantly with the advent of SABC's TV service. The press still holds the lion's share of advertising - around 60% - but TV is steadily cutting away at that share. Its own slice of the advertising market has grown 10% since 1978, and will probably stand at 30% next year. The press, by contrast, has lost steadily - 63% in 1978, to predictions for 1985 of not much higher than 50%.

This has been particularly worrying for the Argus group, with its stable of afternoon papers - the most vulnerable to the growth of TV, as overseas experience has shown. But Argus is buffered by its domination of the classified ads market. Its subsidiary

Caxton has cornered the lucrative knock-and-drop field as well. SAAN, with a heavily losing flagship, has less to temper the wind after at least a decade of ramshackle management.

Maintenance of profits has anyway demanded continued expansion, even without the major challenge of TV. The printed press's traditional markets have for some time been relatively saturated. Circulations increase steadily, but far too slowly. The small, independent newspaper groups have, in the last two years, been almost completely engulfed by Argus, SA Associated Newspapers (SAAN publishes most of the country's morning English-language papers), Nasionale Pers and Perskor.

Between them, these media giants account for almost 90% of the country's daily newspaper circulation (and 100% of Sunday circulations) - the highest newspaper ownership concentration in the world.

As TV loomed ever larger on the horizon, all four groups had to look for new areas to conquer. For Argus and Nasionale, the most obvious new territories were respectively those held by SAAN and Perskor. And, to a lesser extent, each others' holdings.

Nasionale's attack on Perskor coincided with the verligte attack on Vorster's conservative dominance in the National Party. The motive was at least partly political. Early in 1984, Nasionale's Beeld finally, and at a cost of millions, crushed Perskor's Die Transvaler, its morning flagship in the Pretoria - Witwatersrand - Vereeniging heartland.

Three factors laid Perskor open to defeat from the Cape. It opted to retain and run a number of smaller, regional papers, instead of channeling resources into national scale expansion of one of its papers to meet Beeld's challenge. At management and board level, it was strongly linked to the dinosaur Transvaal Broederbond, which was to suffer a series of defeats in Afrikaner politics. And its management was as centralised, rigid and autocratic as that of its mirror image in the English press, SAAN

Perskor has tiny footholds in Pretoria and the TV-threatened afternoon market in Johannesburg through Vaderland. It has one or two other outlets. But its most profitable paper is Rapport, owned 50-50 with Nasionale.

Nasionale's hold on the Afrikaans newspaper market was almost complete. With a massive dominance in the white-reader magazine market, it began to look elsewhere ...

Argus was less direct in its challenge to its rival, SAAN - of which it owned 39%.

In 1982, the SAPA agreement (a newspaper cartel agreement, defining who sold where and when, to avoid what had once seemed costly and unnecessary rivalry) came up for renewal. No agreement was reached. The way was cleared for an attack on SAAN.

The first strike on SAAN was Saturday 'sunrise' editions of Argus afternoon papers. The Rand Daily Mail, never a big money maker, and less so since the launch of the Citizen, felt the bite most painfully. While the Mail's sales dropped since the launch of the Citizen, its percentage of black readers had risen sharply - a factor not encouraging for advertisers. Now its white readership was under attack from another direction.

But a direct attack on the renowned Rand Daily Mail would have been unwise politically - it would have hurt the Star's own liberal image - and with the Mail already losing millions a year, it wouldn't have been a particularly profitable victory.

SAAN money spinners are its Sunday papers, the Sunday Times and Sunday Express. The Times, the biggest paper in the country, was unassailable. But the Express, despite gradually dwindling sales, was pulling in increasingly high profits from property advertising.

In one swoop, the Star massively undercut the Express's advertising rates, and snatched almost the entire Reef property ad market from SAAN. The way was now open for a direct challenge to the big apple - the Sunday Times. In July, Argus duly announced that it would launch a Sunday Star the following month.

What Argus is after, SAAN insiders say, is the Times's classified section, particularly its lucrative job ads.

In the Cape, meanwhile, Argus tried to raid the Cape Times's property advertising, with the help of the local Institute of Estate Agents. But the raid was clumsy and a bitter legal battle ensued. In Durban, most of the local estate agents have withdrawn their advertising from local Argus papers, apparently after personal

disagreements with Argus advertising staff - a decision that will cost Argus more than R200 000 a month.

SAAN is not the only victim of Argus raids. Argus is soon to launch an Afrikaans paper in Natal. Called Monitor, it is a direct challenge to Perskor's Natal paper, Tempo. Although Tempo sells just 3 000, the logic of the Argus attack is simple according to the SA Society of Journalists' organ, The Journalist: because the law requires that legal notices be published in both an English and an Afrikaans newspaper in the same province, Tempo has survived in a province dominated by white English-speaking readership. Purely because of legal convenience, Argus' Monitor looks set to kill Perskor's Tempo.

But the Sunday market remains Argus' main target in its search for profitable markets. Here Argus and SAAN confront not only each other, but also Nasionale - the most profitable of the country's newspaper groups with an after-tax profit of R19-million last year.

Argus appears to have been forced to announce the launch of its Sunday Star sooner than it would have liked. There were rumours that Nasionale, having moved into the black newspaper market by buying Jim Bailey's City Press, was planning an English-language Sunday. The suspicion that Nasionale may have seeded these rumours gets credence from the statement by Nasionale managing director Ton Vosloo on the announcement of the Sunday Star launch: '...we will be watching to see if (Argus managing director) Hal Miller decides to amalgamate the Sowetan Sunday Mirror with the Sunday Star to cut costs', he told the Financial Mail.

Argus launched the Sunday Mirror - also way ahead of schedule - just two months after Nasionale's takeover of City Press. Clearly, Argus felt it could take on and beat Bailey's City Press, but was far less certain about beating a City Press backed with Nasionale's resources.

The Mirror launch was a bid to pre-empt the rapid growth of City Press. The Mirror has been running with 10% or less advertising, when conventional wisdom demands a 50-50 editorial-advertising ratio for financial viability. It has cost Argus money, and Nasionale obviously hopes the Sunday Star will absorb all the money Argus has to spare as it battles for a Sunday foothold. If so the Mirror would

shrivel and die as City Press' only black Sunday competitor.

All this has a direct impact on the news content of the papers concerned. TV is grabbing more and more of the country's advertising revenue. Through City Press, Nasionale has a purchase on the black newspaper market. It may genuinely have plans for a white, English-language Sunday paper, if its signals of intent were not simply designed to fluster Argus into an early launch of the Sunday Star.

Next month, seven Sunday papers will fight for a place - in a market which was barely supporting five in April.

Increased ad rates and an unstable economy have caused major cutbacks in advertisers' budgets - while the extension of GST to advertising caused an immediate 7% cut in value of ads placed.

The tables have turned. Newspapers can't afford to antagonise their advertisers. Advertisers generally want to appeal to those who can afford their products - the middle- and high-earners, most of them obviously white.

Advertisers seldom attempt to interfere directly in news content. But a recent exception occurred during the Cape Town battle for property ads. Complaints from estate agents reportedly led to the transfer of pessimistic property stories from the property supplement to the main body of the Weekend Argus.

But newspaper managements are now painfully conscious of their advertisers' preferences.

The security of the cartel is a thing of the past. The challenge of TV worsens the threat posed by more competitors in a contracting market. The press can no longer afford to tell readers what its journalists think they ought to know - it has to direct itself towards readers that advertisers want to reach.

Theoretically, black-oriented papers should be in a somewhat different position. But where the Argus's Sowetan and Sunday Mirror are concerned, Argus management hasn't forgotten the bannings of World, Weekend World, Post and Sunday Post.

Nasionale's motives for moving into the black newspaper market are only partially commercial. Nasionale has close links - particularly through Vosloo and his predecessor Dawid de Villiers - with the left wing of

the National Party.

Senior management in the group sees a need to attract and encourage a moderate black leadership - not the Sebes nor the Hendrickses, but black political figures with a genuine following, with national and international credibility - into debate with the Nationalist government.

Ton Vosloo as editor of Beeld was the first Afrikaans editor to suggest dialogue between the Nationalist government and the ANC.

Nasionale moved into black media at about the same time as sections of the state apparatus and government began flying kites over apparent differences between 'communists' and 'nationalists' in the ANC. The suggestion that Jeanette Schoon and Ruth First were murdered because of their dissidence by 'communists' in the movement is just one example.

Debate and regular communication between radical black nationalists and the government might be light years away. But it is part of The Vision - that flexible master plan for depolarising South Africa's politics and economy no left-wing Nationalist technocrat is ever without.

From what Nasionale told City Press journalists at the time of the takeover, The Vision includes a media vehicle into the townships. City Press is that vehicle, both to prove Nasionale and its Nationalist allies' 'good faith', and as a launching pad for the debate. As yet no overt moves have been made at City Press to launch the debate. It would require substantial restructuring of the paper. But that restructuring probably only months away.

The future is not altogether rosy for readers or writers interested in coverage of events that alienates middle class readership. Nasionale has a vested - and not particularly savoury - interest in getting into the black newspaper market. Argus is, through the Sunday Mirror, only in there to prevent Nasionale developing a monopoly. And the demands of the Sunday Star may change even that. Both SAAN and Argus are concentrating their energies on attracting white readers. Rigorous political reporting - traditionally to be found in black papers or black editions of white papers - is taking a back seat.

So sit tight ... and watch for that capital 'P'.

NUM Tests Legal Strategies

The next few weeks may see legal strikes by black mine workers. INGRID OBERY looks at the current state of play in the National Union of Mineworkers' dispute with the Chamber of Mines.

The time for mickey mouse black unions on the mines is over. Or so the powerful Chamber of Mines is coming to realise. 'When we first went to the Chamber requesting access, we went cap in hand,' said National Union of Mineworkers general secretary, Cyril Ramaphosa. 'But we are not the union they thought we were. We are challenging them on every front.'

NUM's dispute with the Chamber is months old now. It began with NUM's December 1983 congress resolution to press for a living wage of at least R450 per month for mine workers. However congress recognised that this kind of an increase was currently unrealistic and the demand was modified to a 60% across the board increase. The congress resolved that negotiations should begin in May. In March a negotiating committee was elected by the Central Committee which is made up of the six regional committees (120 representatives). But the Chamber was only willing to begin negotiations in June.

