

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions

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1984



Bosses use strikes for UNION BASHING!



INSTEAD of settling the dispute, many South African employers are using strikes as an opportunity to indulge in their favourite pastime – union bashing.

Two recent strikes clearly illustrate this management attitude – the one at SA Fabrics at Rosburgh and the other at BMW at Rosslyn.

Workers at SA Fabrics, a textile factory near Durban, declared a dispute at the end of last year after the company turned down their wage demand for a staggered 16 percent increase.

The National Union of Textile Workers put forward a demand for a 6 percent increase in January, 8 percent in July and a further 2 percent to be given in the form of a Christmas bonus.

The company's response was a 4 percent increase which was completely rejected by workers.

As the company refused to budge, a dispute was declared and the NUTW applied for a Conciliation Board – this now opened the way for a legal strike.

Within days of the dispute being declared, SA Fabrics told the union that it wanted to now retrench – this was seen by workers as outright provocation.

Early this year, a strike ballot was held and an overwhelming majority of the workers voted to go on strike.

Management then held meetings in all the departments and told workers that they 'may' be dismissed if they strike.

This merely further angered workers and on January 26, the entire workforce stopped work – this was the beginning of NUTW's second legal strike.

From then on the company launched its attack on the union – it threatened to sue the union in order to 'recover damages suffered by the company' and it threatened to cancel the agreement that it has with

BMW workers discuss the anti-union pamphlets dropped from a helicopter hired by the company

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Workers forced to strip

IN an out of court settlement, 14 Braitex workers have been paid R40 each by a security firm which forced them to strip naked in order to search them.

The Transvaal branch secretary of the National Union of Textile Workers, Bangi Solo said that when the workers had knocked off at 10.30 one night, they had been told to stand in a queue by new security personnel.

They then had to go into a hut where they were made to strip naked and then searched, he said.

'When the workers complained they were told to shut up by the security guards who said they hadn't got time for kaffirs,' Brother Solo said.

As well as undergoing the 'inhumane' search, Brother Solo said, the workers were late home because they had missed their transport.

The NUTW took the matter up with management the next day.

Braitex apologised and dismissed the security firm, Brother Solo said.

However, it was decided to take the SA Security Services to court for detaining the workers illegally and for making them strip.

On January 11, the security firm settled the matter out of court by agreeing to pay the workers compensation and the legal costs.

THE National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has attacked the motor industry for putting profit for shareholders before the livelihood of people.

And it has committed itself to winning job security for its members.

Already this year the motor industry has laid off over 2000 workers - 500 at Ford, 850 at Sigma and 700 at Datsun-Nissan.

NAAWU said these 'massive' retrenchments underline the inherent insecurity of workers in the automobile industry.

'Agreements need to be made to buttress workers against the financial risks of working in this industry and decent severance and unemployment pay arrangements must be made,' the union said.

SENSITIVITY

NAAWU said that such insecurity did not ease industrial relations and was a situation which needed to be handled with 'sensitivity' through constant negotiation between management and workers.

'We are currently formulating proposals which will ensure that workers in all auto plants in this country will not be at such a disadvantage through factors over which they have no control,' general secretary, Fred Sauls said.

Turning to the retrenchments, Fred Sauls said the difference between the way Sigma and Ford handled the lay-offs was startling.

Discussion between the union and Sigma had begun as early as December over the possibility of the current retrenchment, he said.

'In addition the long standing agreement between the two parties ensured that the Last In First Out principle was adhered to

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Whereas Ford presented exactly the opposite picture, he said.

'The union was notified on Wednesday of the retrenchments which were to take place on Friday and only at the union's request was a meeting held.'

The company even refused to consider any alternative proposals by the union and refused to delay their retrenchments until after a report back to a general meeting of workers could be held,' Brother Sauls said.

He added that this was not to say that NAAWU was satisfied with the Sigma retrenchments as the union believes that the company had not taken sufficient steps to ensure that manning levels were such that massive swings between employment and retrenchment were avoided.

The union will continue to discuss this with the company.

Brother Sauls said since 1980 Ford had been the cause of considerable conflict.