While the primary issue for negotiation was wages, workers also mandated the union to negotiate a better agreement around the fatal accidents and death benefit insurance schemes. Workers contribute to the scheme, but on dismissal or retirement do not get their money refunded. As regards death benefits, the Chamber pays a lump sum of two years earnings calculated on the basis of the last three months earnings.

The Chamber was not willing to negotiate the insurance scheme. NUM was not sufficiently represented in the

industry to warrant their inclusion on the board which governed the rules of the scheme, it said.

DOING IT LEGALLY

After declaring disputes with the Chamber on the gold and coal mines in June, the issue of wage negotiations went to Conciliation Boards. Throughout, NUM has maintained that it is committed to negotiating and resolving the dispute through legal channels. Ramaphosa says this is a test to see whether doing things the legal way will limit employer rights to dismiss workers during disputes. Also, he says, it will be a test for the industry which in the past has gone through violent and bloody worker unrest. The most important question here says Ramaphosa, is whether or not there will be sufficient union discipline to deal with the struggle with employers in a peaceful and dignified manner.

The first Conciliation Board meeting regarding gold miners met on the 7 August, but failed to reach an agreement. At the second meeting of the Board on 13 August, the Chamber and NUM again failed to reach agreement. At the first meeting NUM presented demands around overtime rates and hours of work. It demanded an 88 rather than 102 hour fortnightly rate, an overtime rate of 7% for weekdays and 8% for Sundays, and an improved service increment. The Chamber responded with what NUM regarded as an unacceptable offer: no improvement on its final wage offer of 13-14% increase and a two hour reduction in working hours per fortnight. This reduction gave workers only a four hour overtime increase per month. Once NUM rejected this offer it was withdrawn by the Chamber. 'The ball is now in Ramaphosa's court', said the Chamber. But as Ramaphosa put it, 'There is now

no offer on the table.'

The collieries Conciliation Board met on 8 August. Here NUM had also reduced their wage increase demand from 60% to 25%. At the second meeting of the Board on 16 August the Chamber offered a reduction in working hours from 96 to 94 hours per fortnight. Although the Chambers' proposals were not entirely satisfactory, NUM regarded them worthy of consideration. The proposals have been taken back to coal miners for discussion. They have yet to make a decision. But given the imminent strike on the gold mines it seems possible that coal miners will accept the Chambers' proposals as an interim measure.

NUM has declared two other disputes at collieries not members of the Chamber of Mines. Rietspruit and Duhva collieries belong to the Rand Mines group. In both instances the union and management reached deadlock. Offers to workers were similar to those proposed by the Chamber to coal miners, and NUM also took these proposals back to the workers for decision. Rand Mines was not prepared to revise its offer, and the way was open for NUM to hold a legal strike ballot.

WILL WORKERS STRIKE?

The next few weeks will see the outcome of workers' decisions to strike or not to strike on the coal and gold mines. It is almost inevitable that gold miners will strike. Coal miners however will probably accept the offer put forward by the Chamber. Why the different responses from the different mines?

The fact that NUM is only three years old must have something to do with it. Structures are new and untested in a crisis situation. At very least the union will only just be able to control the potential outbreak of industrial unrest on the gold mines. During the strikes at five collieries at the beginning of July, NUM was already hard pressed to control those workers on mines where they had considerable influence. Dealing with eight striking gold mines is another kettle of fish altogether. Add to that the coal miners and the situation is liable to get totally out of hand.

The eight gold mines are Anglo American's Elandsrand, its three divisions of Western Holdings (Holdings, Syplaas and Welkom), East and West Vaal

Reefs Divisions and President Brand which also belong to Anglo, and Gold Field's Kloof mine.

Both sides hold good cards. As Ramaphosa says, it remains to be seen who holds the ace of spades. If workers strike, employers are quite entitled by law to warn them that their jobs are endangered. Employers may then fire workers immediately. So, as the Chamber has already warned, the threat of mass dismissal of mine workers is there.

But will the Chamber risk it? Dismissing an entire work-force is a decision the mine bosses cannot take lightly. They face the prospect of at least a month of no production, says Ramaphosa. Dismissed workers will not simply leave the hostels once they have been fired. Employers must apply for a court order to get them out. The union would oppose such an order. Even if employers are able to recruit new work-forces, they will initially have no place to house them. All new miners must also undergo some training which, according to NUM, can take anything up to ten days. Workers must then undergo acclimatisation to heat which takes another three days. All this before the mines are able to re-start production. With the current price of gold and a declining economy, stopping production for a month or more could be disastrous.

But it seems that the Chamber may not be as hard-pressed as it claims. Gold is sold by the dollar and because of the dollar rise against the rand, mine profits in rands have increased. The Chamber may then be able to survive a limited period of no production and rely on stockpiled ore.

The Chamber's industrial relations man, Johan Liebenberg, has tried to pass the dispute off, saying it has little significance in the history of labour relations in South Africa. Liebenberg argues that the more significant landmark was the actual recognition and negotiation of an agreement with NUM in June 1983. 'This was the first time in modern history that black miners have joined unions in fairly large numbers,' he said.

NUM however regards the dispute and its challenge to employers as significant. It sees the outcome, whatever it may be, as a test of strength, and an important advance in the development of unionisation and disciplined organisation of black mine workers. Already NUM has made headway

for worker demands within the industry. It now sits on the Chamber's Prevention of Accidents committee, which is a major advance in monitoring working conditions. 'If we had not challenged them it would still be a cocktail party committee', said Ramaphosa.

ADVANCE AND RETREAT

The Chamber's response to the dispute with NUM is both predictable and confusing. The Chamber allowed the union access to mines for organising purposes. In some cases Chamber members



Cyril Ramaphosa - 'Who holds the ace of spades?'

There is also the question of whether the mine bosses and the Chamber of Mines are totally in agreement over strategy. NUM argues that some mine bosses are fully aware of the possible implications of extensive strike action and would be keen to avoid it. The Chamber he says, can take chances because they are a bit removed. 'The mining industry is like a military academy. The lower ranks don't question the officers, and the Chamber is the chief of staff, so what it says goes.' But the Chamber is unlikely to do anything which goes against the interests of the industry as a whole.

even provided offices for unions on mine property in the initial stages of organisation. However, it is retreating and attempting to push back the boundaries conceded with threats of harsh action and dismissals if workers decide to strike. Liebenberg stresses that the union's 'unreasonable' initial demand of a 60% increase resulted in raised worker expectations which made the dispute 'inevitable'. He argues that because of the state of the economy only moderate increases were dictated, particularly bearing in mind 'poor productivity' performances over the

last year.

Liebenberg states that the Chamber was prepared to negotiate with NUM as a full partner in the collective bargaining process. He says that the Chamber, despite its conservative history was 'in the forefront of putting into practice the spirit and the letter of the Wiehahn reforms ... Dealing with trade unions irrespective of who they represent is part of the free enterprise system and we are committed to a free market'.

The Chamber obviously feels that the union's demands have pushed them too far. It argues that the wage offer was reasonable and in fact more than it should have been. Liebenberg said that because the Chamber does not base wage increases on the current price of the product, it can suffer. He also pointed out that in comparison to white miners' increases of 10%, the offer to black miners was considerable. White miners can earn R900 per month.

The employers have obviously planned for the event of a strike, but as Liebenberg said, 'I'm sure you will understand we cannot reveal those strategies until the strike takes place'.

TESTING UNION STRENGTH

For NUM, the dispute and subsequent events are a test of its effectivity as a union. Its actions will not be spontaneous in the event of a decision to strike. The present level of organisation dictates that at least initially decisions and actions will be premeditated and well co-ordinated. But as Ramaphosa says, if the decision is to strike, the situation will be both difficult and dangerous.

NUM appears to be building a union very much on the basis of localised worker control. A branch shaft stewards council is the overall representative of all NUM members on a mine. The

council is made up of representatives of members of the shaft stewards committees from each shaft. The branch shaft stewards council then elects a branch committee from among its members.

The bulk of organisation is now being undertaken by the members of the shaft stewards committees. The union's 11 organisers are used mainly to train shaft stewards. But 'As soon as we are recognised by management, the shaft stewards take over the negotiations at the mine level. They represent members on grievances and at disciplinary cases'. The stewards have also gone out to other mines than their own to organise workers. The union admits that the stewards are achieving better results than the organisers have done as regards recruitment. Ramaphosa cites an example of a mine of 18 000 workers where stewards have succeeded in recruiting over 7 500 members since February this year.

Workers have been more than receptive to unionisation. An important factor, according to Ramaphosa, is the militance of the migrant workers. 'In many senses they have nothing to lose. If management threatens them with loss of food or jobs, well they don't seem to care that much. In this country they don't have a lot at stake. Nothing belongs to them anyway. Particularly now that we are doing things legally they feel that we must go all the way.'

NUM represents less than one fifth of all black mine workers. Of the approximately 70 000 workers signed up by the union, it has only 15 000 paid up members. This the Chamber feels makes NUM less representative and gives it less bargaining power. But it is certain that if NUM calls a strike the turnout will be more than 70 000 workers.

The question that remains is whether militant miners will continue to follow Ramaphosa's dignified and disciplined lead, or whether they will reject the pragmatic legal approach and take matters into their own hands.

Roots of BC Trade Unionism

Seven black consciousness unions have begun exploring possibilities of federation. Meanwhile they are linked in a loose alliance, with BAMCWU general secretary Pandelani Nefolovhodwe acting as co-ordinator. Along with other union officials, he discussed the alliance, and BC directions and attitudes on labour.

In 1970, the South African Students Organisation (SASO), then the mainspring of the BC movement, resolved at a general student council to undertake labour organisation. This was the beginning of BC's search to expand its constituency beyond its student base. Two years later, the Black Allied Workers Union (BAWU) was formed.

1976-77 marked a further, brief stage of militancy, and attempts to broaden the base to include urban community groups. AZAPO's formation, a year after the October 1977 bannings which wiped out most BC organisations, marked a new phase. It emphasised the need for labour organisation and asserted a socialist objective. After 1982, a number of BC unions were formed, most with close links to AZAPO.

Recent reports describing the formation of a federation of these BC unions were rather exaggerated. At an initial meeting in February this year, seven of them agreed in principle to form an alliance, as a first step towards a putative federation.

The unions concerned are: the Black Allied Mining and Construction Workers Union (BAMCWU), the Insurance and Assurance Workers Union of SA (IAWUSA), the Black Electronics and Electrical Workers Union (BEEWU), the African Allied Workers Union (AAWU), the Black General Workers Union (BGWU), the National Union of Workers of SA (NUWSA), and the Amalgamated Black General Workers Union (ABGWU).

Nefolovhodwe and other officials

declined to give figures for paid-up membership, arguing that this gives management an edge in retrenching members. They claimed 75 000 as a total for the alliance. However, SALDRU's Directory of South African Trade Unions gives 1983 claimed membership figures of 15 000 for BAMCWU, 483 for IAWUSA and 4 684 for AAWU.

It was not entirely unknown for emergent unions in their early years to assert legitimacy with inflated membership. Had something of the sort occurred here? 'No, we're past that stage. Certainly the past year, and probably the coming year, are hard times for organisation,' Nefolovhodwe answered.

All alliance members are nation-wide unions, he says. As co-ordinator for the alliance, Nefolovhodwe is mandated to draft a federation constitution for consideration.

'NO ANIMOSITY, NO CONTACT'

He has to formulate a policy outline according to the alliance's declaration of intent, in conformity with individual unions' policy. He must outline possibilities for financial co-operation in fundraising and administration. Finally, he would co-ordinate response if any other union federation contacts the group. So far, relations are 'no animosity, no contact. We do have informal relations with the unions who left the unity talks - after all, we work from the same building.'

BAMCWU, IAWUSA, BEEWU and BGWU are self-sufficient, operating off members' dues, according to Nefolovhodwe. But there is little left for legal advice and applications, hence the intention to fundraise jointly.

AAWU's general secretary and alliance publicity official Cunningham Nqucukana explained: 'We are prepared to fight for redress on day-to-day issues

through the legal machinery - dismissals for striking, unfair labour practices - without feeling compromised in dealing with a state we don't recognise. Human rights issues can be fought this way - for example, we're willing to take another union to court to break a closed shop agreement, as that's a principle of freedom of association.'

Similarly, Nqcekana says that at present it's alliance policy not to participate in industrial councils, 'on the same basis as we won't participate in government-created structures. But policy on industrial council participation is a matter of tactics, not of principle, and we would decide to adapt to a changing situation.'

Unions in the alliance span almost all industries, their officials point out. Nefolovhodwe enumerated, 'mining, construction, quarries, cementation, civil engineering and allied industries in BAMCWU. There are electronics and electrical workers, and employees in a range of financial and commercial institutions.'

Since four alliance members are general workers unions, they have members from a broad spectrum of industries as well. But they are concerned to organise by industry, rather than 'accept any man-in-the-street'.

Would such diversity not be an obstacle to a functioning federation? No said Nefolovhodwe. He cited the unity of black experience of oppression, across the spectrum from skilled to unskilled, migrant to urban. He expanded:

The only base for fundamental change in South Africa is the group of people that is most oppressed. That is the working class. They will produce the agents of change, or vanguard.

Not all levels of the working class are in fact agents of change - these are constituted in the black working class. Though rural communities, students and some sections of the middle class also come into the political picture, it is the black working class that must lead.

In fact, rural unemployed are not separate from the working class. 'If you accept that rural people in homeland labour reservoirs are integrally bound into the system of labour exploitation in SA, and that there is almost nothing left of a peasantry that makes its living from the land, then you perceive

that the rural oppressed are an extension, part of the working class.

'This is particularly evident when it comes to industries like mining and construction which use a great deal of migrant labour. It's a definition that includes almost every oppressed person.'

INTELLECTUALS AS ORGANISERS

What of the role of black intellectuals, like the alliance officials themselves? Nefolovhodwe replied vigorously: 'If intellectuals won't admit that's what they are, they're going to be useless organisers. If you truthfully accept what you are, you work at interacting with workers, listening and accepting. Then you can systematise and form the ideas that project working-class aspirations.'

'I would argue that black intellectuals have an advantage, if they have come from the same background as most workers, and if they are able to throw off the conformist legacy of their education.'

This doesn't mean that intellectuals can't use their skills and expertise. What's at issue is their practise: I would argue that in their critique of 'bureaucratic white intellectuals' in MAWU, UMMAWSA got hold of the wrong end of the stick. The point shouldn't have been criticism of intellectuals as such, white or not, rather, specific evidence should have been produced of bad organisational behavior.'

What are the putative alliance's own internal democratic structures and practices? BAMCWU is given as an example. Officials are elected by the annual congress and make up its National Executive Committee (NEC). This is responsible to the National Workers Council (NWC), which is made up of all regional, area and branch executives, plus NEC members.

Anyone critical, or disciplined, can appeal from the NEC to the NWC, and beyond that to the general union congress - if necessary calling a special session. All members are entitled to attend and vote at congresses. Attendance at last June's annual congress was about 1 800.

How does the alliance see itself as differing from the Council of Unions of SA (CUSA), which also stresses black leadership in unionisation? According to Nqcekana: 'We wouldn't want to criticise. The alliance hasn't come to

a firm decision about whether to join existing union federations like CUSA or FOSATU. We're not in opposition to them as such, and if invited, we'd consider the case on its own merits. Of course we're willing to include anyone who wants to join the alliance, if they're happy with our objectives.'

Did the BC movement, and later its unions, suffer from lack of experience in techniques of labour organisation, not uncommon among new unions during the 1970s? Nefolovhodwe replied: 'No, we had people like Drake Koka heading BAWU. His organisational experience went back to the Liberal Party. And Lindele Mabandla, a teacher who, having served as vice-president of SASO, went on to take charge of BAWU in Durban.'

BC ENTERS LABOUR

Even before BAWU was formed in 1972, SASO set up the Black Workers Project (BWP) under Bokwe Mafuna in 1971. Mafuna was succeeded by Welile Nhlapo. BWP ran labour clinics. 'We didn't deal so much with issues like compensation, UIF or dismissals, as attempt to conscientise workers about black bargaining power. The clinics operated in Johannesburg, Durban and to a lesser extent Cape Town'.

SASO decided to form the Black People's Convention (BPC) in 1972. It was intended to serve as a national political organisation in the move away from student- and intellectual-based politics. Within months, BPC in turn formed BAWU. The BWP was later handed over to BAWU, a process co-ordinated by Nefolovhodwe's SASO executive, on which both Muntu Myeza and Terror Lekota served.

During the 1973 Durban strikes, BAWU and the BPC were very active in pamphleting and politicising, Nefolovhodwe says, with Saths Cooper and Strini Moodley leading. After their release from Robben Island in the early 1980s along with the others sentenced in the SASO-BPC trial of 1975-76, they were active in AZAPO and the formation of the National Forum.

Of the nine sentenced in the SASO-BPC trial, Cooper, Moodley, Myeza, Zithulele Cindi, Aubrey Mokoape and Nefolovhodwe are still active in BC organisations. Terror Lekota is UDF publicity secretary.

By 1974 when top BC officials were detained, a number of issues that would impact on the second half of the 1970s had been spelled out, Nefolovhodwe believes. A 1974 SASO general student council produced a lengthy paper on galvanising school students to reject government institutions, foreshadowing 1976. SASO had also begun to form a number of 'community based' organisations; the SA Students Movement (SASM), the Southern African Students Movement, the National Youth Organisation, the Union of Black Journalists were examples cited.

In the course of BAWU's turbulent history, riven with splits, it had many offshoots. Nefolovhodwe claims that AAWU and AAGWU are descendants of BAWU, that SAAWU and MACWUSA also derive from it by a process of schismatic reproduction. Spinoffs of the BC labour thrust in the early 1970s by splits and influence extend to CCAWUSA and CUSA he believed.

After 1977, when a massive gamut of BC organisations were banned, it took a year for AZAPO to emerge, with its more explicit rejection of capitalism as the motor of apartheid. BC activists then on Robben Island expected to disagree with the new BC generation. But, Nefolovhodwe said, it didn't turn out that way: 'There was no fundamentaal change from the BC cornerstone. At different times in a movement's history, you need to emphasise different things in the line you walk between your constituency and your theorists' perceptions of social dynamics. We began by stressing black self-worth and dignity, beginning from people's experience and reaction to denigration. Later, we moved on in our organisational stress to more abstract notions like critiques of capitalism and its role as a source of oppression. But both were present in the movement at any one time. This development in emphasis is by no means the last such shift either.'

Diamonds are Forever But is the Mine?

De Beers and its wholly-owned Namibian subsidiary, CDM, face allegations of irresponsible mining and marketing practices. They deny these strongly, but the controversy is far from over.

Consolidated Diamond Mines, De Beers' Namibian subsidiary, has faced a storm of malpractice allegations in recent months. First the corporation and its Namibian MD Doug Hoffe were tongue-lashed by Justice Thirion, head of the commission of enquiry into government corruption in Namibia.

De Beers and CDM had refused to give evidence under oath at a public hearing of the commission. During hearings on Namibia's Diamond Board, Thirion's investigators had testified that the country's lack of control over diamond exports was so extreme that CDM could have evaded tax on up to R1-billion (R1 000-million) by underpricing export diamonds between 1978 and 1983.

LEAKED DOCUMENTS

Then confidential CDM documents were leaked. CDM faced allegations in the SA press that it had been 'overmining' at its Oranjemund mine. Crudely put, the allegations - current for years in Namibia - say that after 1968 CDM steeply increased the tempo of its Oranjemund mining operations.

The alleged result was to shorten the life of the mine, to deplete the country's single most valuable mineral resource in advance of its independence. The gems that were not sold are safely stockpiled in the vaults of De Beers' Central Selling Organisation (CSO).