'The company must take full

responsibility for this through its refusal to consult and negotiate in good faith with its workers,' he said.

He said that it was clear that Ford was using the current state of the economy as a way of attempting to weaken and even smash unions.

'Such an attitude is strongly condemned and should be exposed as the worst sort of paternalistic exploitation,' Brother Sauls said.

'Ford will not succeed in defeating the union in its plants,' he warned.

Charges dropped!

THE charges have been dropped against seven unionists from the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union who were arrested while organising outside the Beacon Sweets factory at Mobeni.

The SFAWU organisers and shop stewards were arrested by the police while signing up workers outside the factory gates and charged with 'obstructing the pavement'.

Union bashing bosses



SA Fabrics' workers cast their votes on whether to strike in their attempt to get management to come forward with a better wage offer.



The strike is on, and NUTW organiser, Elias Banda, leads the workers in song while they wait for a report-back on a meeting between the company and the union.

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NUTW.

SA Fabrics also told the press that the strike was 'illegal' and that it was not about wages at all, but about retrenchments.

This was clearly not true. The NUTW attempted to get the company to postpone the retrenchments until the wage dispute was settled but management insisted on retrenching in the middle of the strike.

Workers throughout the strike have been adamant that they will not go back until the company has come forward with a reasonable offer.

At BMW motor plant near Pretoria, about 1 500 workers went on strike when the company refused to improve its offer of a 10c an hour increase.

The day after the strike began the company shut down the plant claiming there had been 'threats and acts of violence against staff'.

Several days later BMW held 'disciplinary hearings' for 19 workers who the company claims were the 'main intimidators' - without these workers even being present. The company said the personnel officer had represented them.

The company even went as far as hiring a helicopter to drop anti-union pamphlets in three local townships.

The first pamphlet accused the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union of not informing workers

'that in the present economic climate', their demands were 'unreasonable'.

It said that the 'wild-cat strike' would not force BMW to change its position.

'We believe that NAAWU does not represent your true feelings on this matter. In future we will communicate with you directly and we are looking forward to your loyal support,' the pamphlet said.

Later the same day, BMW dropped another pamphlet inviting workers and their wives to a free party.

It said that amongst other things there would be a free video show and cold drinks.

The pamphlet said at the party there would be discussions on the strike and the closing of the plant.

This was a clear attempt to undermine the workers' representative, NAAWU, and was soundly condemned by the workers.

Worker-management relations in both these factories will undoubtedly suffer due to the companies' union bashing.

STOP PRESS: At SA Fabrics, a Conciliation Board has been appointed and workers have agreed to go back to work in the hope that the dispute will be resolved through further negotiations. BMW workers also decided to return to work when the company reopened the plant - giving the company a further chance to pay serious attention to their wage demands.

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COMMENT

A CLOUD of gloom has already settled, as we enter 1984. More than 2 000 workers have already been retrenched and the 1 percent rise in GST will erode away the little wage gains that workers managed to win last year. And those hard hit by last year's drought are now the victims of the floods brought on by Cyclone Domoina.

But last year, in spite of the difficult conditions of an economic recession, FOSATU unions were able, not only to survive, but also to grow stronger. It is from the unity of workers that we will draw our strength to fight the difficult battles ahead.

For this reason FOSATU remains convinced of the urgent need for unity and solidarity among the oppressed workers of South Africa. We hope that 1984 will bring about a larger united worker federation consisting of those unions really serious about worker unity.

It is obvious that employers are uniting in their attempts to curb the growth of the worker movement in this country. Word has reached us of employer organisations discussing ways to smash FOSATU unions within their area. And judging from Bophuthatswana's recent attempts to bar South African-based unions, they will receive support from these puppet homeland governments.

But FOSATU and other progressive unions will resist this with all our strength and employers will learn what it is like to face the might of united workers.

Employers must also be taught that we will not allow workers to bear the burden of the economic recession. Workers are already burdened with the increased sales tax — a tax which always hits the poor harder than the rich. On top of this, the drought and the floods have increased the families' demands on the wages of their working relatives. Yet employers call our wage demands 'unreasonable' and refuse to give us a living wage.