Such practices, if true, break the 61 year-old Halbscheid Agreement, which gives CDM exclusive rights to mine and prospect in Namibia's

Sperrgebiet, the forbidden diamond area. The agreement specifies thorough and economic mining practices, 'not with a view to exhausting the superficial and more valuable deposits to the detriment of the low grade deposits'.

CDM is Namibia's single largest source of tax revenue. The mine is now taxed at a rate of 75%, made up of diamond profit tax, diamond export tax, company tax and diamond company tax. In the ten years to the end of the 1982-83 financial year, it contributed nearly R1-billion in tax, more than one third of the country's tax revenue over the period. After 1982, CDM's tax payments dropped sharply because of the diamond market recession and production cutbacks at CDM, to about 10% of Namibia's tax revenue.

According to the last De Beers' annual report, CDM contributes 14% of De Beers' income. CDM's Oranjemund mine is a series of operations along a 100 km strip of the southern desert coast. A highly capital-intensive operation, its annual investment amounts to some R750-million.

In massive earthmoving operations, miners shift sand and overburden to get at the diamond-bearing gravel. In one area the sea has been pushed back 100 metres to allow mining in the surf zone.

A confidential 'Life of Mine Forecast' in 1977 estimated that CDM's Oranjemund mine had 14 years of operation remaining. It said that at the rate of mining then practised, the mine would be played out in 1991. The forecast added that 'only eight of these years prove profitable'.

A further memorandum to the mining manager from Clive Ross, CDM's operations research manager, dated 31 January 1980, discusses three mining plans:

'Plan 1: Maximum mining policy to the end of the mine;
Plan 2: Maximum mining until 1985, then reverting (suddenly) to an average mining policy;
Plan 3: A gradual smooth shift from the current maximum mining to an average mining policy in 1983'.

Graphs sent to the mining manager with this memorandum forecast that Plan 1 would result in the mine working at a loss by 1990. Plan 2 would have the same result in 1985, while Plan 3 would result in losses by 1993.

Market prices on which these projections are based are not known, but the memorandum antedates the sudden sharp drop in demand for diamonds of 1980-81.

CDM RESPONSE

While De Beers and CDM responses to the Thirion commission allegations seem unco-ordinated and evasive, they came out fighting on the allegations of overmining, with press statements, advertisements, interviews and explanations in refutation.

De Beers spokesmen explain that periodic forecasts of the life of the mine change continually as mining technology advances, making unpayable areas payable as new reserves are discovered (CDM is heavily engaged in prospecting inland along the Orange River and northwards along the Atlantic coast). In fact, they say, the mine's reserves are not static, but continually opening up - as a result of CDM's activity and investment.

The term 'overmining' found in the leaked documents is a technical one, De Beers spokesmen say. It describes the average grade of diamonds actually mined in a year in relation to the estimated average in the diamond concession reserves.

In 1977, for example, the payable grade was given as 0,159 cubic metres, while the actual recovered grade was 0,235 carats per cubic metre, an over-recovery on payable reserves of 47%. The overmining figure given on total production figures is 69%. But to pay for head office costs, increased capital expenditure and increased tax liability, target grades must rise, CDM points out.

De Beers does not deny that CDM sharply increased production in the

1970s, and that the end of the mine's life may be closer than earlier statements led the public to believe.

This was in keeping with sound mining practice and did not violate the Halbscheid agreement, though, CDM says. It makes the following points:

The late 1970s saw unprecedented speculation in the diamond trade, and 'production from all sources, including CDM, was maximised consistent with good mining practice, to take advantage of the favourable selling conditions and maintain an orderly market, which is in the long term interest of all producers'.

Rather than planning to exhaust reserves in advance of political change, 'the emphasis, continuously, has been to identify new reserves and methods of treating them so that no payable diamond-bearing ground remains when operations finally cease, and to preserve the value of the product'.

After demand for high quality diamonds dropped sharply after 1980, one of CDM's four conglomerate crushers was closed, and it also ceased production from the screening plants.

It would take detailed investigation into Namibia's diamond industry to settle the issue finally. South Africa's administrator general in Namibia, Willie van Niekerk, refused to broaden the scope of the Thirion commission to include the mining industry, leaving it within its mandate to investigate government bodies. His grounds were that technical mining experts would be required for a broadened investigation.

But after the last, heated hearings on the Diamond Board in Windhoek, Justice Thirion is preparing his report, which is due in October. Van Niekerk's office says he is waiting for Thirion's report, and may consider a further investigation in the light of the report.

Investigation into possible tax evasion by transfer pricing would open up more complex questions than the issue of 'overmining' - whether in its technical or non-technical sense. The pricing issue would demand information about activities of the chain of loosely linked trading companies making up De Beers' CSO.

According to Julian Ogilvy-Thompson, De Beers deputy chairman (chairman is Harry Oppenheimer), the company refused to give evidence in response to

allegations of transfer pricing before the Thirion commission when it was refused permission to testify in camera, because it did not want to be forced to disclose confidential company information, as well as that of its partners around the world.

Similarly, Ogilvy-Thompson said, 'We do not release information on the estimated life of our mines, because this information, on the strength of De Beers' future production, could affect the overall diamond market and our control of it.'

SECRETIVE SELLERS

Certainly information on the CSO's buying quotas from its various suppliers inside and outside the group, and about its stockpiles would affect De Beers' near-monopoly of world diamond trade. It has always been extremely secretive, giving minimal information on its operations to shareholders and customers.

The CSO buys diamonds from producers around the world. Each has a quota. The CSO does not lower the prices it pays for rough stones. For the right to buy on an exclusive basis from independent producers, it agrees to buy total production or a set quota from producers at set or rising prices.

It does not drop its prices, though when demand falls as it did in 1980, the CSO releases fewer stones on to the market. Rough diamond prices are maintained, while De Beers stockpiles diamonds at its own expense, waiting for better days.

Martin Grote, an economic researcher who provided information to the Thirion commission, said that neither the Diamond Board nor anyone else in government appeared to know the end prices of Namibian diamonds.

It was possible, he said, that CDM had understated the selling price of the diamonds by more than R1-billion over the five years since 1978. If this had happened, Namibia had lost revenue of about R660-million, at the tax rates that then applied. The country's annual budget only recently topped R1-billion.

The only figures on value and amount

of diamonds exported were those supplied by CDM. The Diamond Board should theoretically have controlled and checked Namibia's diamond exports. But its most important functions were delegated to De Beers' functionaries. The Board had no inspection facilities, no inspection agents, and no inspection staff either inside the country or overseas - except CDM employees.

Grote used USA Department of Mines statistics on the value of imported rough diamonds as a basis of comparison. Some 66% of CDM's rough diamonds enter the US. According to his calculations, after 1978 Namibian diamonds were fetching up to R214 per carat more in America than CDM's locally quoted prices.

Between 1955 and 1977, there were no significant differences between diamond prices given by CDM and the Diamond Board and those estimated from US statistics.

Some CSO companies are registered in Bermuda, which is a tax haven. Grote's testimony stressed that it was possible that CDM's exports had been undervalued in order to take advantage of the tax haven.

Grote cited other instances of the lack of control exercised by the Diamond Board. In a 'year's-old swopping scheme' between De Beers and CDM, packages of up to 300 000 carats of CDM's high quality diamonds were exchanged for equal weights from De Beers South African mines. The Board had no comparative records of the quality, quantity or value of the stones involved. In 1981, he said, 45% of Namibia's diamonds went to Switzerland instead of to London, without the Diamond Board knowing of it. Namibian diamonds were being traded, stockpiled and swapped in foreign countries without independent state knowledge, let alone supervision.

The content of Thirion's report will open the issue up further. Whether it will be made public, or if another enquiry will be set afoot is an open question. De Beers is still enormously powerful in South Africa, and CDM is relatively still more so in Namibia. Nevertheless, they may have to provide more information than they have so far.

Unemployment and Social Security: The UIF Investigation

The social security system for South Africa's growing number of unemployed is deeply flawed. GEORGINA JAFFEE analyses a recently released memorandum on the Unemployment Insurance Fund.

South Africa's Unemployment Insurance Fund is inefficient, open to abuse, and inadequate. When a number of organisations assisting unemployed workers concluded this, they launched an investigation into the Fund and its administration.

Their investigations have resulted in a recently released memorandum and Benefit Charter, endorsed by a wide range of trade union, service and community organisations.

As the recession deepened, more and more people approached advice offices for assistance in claiming unemployment benefits. This initially focused attention on the scope and administration of the state-run Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF).

Unemployment has reached two-and-a-half million, and in 1983 the Fund paid out three times more than 1981-2. Payments totalled R104-m, and this led the Department of Manpower to sell R20-m of UIF benefits to meet increased claims. Government has declared that it is presently conducting a review of the Fund's finances.

As early as 1982, service organisations having difficulty in obtaining unemployment benefits for their clients began preparing a memorandum on all aspects of the Fund. By July 1984 this memorandum, drawn up in consultation with unions and unemployed workers, was released. At the same time, a group including the Black Sash, the South African Institute of Race Relations, the East Rand Advice Bureau, the Industrial Aid Society, the Industrial Aid Centre, and a number of independent unions,

produced a Benefit Charter. This encourages community organisations and trade unions to take up the Charter's recommendations as popular demands.

HOW THE FUND WORKS

The Unemployment Insurance Fund is only accessible to those who have contributed to it. It is not a general assistance scheme and makes no provision for people who are entering the work-force for the first time. The Fund only covers certain categories of workers, and excludes casual, public service, seasonal, domestic and agricultural workers, and contract workers from other countries in Southern Africa. In rural areas it only covers Africans working in factories or mines, and those earning over R18 000 per year. The 1980 Report of the Department of Manpower estimates that only 3 580 849 of an economically active population of 9 490 000 were contributors to the Fund.

This failure of UIF to provide for the most vulnerable sectors of the work-force is a major issue brought out in the memorandum. So is the Fund's inability to include those who have never worked or will have little opportunity of ever finding employment.

The Fund pays 45% of the average wage calculated over the last 13 weeks of employment. It provides one week's benefit for every six weeks worked. The beneficiary must have contributed to the Fund for 13 of the previous 52 weeks to qualify for payment. Benefits may be received for a maximum of 26 weeks, although it is possible to apply for an extension of this period. But this is not often done due to ignorance of the procedures involved. When such applications are made, they are not often granted. Benefits can be

claimed two weeks from the date of application, except where a penalty is imposed for voluntary loss of employment (resignation).

The Fund is financed by employers, employees and the state, but the state contribution has decreased in recent years. Employees pay 0,5% of earnings, employers 0,3%. In 1977 the state reduced its contribution from 50% to 25% of the joint employer and employee contribution. The state also set a limit of R7-m as its contribution.

In 1982 employer and employee contributions amounted to R119 235 155 compared to the state's R7-m. If no ceiling had been placed on the state's 25% contribution, it would have amounted to R29 800 000.

PROBLEMS IN THE FUND'S ADMINISTRATION

Advice offices for the unemployed, as well as recent research, suggest that there are multiple problems with the Fund. These are well documented in the memorandum, and include:

Employer responsibilities

According to the Unemployment Insurance Act, employers are obliged to register with the Department of Manpower and take responsibility for workers' UIF cards. These record deductions and information regarding termination of employment. Employers are subject to penalties for contravening these regulations, but often do not deduct the correct amounts or fail to obtain UIF cards for employees. At the height of the recession there were numerous cases where migrant workers, forced to return to the bantustans, could not apply for UIF benefits as they had not received a card.

Employers often do not record the correct reason for dismissal. Cards of retrenched workers examined did not record their retrenchment, rather detailing employment termination under the category 'other'. This meant applicants for benefits were forced to wait for a longer period before receiving benefits.

Workers have no control over their UIF cards. And once they apply for benefits they are often unjustly penalised by claims officers who have the power to interpret the reasons for loss of employment. A right of appeal

exists, but both ignorance and complex bureaucratic procedures prevent most unemployed workers from exercising this.

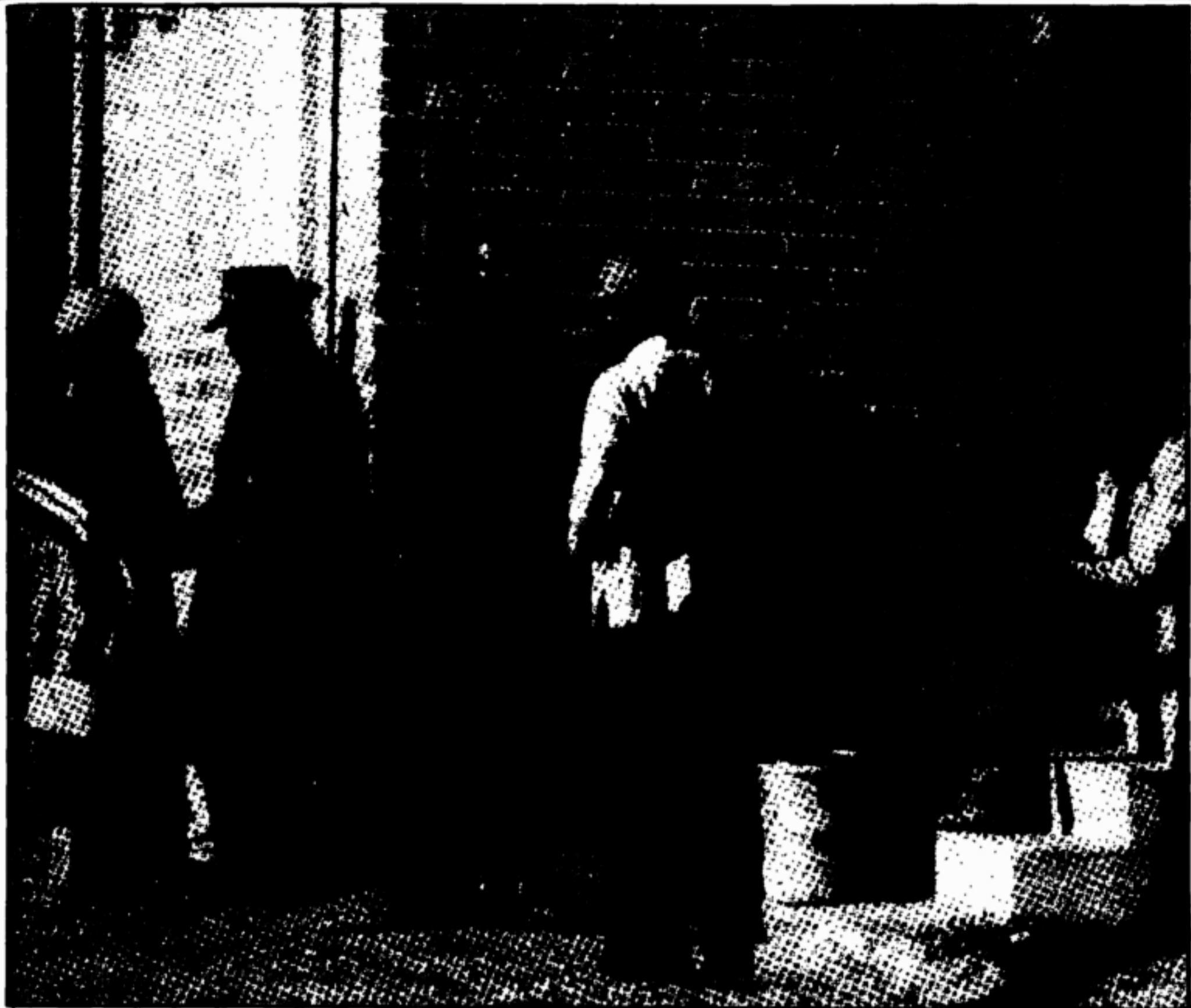
Application and payment of benefits
Research done by the organisations which drafted the memorandum pointed to the lack of co-operation of clerks at UIF offices, and long delays in the payment of benefits.

The process of applying for UIF is cumbersome. African workers are required to register as work-seekers and obtain a form from the Department of Co-operation and Development certifying that they are looking for employment. Before receiving this form, they have to prove that they have applied unsuccessfully for a number of jobs. This procedure leaves the unemployed completely vulnerable to arbitrary and bureaucratic procedure.

The Industrial Aid Society cites the case of a man who applied for UIF benefits in 1982. He was sent to a factory which required a Code 10 driver, but as he had a Code 8 licence he was not suitable for the job. Three months later he was notified that his application for benefits had been refused on the grounds that he was not available for work.

The procedure surrounding the payouts is equally problematic. Workers receive incorrect amounts, or receive them for shorter periods than expected. Having to sign a register regularly to prove continuing unemployment involves travel to the UIF offices. Sometimes it is not possible for claimants to get there on a particular day, and they forfeit their benefits. The need to sign a register particularly discriminates against workers in rural areas who sometimes have to travel over 50 km to reach a UIF office.

Retrenched workers interviewed in KwaZulu were either ignorant of UIF benefits available, or became totally disillusioned by regular trips to the labour bureau to sign the register. Many did not have the money to travel the distance every two weeks. Migrant workers who become unemployed are forced to return to the bantustans to receive UIF benefits. Their position is made even more difficult as the South African state has encouraged the 'independent' bantustans to set up unemployment insurance schemes of



Workers waiting for unemployment benefits at Dukuza labour bureau,
Upper Tugela Location, KwaZulu

their own. This has enabled the central state to shift some of the costs of unemployment onto the bantustan administrations.

The Black Sash reports widespread corruption in the cashing of UIF cheques. Clerks have been accused of forgery, and workers who do not have bank accounts are forced to cash cheques at local stores. They are often not paid the full amount by those cashing the cheques.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTED CHANGES

The memorandum recommends that in addition to unemployment insurance which provides benefits to the temporarily unemployed, there should also be a subsistence fund. This would cover those who have never

worked, and those who no longer receive UIF benefits. This scheme should be state funded and set up to alleviate the serious poverty which the unemployed face.

The memorandum suggests that all categories of workers be included in the present unemployment insurance scheme, and that the Fund be organised by one central body; that the state make a greater financial contribution; and that employers pay in the same amount as employees. It proposes that the state increases benefits to at least 60% of the average wage of the last 13 weeks; that claimants be given exact information of due amounts and when they will be received; that workers receive one week's benefit for every four weeks they have contributed to the Fund, and that they get these benefits for up to a year; that workers should not have to wait longer than

seven days for benefits after application; and that workers be given a choice of where they apply for and receive benefits.

Other recommendations include increasing the number of claims offices; fortnightly payouts for urban unemployed and monthly payments for rural unemployed; a choice of payment by cheque or cash; more control over penalties and possibilities for appeal against the decisions of claims officers; better control over employers and the opportunity for employee representation on the Unemployment Insurance Board. It is also proposed that the public be fully informed about the operation of the Fund, including its investment policies.

Finally, the memorandum calls for money in the Fund to be used on projects for the unemployed, and for more to be spent on training schemes.

RESPONSES

According to the groups who compiled the memorandum, there has not yet been much response from employer organisations. They have been told that the Department of Manpower has submitted a copy to the UIF Board 'for consideration'.

But the memorandum has already been successful in generating widespread interest in unemployment insurance. Some workers' organisations have asked those involved in drafting the memo to address meetings, and community organisations have been asked to distribute the Benefit Charter.

The memorandum has played an important role in providing information and raising questions about the unemployed. Its final impact will depend on whether trade unions and community organisations take up the issues raised. It is unlikely that the recommendations will be implemented without forceful pressure from these groups.

Unemployment insurance raises a number of questions: will trade unions see the issue of the unemployed as a priority, or even an area which they wish to participate in? To what extent will they take up the question with employer organisations?

FOSATU, while not formally endorsing the memorandum or the Benefit Charter, is presently engaged in research on

unemployment. The Federation believes that while the whole UIF scheme needs restructuring, increased benefits under the current system would bankrupt the Fund.