And why is the government increasing GST? Because its apartheid policies are expensive. The government expects we, workers, to pay for the very racist policies which oppress us! If the government and the rich capitalists want apartheid then they must pay the tax for it!

This year the government and employers will learn, once again, that workers are not donkeys which will carry any burden placed on their backs. FOSATU remains committed to the struggle for a South Africa where all workers, regardless of race, will receive a fair share of its wealth.



Frame's wall begins to crack

CRACKS are beginning to appear in the wall that Frame has built to keep out the National Union of Textile Workers.

For the past year, Frame has been running from one court to another in its attempts to keep the NUTW from representing workers at its New Germany mills — but it is beginning to run out of courts.

Last year, the NUTW took Frame to the industrial court for unfairly retrenching 10 of its members at the giant Frametex mill.

One hundred members of the sweetheart Textile Workers Industrial Union were also retrenched but this union has done nothing to assist its members.

NUTW argued that Frame had not consulted with the union over the retrenchment of its members and had not stuck to the principle of Last In First Out — in fact a number of the retrenched workers had more than 20 years service.

Frame managing director,

Selwyn Lurie said in reply that the company first retrenched according to a worker's 'efficiency'.

The company then retrenched on the basis of the worker's length of service in a particular department.

NUTW attacked this saying that using efficiency as a criteria 'placed employees at the mercy of the whims of their supervisors'.

And LIFO by department allowed the company to 'rob an employee of his seniority by transferring him to another department', the union said.

A number of the workers retrenched with long service had been transferred to another department and then within ten days had found themselves retrenched — because according to Frame they had only ten days' service.

The court agreed to order the temporary reinstatement of the 10 workers but early this year Frame appealed against this

judgement.

The industrial court turned down this appeal and has once again ordered that the company either take back the workers or continue to pay them until the dispute is resolved.

Recently, the retrenched workers received R9 600 in pay — each worker was paid roughly R1 000.

In another important victory for the NUTW, the civil court recently ordered that Frame stop deducting Textile Workers Industrial Union dues from the wages of 19 Pinetex workers.

The workers had already resigned from the TWIU to join NUTW some time ago, but the company had refused to stop deducting union dues.

Hundreds of Pinetex workers have since then crossed the floor to join NUTW and unless the company stops deducting TWIU dues for these workers it will once again find itself in court.

FOSATU calls for a delay on new tax plan

THE Federation of SA Trade Unions (FOSATU) has called on the government to delay introducing the new tax plan for black workers.

Until now black workers have been subject to a different tax system to whites.

The new system, due to be introduced next month, will bring all wage earners under the same tax system.

Early this month, FOSATU officials met with senior Inland Revenue officials, Mr Clive Kingdon and Mr Hennie Smidt, to discuss the serious problems that the federation has with the new tax plan.

FOSATU said that it accepted that if people pay tax then they must be treated in the same way and not divided by race.

But it attacked the government for 'blindly' refusing to consult with worker representatives.

FOSATU general secretary, Joe Foster said that the government had been planning this new system for five years but only now does it talk to the unions — and only then because they want the unions to explain the system to black workers.

FOSATU told the Revenue

officials that workers were 'extremely' suspicious of the new tax plan particularly since tax forms were being handed out by employers.

The federation called on the government to delay the new

Wage victory after 'tough negotiations'

IN what shop stewards called 'the toughest wage negotiations we have ever had', Plate Glass workers at Germiston scored a big victory.

Ever since FOSATU's living wage policy was publicised in 1981, the Plate Glass shop stewards have been struggling to achieve a minimum wage of R2 an hour.

In the recent negotiations held in December last year, the shop stewards and workers prepared to achieve their goal.

Workers made it quite clear to their bosses that they were prepared to strike if the company refused to at least raise the minimum wages up to R2 an hour.

On the eve of the wage talks, the workers began a collection

system until all workers had a chance 'to consider it, understand it and make proposals to help improve it'.

The Inland Revenue officials agreed to take back FOSATU's call to their 'bosses'.

among themselves in order to prepare for a strike. By collecting R10 from each worker, they managed to raise R1 780. Workers were preparing to collect more money but this became unnecessary when the management conceded a R2 an hour minimum.

The minimum wages will be raised from R1,41 to R1,80 in January and then to R2 in July — a hike of 59c per hour.

On top of this the Christmas bonus for last year and this year was raised from one week's wages to three weeks' wages.

There are now more than 10 Transvaal plants organised by the Chemical Workers Industrial Union with a minimum wage of R2.

Bop puts ban on SA unions

BOPHUTHATSWANA has imposed a ban on South African trade unions operating on its territory.

A move which is being closely watched by a number of unions affiliated to FOSATU which over the past year have made tremendous strides in organising workers living in Bophuthatswana.

At the end of last month, the Commercial Catering and Allied Workers Union, the National Union of Mineworkers and the South African Allied Workers Union were informed that it is illegal for South African unions to organise within Bophuthatswana.

This ban came to light when Ucar mine, organised by NUM, and Metro Cash and Carry, organised by CCAWUSA were told by the Bophuthatswana government that they could not recognise the South African-based unions.

Apparently a new Industrial Conciliation Act is due to be tabled in the territory's 'parliament' this month which will allow for the establishment of

Bophuthatswana unions.

It is not clear yet whether workers living in Bophuthatswana but working within South Africa will be barred from joining South African-based unions.

IMF speaks about SA trade unions

THE continuing growth of lasting and democratic trade unions for black workers is an important step forward in the fight against apartheid.

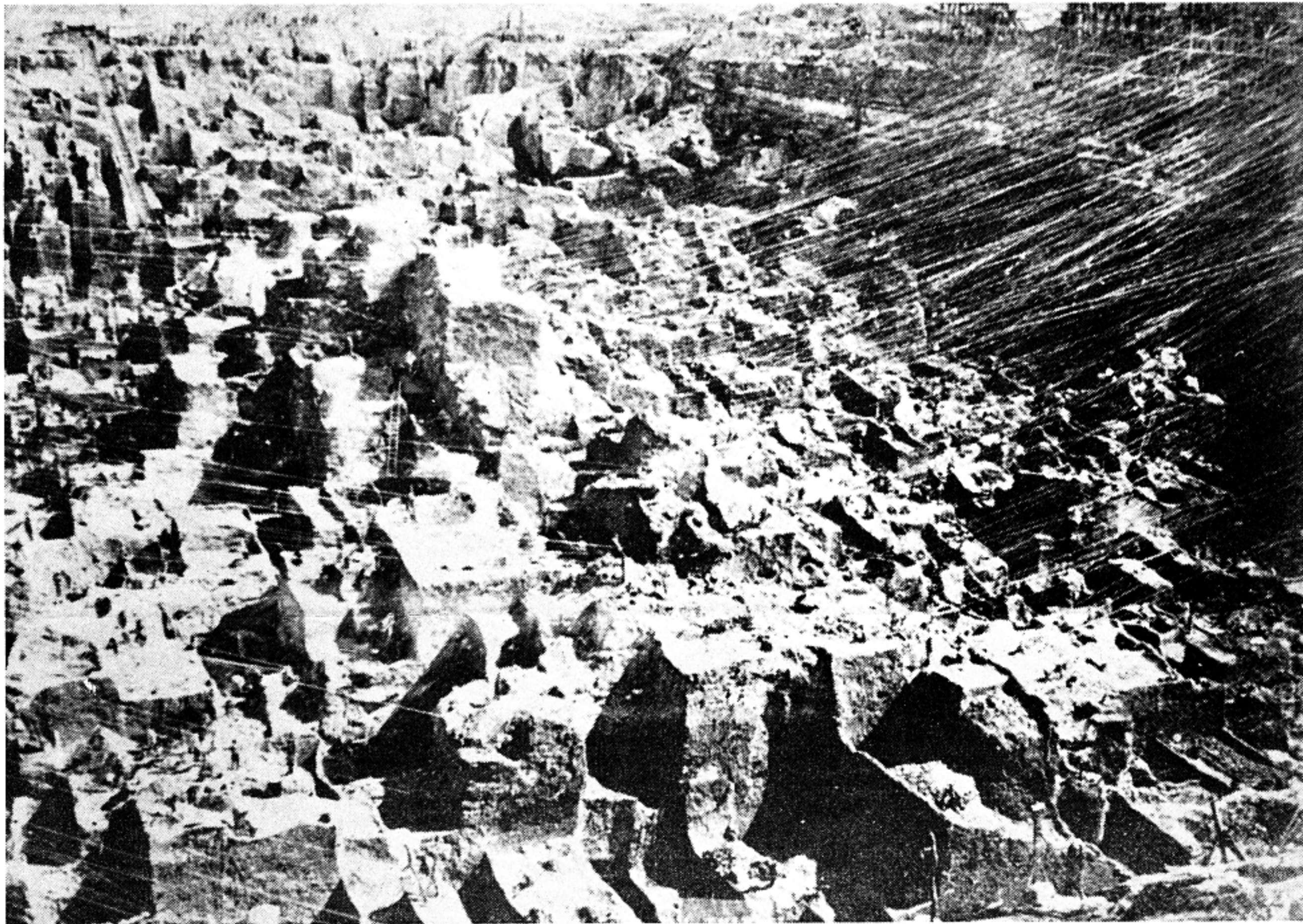
This is according to the general secretary of the 14 million-strong International Metalworkers' Federation, Herman Rebhan.