Capital and the state have indicated concern over the threat posed by increasing unemployment. But it is not clear whether they would support a better social security system as a way of preventing social and political instability. In countries like the United Kingdom and the United States, expanded social security benefits have had a conservative effect on unemployed and retired workers.

Unemployment benefits have become a minimum right in some capitalist societies. Who finances these remains a source of conflict. But whoever pays, welfare and social security do not solve the unemployment problem. There is no doubt that assistance to South Africa's unemployed can be improved, and that more control over the Fund by contributors would be an important step forward. But these demands should go hand in hand with programmes to train and educate the unemployed, labour intensive industries, and the production of commodities that meet the majority's basic needs.

This article is based on the Unemployment Memorandum, and the Draft Benefit Charter. The following trade unions have endorsed both documents: African Food and Canning Workers Union Amalgamated Black Workers Union Cape Town Municipal Workers Association Council of Unions of South Africa Food and Canning Workers Union General Workers Union Municipal and General Workers Union Orange-Vaal General Workers Union Paper, Wood and Allied Workers Union Scooter Drivers and Teamates Union SA Black Municipal and Allied Workers SA Domestic Workers Association.

The authors of the memorandum were interviewed for this article, and use was made of Carole Cooper's Carnegie Conference Paper (number 299), 'South Africa's Unemployment Fund: an inadequate cover for the unemployed'.

Information regarding the memorandum and the Benefit Charter can be obtained from the Industrial Aid Society
PO Box 26119
2032 Excom
Johannesburg

Labour Action

Joint ballot at Highveld Steel

On 14 August, the Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) and the predominantly white South African Boilermakers Society voted together in favour of strike action at four divisions and a subsidiary of Anglo's massive Highveld Steel Corporation.

The vote, and the co-operation of white and black unions that preceded it, sets a landmark precedent for labour organisation.

MAWU rebuilt its Highveld base last year, after a crushing defeat in 1982 when 1 200 workers were retrenched. Until recently, however, it was unable to institute effective opposition over wage demands, partly because white unions in the plant generally accepted management offers.

But during industrial council negotiations this year, both MAWU and the Boilermakers refused to accept proposed increases. Management's wage offer was for 7 - 13% increases, the same as SEIFSA's offer in the industrial council. This meant a 20c hourly increase for labourers and a 40c increase for artisans.

At the first in-plant bargaining meeting after the industrial council, the white unions declared disputes over wages. Present were the Boilermakers, the Yster en Staal Unie and the Amalgamated Engineering Union. MAWU was not present but at a subsequent meeting it also declared a dispute with management. All unions demanded the right to report back to their membership and meetings of all unions' members were held.

Yster en Staal finally accepted management's offer. The AEU neither accepted or rejected the offer, and their position remains unclear.

The Boilermakers and MAWU opted to take further action. Their shop

stewards held joint meetings and decided to go ahead with an industrial action ballot.

The ballot was held over three days. On the first two, the three Witbank divisions (Highveld, Ventra and Rand Carbide) and a subsidiary, Trans Alloy, voted. On the third day a ballot was held at Mapocho mine.

Legally two ballots had to be taken, one for each of the unions. MAWU and the Boilermakers decided to hold a third ballot for workers who were not members of either union.

The outcome was resoundingly in favour of strike action. Well over 90% of MAWU membership voted in favour. 70% of the Boilermakers voted in favour. In the third informal ballot, more than 400 of the 896 white workers belonging to other unions went against their union officials' instructions and voted in favour of industrial action. Over 70% of the work-force of about 5 700 workers, voted for industrial action.

The dispute resulted in increased support and membership for both unions. MAWU signed up 343 new members and the Boilermakers have gained at least 50 new members who have switched allegiance from Yster en Staal and the Mineworkers Union.

The Boilermakers and MAWU were able to demand that wage negotiations be re-opened from a position of strength. Management agreed, and talks began on Friday, 31 August. Together, the unions forced an intransigent management ('consistently arrogant and antagonistic' was one organiser's description) to renegotiate.

The outcome will affect the metal industry as a whole. Highveld Steel management has considerable influence within SEIFSA. Other SEIFSA affiliates are likely to follow Highveld's example.

According to MAWU's organiser at Highveld, the co-operation of the two unions representing black unskilled workers and white skilled artisans was in part made possible by MAWU's participation in the in-house bargaining. MAWU's move into the industrial council, while continuing plant-based negotiations appears to be paying off.

The issue also generated a split in the white unions. Boilermakers, having placed themselves firmly against management, have gained support, while those unions which accepted management offers lost members. Also for the first time, white workers went against express union instructions and voted together with black workers. So there has been a shift away from the pure white trade unionism of unions like Yster en Staal.

A MAWU spokesman believes that still

more white workers would have voted, had it not been for rumours that management would increase house rents by R500 if they voted. Rumour said that if white workers went on strike they were in danger of losing their houses entirely.

The question is which way white workers will finally go. One MAWU organiser said, 'It is difficult to say what future relations between MAWU and Boilermakers will be, but there has been good co-operation between shop stewards of both unions. It depends on responses from the shop floor. If there is co-operation, we will build on it.'

For the first time in South Africa, management now faces a united front of both skilled and unskilled and black and white workers.

Penge miners lose battle

On 14 July, 1 700 workers at the Penge asbestos mine went on strike. Workers demanded a R10 per ten hour shift increase and the recognition of the Black Allied Mining and Construction Workers Union (BAMCWU). Other grievances were overlong working hours and dangerous working conditions.

BAMCWU has struggled for recognition at Penge mine since 1982. It has continually met an intransigent management which refuses to recognise officials as worker representatives. The union's access agreement to organise on the mine was cancelled during the strike. BAMCWU claims 90% representation at Penge Mine. Penge is owned by the

Griqualand Exploration and Finance Company (GEFCO), a subsidiary of GENCOR.

THE STRIKE

After four days on strike all the workers were fired. Management consistently refused to meet with worker representatives and refused the union permission to address striking workers. Instead, it was only willing to negotiate with the works committee, a committee appointed by management and rejected by the majority of the work-force.

Police stood by as workers gathered

Striking Penge workers refuse to leave their hostel

in the mine compound. They had refused to collect their severance pay. Production was at a standstill. It was only then that management agreed to meet BAMCWU representatives.

The two subsequent meetings between BAMCWU and Penge management were unsuccessful. Management refused to reconsider the eviction of workers from the hostels, saying that since the strike was illegal, workers had effectively dismissed themselves from their jobs. They also refused to discuss the recruitment of 460 scabs. These new workers were drawn from an extensive pool of unemployed who live in the area. The scabs were miners who had been retrenched from asbestos mines in the area. So limited production at Penge was soon underway.

The union then opposed the eviction court order brought by management to get workers out of the mine hostels. BAMCWU claimed that management had not followed the health examination procedures required for worker dismissal. Mine workers should have been X-rayed on the date of discharge or within 30 days thereafter. The Supreme Court over-ruled this claim as invalid.

After the strike GEFCO management offered to re-employ 1 000 workers. Workers however demanded that all scabs leave the mine and that they be reinstated with no loss of pay and at the same rate of pay. Management refused, and began recruiting labour from Lesotho and the Transkei through TEBA, the Chamber of Mines' recruiting agency. Management therefore bypassed local unemployed.

Striking workers finally decided to accept severance pay and leave the compound. BAMCWU stated that workers' decision to finally collect their severance pay was because 'they feel if they do not go back, the company will be forced to employ inexperienced recruits and in this way, production will suffer'.

EFFECTS ON GEFCO

But will this action affect GEFCO substantially? The evidence suggests not. GEFCO at present has a total monopoly over the mining and distribution of both blue(crocidolite) and brown(amosite) asbestos. GEFCO's net income after tax this year was

R25-m, up seven million from last year. It has reduced capital expenditure from R9,8-m to R5,6-m. In addition, the asbestos mines are only being worked at around 50% capacity. In 1982 GENCOR stopped releasing production and sales figures for its mines, but export sales for asbestos increased. Exports to the US, the UK and Western Europe are dropping, probably because of increasing awareness of the health hazards of asbestos use. But it is fairly certain that exports to the Far East are increasing, where shipping costs are less, and health codes less stringent.

BAMCWU ORGANISATION AT PENGE

The extent of BAMCWU's on-the-ground organisation at the Penge mine is unclear. It claims to have signed up 90% of the work-force before and during the strike and to have 'lots of shop stewards'. The union claims that its organisation is more community than production based.

The area is plagued by an extremely high level of unemployment. Many residents are long-term sufferers from asbestos-related diseases. Since the 1960s, retrenchment has continually exacerbated the unemployment problem. The work-force of Penge mine has been reduced from about 15 000 in the 1960s to 1 700 before the strike in July this year. BAMCWU says that the close ties between the work-force on the mine and the local population have facilitated organisation.

Wages were a central concern for the union during the strike. Workers were getting only R2,50 per 10 hour shift, and the highest paid workers, those with 25 or more years service, only received R361 per month. But because of the large numbers of workers who suffer from asbestosis, mesothelioma, a fatal cancer of the lung lining, and other asbestos-related diseases, the issue of workmen's compensation is important for the workers and the community.

BAMCWU says it has recently begun to focus on such health and safety issues. It has emphasised these during recognition talks with management. The union is also keeping records of members who have contracted occupation-related diseases, in order to assist workers with compensation claims.

Health and safety precautions at Penge are inadequate, claims BAMCWU.



A Penge miner laid off after contracting asbestosis

Workers are examined every nine months. Those workers found to have asbestosis or related diseases are laid off. Compensation includes a lump sum of between R1 490 for asbestosis sufferers and R1 790 for those who have TB and asbestosis. The union claims that this sum does not include refunded pension money or unemployment insurance.

The dilemma facing Penge workers has been a classic catch 22. The choice was

asbestosis or unemployment, both potential killers. Workers could remain in their jobs and be exposed to severe health hazards. Or they could press management to improve working and health conditions on the mine and face either a drop in wages while management improved conditions, or total unemployment in an area where jobs are almost impossible to come by.

Hlobane findings and fines

Consequences of the Hlobane Colliery disaster in September last year continue to unfold. Last February's inquest/enquiry into the methane explosion which killed 68 miners found that the final act of negligence in the causal chain leading to the blast was the failure of a deceased white miner to test for methane.

The presiding magistrate found that the owners of Hlobane Colliery should be held criminally responsible for

this negligence, and for the death of the 68 miners. Counsel representing five of the dead miners' families stressed that 21 Mines and Works Act regulations had been contravened, some repeatedly.

In a criminal case held in Vryheid in August, the Vryheid Railway Coal and Iron Company, an ISCOR subsidiary which owns Hlobane, was charged. Mine manager David Watson represented the company, and also faced charges in his

own capacity, along with a shift boss and white miner.

. According to the Mines and Works Act, an individual act of negligence which endangers the safety of persons carries a fine of up to R1 000. The company pleaded guilty to the charge relating to the presence of dangerous non-flameproof equipment at the blast site, and was fined R400. Watson was found guilty, cautioned and discharged.

Shift boss Petrus Claasens was fined R200 for neglecting to obey an order from the mine foreman to close a hole in one of the airways. Robert Morgan, a miner, was fined R200 for failing to carry out Claasens' instruction to close the hole. They had pleaded guilty to these charges.

There had been some doubt that the attorney general's office would proceed with charges. Cyril Ramaphosa, general secretary of the National Union of Mineworkers, expressed surprise that the union was not told that the case was pending. In the event, the case showed signs of being ill-prepared. The charge sheet shows a random selection of offences exposed in the enquiry, with others omitted altogether.

One of the three counts on which the mine owners were found guilty presents a striking example: the 12 pieces of non-flameproof equipment found at the explosion site could have constituted 12 charges, rather than one.

The nominal fine imposed on the owners could be seen as a wrist-slap, with blame laid largely on the three individual mine employees. However, all the guilty pleas were in effect an admission of liability.

Families of about 40 of the deceased are applying for increased compensation to the Workmen's Compensation Court. Under the Act, increased compensation can be awarded where an accident was caused by negligence of a mine employee in a supervisory or higher position, or where a patent defect was involved; that is, defective equipment which responsible people negligently failed to repair.

Over the nine year period between 1974 and 1983, only 23 increased compensation claims were made - none of them in the mining industry. As one lawyer put it, increased compensation is 'strikingly underused', probably because of widespread ignorance about it. Unionisation on the mines may

change this pattern.

Hlobane has not set any precedents so far, but it has had an impact.

It has indicated to the Chamber of Mines that NUM is serious about mine safety, and will tackle the issue in a serious way. At the enquiry, for example, NUM's team of lawyers and mining experts was the best prepared. NUM has also gained representation on the Chamber of Mines' Prevention of Accidents Committee.

The stranglehold on technical knowledge, arising from the fact that South African mining experts are almost exclusively mine employees, was broken: at least in the coal mining industry, there is a considerable body of independent overseas expertise that was, and can be used by unions as expert evidence.

In the wake of the inquest the government mining engineer, JH Badenhorst, was highly critical of Hlobane's techniques for methane detection, and its antiquated ventilation system. He remarked that eighteenth century ventilation was being used with twentieth century mining technology.

Though there might be some doubt about safety inspection prior to the disaster (see box), the inspector of mines conducted a thorough investigation into the explosion and its causes.

On the issue of safety ratings for mines, the Chamber has conceded that Hlobane was not inspected properly. In terms of the Chamber's complex loss control system, a mine is awarded a number of stars, according to its performance in terms of 22 separate elements. Hlobane had been awarded four stars after its previous audit by the Chamber's mine safety division.

Critics argue that the system, designed by the International Loss Control Institute in the USA, might be appropriate for factories, but is not so for mines. Its controls are inappropriate, they say, stressing 'good housekeeping' over safety precautions at the workplace. They point to the fact that while reportable injuries (keeping the victim from work for more than 14 shifts) decreased last year, deaths did not.

The Chamber replies that at the time of the Hlobane explosion, it had been 11 months since the last audit; also, there had been a change of management

two-and-a-half months before the disaster, which might have affected the reporting system.

The Chamber argues that it takes time for routine habits of safety precaution to percolate down to the workforce, and points to the decline in mine death figures for the first six months of the year.

A dilemma pointed out by critics is that time spent on safety precautions at the work-place takes up work time not directly used in production. At Hlobane Colliery, as in South Africa's mines in general, white miners' productivity bonuses depend on the

output of teams of black workers who work at the face. As a result, white miners have no direct incentive to ensure safety at the expense of production output.

Reform in South African mine safety legislation usually follows mine disasters. The last major amendment to the Mines and Works Act of 1970 grew out of the Coalbrook disaster ten years earlier - after a lengthy commission of enquiry whose report was never published in full. Hopefully, of course, it will not take until 1993 for necessary reforms emerging from the Hlobane disaster to be drafted.

Enquiry findings

At the inquest/enquiry into the Hlobane explosion in February this year, the following negligent practices were exposed:

- * The stipulated amount of air frequently did not get to all the coal faces;
- * At the time, a dyke had been mined, releasing an increased amount of methane. No special precautions were taken, and the mine ventilation officer was not notified;
- * Before the accident, the return airway was broken into, reducing the amount of air at the coal face by more than half. A miner was instructed to close the hole and failed to do so;
- * Mine officials on duty at the time did not check whether he had carried out his task;
- * Of 29 pieces of equipment found at the site of the explosion, 12 were not flameproof, and could give off sparks. The court found that one of these, coal scoop 56, had probably ignited the explosion;
- * A week before the explosion, a miner reported that he had found a dangerously high methane level of 4%. Mine regulations stipulate that the presence of gas must be reported by mine management to the inspector of mines for investigation. This was neglected;
- * Only four of ten lamps required by law to monitor methane levels were found after the explosion. Only one of the four was fitted with a special probe attachment to detect methane layers on the mine roof;
- * The coal dust had probably not been watered down because of an interruption of water supply at the time of the accident;
- * Despite the lack of water, production was not halted;
- * The brattice material used to direct air along the workforce was not fireproof, and did not meet SABS specifications.

Strikes and Disputes

COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	ISSUE
<p><u>TRANSVAAL</u></p> <p>Alfa Romeo (Assembly plant) Brits</p>	<p>NAAWU</p>	<p>Workers demanded a 50c across-the-board increase. Management offered 11c</p>
<p>Bold Stone (Tombstone factory) Pretoria</p>	<p>NGWU</p>	<p>Union recognition</p>
<p>Bophuthatswana Transport Holdings (BTH) Pitso transport depot Erasmus</p>	<p>Team Workers Union</p>	<p>Re-instatement of two dismissed bus drivers; Union recognition</p>
<p>CHT Manufacturing (Motor components) Rosslyn</p>	<p>NAAWU</p>	<p>Re-instatement of 100 NAAWU members fired on 24 February for refusing to work overtime</p>
<p>Chubby Chicks Potchefstroom</p>	<p>FBWU</p>	<p>Police action against unionist addressing worker gathering outside factory during strike</p>
<p>Diesel Electric (Automobile spares) Johannesburg</p>		<p>Harassment of shop stewards; Union recognition; Wage increase</p>
<p>Edgars</p>	<p>CCAWUSA</p>	<p>Wage negotiations</p>
<p>Hercules Cold Storage Pretoria</p>	<p>RAWU/NGWU</p>	<p>Union recognition</p>
<p>Illman Plastics (four plants)</p>	<p>MAWU</p>	<p>Re-instatement of fired worker at Booyens plant</p>
<p>Industrial Leatherworks Johannesburg</p>	<p>GAWU</p>	<p>Wage negotiations outside industrial council; Union recognition</p>

WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
800	09-16.07.84	Workers demanded a 50c across-the-board increase. Management offered 11c, negotiations deadlocked, and workers struck. NAAWU accepted a subsequent management offer of an immediate 16c increase, with a further 4c in October.
70	Mid-July - 26.07.84	<p>Bold Stone became only the second employer to allege that a union was guilty of an unfair labour practice. On 20 July, at least seven of the strikers were arrested by police investigating Intimidation Act charges.</p> <p>At a meeting of the industrial council called to discuss the dispute, NGWU agreed that strikers would return to work on 26 July.</p>
300	30.07.84 - 03.08.84	Twelve workers were injured and four arrested when Bophuthatswana police baton-charged strikers. The strike ended with Bophuthatswana authorities agreed to recognise the union under the new Industrial Conciliation Act once the union 'gets itself organised'.
	24.02.84 - 06.08.84	The industrial court ordered the company to re-instate the workers from 7 August. NAAWU indicated disappointment that re-instatement was not from the February date of dismissal.
		Sikhakhane was convicted with 26 workers for holding an illegal gathering outside the factory during a dispute. Lawyers will appeal against this decision of a Potchefstroom regional magistrate.
170	13.07.84 -	
2 000		Wage increases affecting 2 000 Edgars workers countrywide, ranging between R48 and R65, to be implemented from 1 July, were agreed to.
		The company refuses to recognise the union, which has declared a dispute and threatened a consumer boycott of Hansa Meats.
1 400	27.06.84	Workers fired after downing tools in solidarity with a dismissed colleague. Negotiations, but no settlement.
+300	08-09.08.84	Workers went on strike after the company refused to negotiate wages outside of the industrial council agreement. Workers ignored a management ultimatum to return to work, and were dismissed.

COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	ISSUE
Mike's Kitchen		Re-instatement of three dismissed workers
Pan African Shopfitters Germiston	BAMCWU	Re-instatement of dismissed worker
Park President Construction Wadeville	BAMCWU	Victimisation of union members; dismissal of two shop stewards and 17 workers
PUTCO	TGWU TAWU	Wage increases and other benefits
Simba Quix Isando	SFAWU	Re-instatement of three dismissed workers
South African Breweries Watloo Depot	FBWU	No-confidence vote in management appointed works council
Supercola Rosslyn	NGWU	Wage increases
Tempest International (Radio manufacturers) Pietersburg and Seshego	BEEWU	Wage increases; Union recognition; Stop to unfair dismissals; Paid maternity leave
Transvaal Steel and Reinforcing Pietersburg	BGWU	Wage increases; Union recognition
Trident Steel Germiston	SEAWU	After a dispute in July over wage increases, most employees were dismissed. On 6 August, SEAWU members picketed the factory. Management obtained a court interdict preventing the picketing
<p><u>ORANGE FREE STATE</u></p> <p>Zeederberg and Toristo Hotels, Kroonstad</p>	CCAWUSA	Wages and overtime pay; Delays in wage payment; Victimisation

WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
30	Mid-July	
400	30-31.07.84	Management agreed to reinstate the dismissed worker. Strikers returned to work.
	09.08.84 -	The union has laid a complaint against the company with the industrial council, and has threatened legal action.
8 600	08.08.84	After a year long dispute with PUTCO, the unions negotiated a 12% pay increase for 8 600 employees. Workers will also receive an additional paid public holiday, an increased tool allowance, maternity benefits with guaranteed re-employment, extended funeral benefits, and increased hospital fees reimbursement.
400	13.08.84	Striking workers dismissed. The union claims that the dismissals violate an agreement not to fire strikers for three days after they have downed tools. Management claims workers had stopped work four times in three weeks.
200	Mid-August	Talks between the union and management due to begin on 5 September.
250	16-23.07.84	Management agreed to negotiate wages with the union. Strikers returned to work.
1 700	06-08.08.84	Management threatened to close factory if workers did not return. Workers mandated union officials to discuss their demands with management, and returned to work.
20	13.08.84	Management agreed to talk to the union through legal advisers and directors. Workers resolved to stay out until their demands were met.
125	13.08.84	After workers had demanded wage increases, they were allegedly forced to choose between overtime work and dismissal. Shop stewards demanded to negotiate the issue with management, but the parties deadlocked. 125 workers were dismissed, and the union declared a dispute with the company.
42	30.07.84 -	The union, which claims representative membership attempted to contact management of both hotels, but without success.

COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	ISSUE
<p><u>EASTERN CAPE</u></p> <p>Frame East London</p>	<p>SAAWU</p>	<p>Deduction of membership dues for TUCSA's TWIU</p>
<p>Volkswagen Uitenhage</p>	<p>NAAWU</p>	<p>Scuffle between white foreman and black worker, and management's response to this</p>
<p><u>WESTERN CAPE</u></p> <p>Dairybelle Cape Town</p>	<p>RAWU</p>	<p>Company's labour recruiting system</p>
<p>Everite Brackenfell</p>	<p>GWU</p>	<p>Charges against five union shop stewards</p>
<p>PA Concrete Products</p>	<p>GWU</p>	
<p><u>NATAL</u></p> <p>AECI New Germany</p>	<p>SACWU</p>	<p>Unfair distribution of short time</p>
<p>Bakers Ltd</p>	<p>SFAWU</p>	<p>Workers demanded R20 across-the-board increase. Management offered R12,50</p>
<p>BTR Sarmcol Howick</p>	<p>MAWU</p>	<p>Wage dispute led to legal strike ballot and overtime ban</p>
<p>Consolidated Woodwashing and Processing (Frame group) Pinetown</p>	<p>NUTW</p>	<p>Wage increases in line with those granted other Frame employees</p>

WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
Initially 800, then 4 500	26.07.84 -	Workers objected to the deduction of dues for the TUCSA-affiliated TWIU. At first 800 struck, then the entire work-force of 4 500 downed tools.
Initially 300, then 4 000	Mid-July; End July. Plant closed 07.08, re- opened 14.08.	<p>After a scuffle between a white foreman and a black worker, workers downed tools. The body shop could not continue operating, and workers in that section were temporarily laid off without pay. The struck, demanding compensation for the lay-off period. After negotiations with management, they returned to work.</p> <p>After another work stoppage in early August, the plant was closed down, and 4 000 workers temporarily laid off. It was re-opened on 14 August when strikers agreed to return.</p>
600	05.07.84 -	In the company's recruiting system, workers are not given call-in cards. This jeopardises their changes of qualifying for permanent urban residence in terms of influx control legislation. Talks between the company and RAWU deadlocked, and the strike continued.
700	20-23.07.84	Workers demanded that management withdraw charges against five shop stewards arrested for allegedly damaging a company office. Management rejected the demand, and workers returned.
	Late August.	Striking contract workers were fired, and then arrested for being in the Western Cape illegally.
160	16-19.07.84	Returned to work after three days, and resumed normal working hours.
800	13.08.84	Dispute referred to industrial council on 17 August. Workers returned to work.
911	April 1984 - 14.08.84	Union accepted minimum wage of R329 per month. Negotiated half a day unpaid leave on labour day.
160	16-20.07.84	Frame refused to negotiate. 142 workers fired after refusing to meet a return-to-work deadline.

COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	ISSUE
Dunlop Tyre Company Durban	MAWU	Dismissal of four union members
Dunlop Tyre Company Ladysmith	MAWU	Sympathy strike with Durban workers
Dunlop Tyre Company Benoni	CWIU	Threatened sympathy strike with Durban workers
Durban City Council Electricity Department	African Workers Association	Wage demand of R29 across-the-board increase. Rejected 4% increase offer
Fedics Food Services University of Natal	CCAWUSA	Reinstatement of dismissed workers; Wage increases
Frame Consolidated Cotton Corporation New Germany	NUTW	Dispute over union recognition at Frametex, Seltex, Pinetex, Natal Knitting Mill and Nortex
Goodhope Concrete Pipes Pietermaritzburg		Wage increases and benefits, including pensions
Hart Ltd Umbilo	MAWU	20% wage increase
Keely Forwarding Durban	GWU	Company paid workers below minimum wage without permission of Department of Manpower
KwaZulu Development Corporation	SFAWU	Wage dispute

WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
1 200	15-16.08.84	1 200 workers dismissed after legal strike. Management refused to refer dismissal of union members to conciliation board, claiming strike was illegal. Also claimed that workers dissatisfied with MAWU.
120	17.08.84 End of August	120 at Dunlop sport division fired for sympathy strike. Sympathy strike at end of August.
500	27.08.84	Management applied for court order preventing MAWU members from striking in sympathy. MAWU taking issue to industrial court.
	27-30.08.84	Downed tools in sympathy with Dunlop workers. MAWU warned that there could be more strikes if management does not negotiate.
500 - 1 000	15.08.84 -	Management committee agreed to hold talks with worker representatives. January 1985 increase to be announced at end of September.
200	01-10.08.84	Workers returned on condition that independent commission of inquiry be appointed.
	28.08.84	NUTW claims majority membership at Pinetex, Frametex and Natal Knitting. Frame obtained supreme court order to prevent industrial court from considering recognition dispute. Judgement on appeal on 17 September.
100	19.07.84	Management agreed to negotiate. Return to work ultimatum for 23 July.
600 - 1 200	15-21.08.84	Company refused to negotiate wages and service benefits with union. Strike ballot on 6 July. Workers went on strike and company agreed to negotiate on conditions of employment at plant level.
200	July-August	Management undercut national wage agreement by R8,45 a day. Keely previously contravened 1979 wage agreement and forced to back pay R80 000. Department of Manpower rejected Keely's application to pay less than minimum wage. Company now owes workers approximately R50 000 back pay.
	March-August	Union demanded R300 monthly minimum wage next year. Deadlock in March, and dispute declared. Conciliation board agreed on R230 minimum from August. Key issue of whether KwaZulu falls under SA labour legislation not resolved.

COMPANY AND AREA	UNION	ISSUE
Lever Brothers Durban	CWIU	Workers demanded 20% wage increase
Machined Timbers Pinetown	PWAU	Wages; Reinstatement of seven dismissed workers
MAN Trucks Pinetown	MAWU	Wage increases
Oxenham Bakery Pietermaritzburg	FBAWU	Wages
Pick 'n Pay Empangeni	CCAWUSA	Alleged racial discrimination after worker jailed for theft
Queensborough Municipality	TGWU	Wages
Rainbow Chickens		Refusal to work overtime
Sentrachem's Karbochen Plant Newcastle	SACWU	Reinstatement of dismissed worker
Tongaat Oil Products Jacobs	AFCWU	Pension fund
Umzinkulu Lime Company	CAWU	Wages; Union recognition
Uniply Factory Cato Ridge	PWAU	Reinstatement of dismissed shop stewards; Dismissals
University of Natal Durban	Black Workers Organisation	Delay in payment of wage increase
WISPECO Mobeni, Durban	MAWU	50c an hour increase demanded. Company offered 20c as per industrial council agreement

WORKERS	DATE	EVENTS AND OUTCOME
500 - 1 500	15.08.84 -	Management held discussions with union representatives.
Over 100	20-25.07.84	Wage negotiations broke down. Seven workers were dismissed. Strike staged in protest led to further dismissals. Matter referred to industrial court by PWAU.
	? - 13.08.84	Dispute settled by mediation. Pay increases of 13 - 28%. Increase in leave bonus.
	? - 11.07.84	Breakdown in wage negotiations led to go-slow.
	29.06.84	Talks with management, but no agreement reached.
170	16.07.84	114 workers dismissed. Workers willing to return if industrial council discusses wages with union. 110 new recruits employed.
7	Five month dispute from February 1984	Industrial court ruled that seven workers who were dismissed for refusing to work overtime should be reinstated.
200	Mid-August	Police clash with strikers. Six workers admitted to hospital.
280 - 320	06-14.08.84	Workers rejected membership of new provident fund scheme as condition of employment. On 7 August, workers at Isando and Kempton Park plants struck in sympathy with Natal workers. Workers at Jacobs plant fired on 8 August, but reinstated on 15 August. Strikers returned to work after agreement between company and union.
120	30.07 - 02.08.84	First go-slow, then work stoppage. Workers returned after arrangements made for recognition talks, and negotiations on conditions of work.
400	May 1984 - ?	Two shop stewards fired following a May Day demonstration. 400 workers go slow in protest, and fired. Matter to industrial court.
	18.07.84	Workers marched on administration buildings to protest delay in wage increase payments.
200	29.06.84	Workers hold placard demonstration at lunch time. Company refused to negotiate outside the industrial council system.

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