Speaking at an international symposium on trade unions in South Africa, which was held in Dusseldorf last month, Brother Rebhan said the industrial struggles to achieve workplace rights were helping to build the self-confidence of those opposed to white minority rule.

The making of the

WORKING

CLASS



The Kimberly diamond mine. Each prospector owned a small plot which he dug with the help of African labour. The plots were linked to the surface by a line which was used to haul the dug rock to the top where it was then sifted for diamonds.

AFTER the discovery of diamonds near Kimberly, in 1867 and gold in the Eastern Transvaal in 1871, the face of South Africa rapidly changed. Money was now available to build larger armies, better systems of transport and more efficient governments so that the human and natural resources of the country could be exploited more effectively. Big capitalists became interested in the profits to be made and imperial countries like Britain were soon following their lead. The impact of these events were felt on the highveld of the Orange Free State and the Transvaal.

Until this time the Boer Republics of the highveld had been very weak and unstable. Our history books usually tell us that the trekkers moved into land left empty after inter-tribal fighting. Here they set up self-sufficient apartheid style states. Recent historical writing shows that this is wrong. Instead of heading for depopulated parts of the country, the trekkers chose to settle close to or among some of the largest concentrations of black population. Here they often came into conflict with nearby black chiefdoms.

Why has this misleading picture been painted in our history books? Part of the reason is that historians have often imagined that the separation of black and white races in South Africa was the natural and original way of things. They tell us that the trekkers were strong, that they did not have to rely on any outside help and that they were racially exclusive. Blacks on the other hand were attracted to the white states by the possibility of earning money and by the benefits of 'white civilisation'. The white states, these histories tell us, were therefore justified in segregating themselves and in refusing blacks political and other rights.

Little of this is correct. The trekkers were neither racially exclusive nor self-sufficient. For them to be able to cultivate their land, for them to be able to look after their herds, for them to be able to hunt — they needed black labour. This meant that they had to attract blacks to work for them or that they had to find some way of forcing blacks to work. But because the trekkers were militarily weak compared to many of their neighbouring African states, they could not do this by themselves and they became dependant in many ways on these African neighbours — especially for labour. The Swazi, for example, sold young children who they had seized from other chiefdoms to the Boer farmers.

According to an early account of one Swazi chief: 'The first white man to come to Swaziland was a Boer named Ngalonkulo. President Kruger also came to the country in the early days to purchase Tonga children with horses and oxen from the Swazi. Other Boers made similar purchases.'

These children who were then 'apprenticed' became one of the earliest parts of the rural working class.

So, between the 1840's and the 1860's a degree of equality existed between white and black societies in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Until the late 1860's and the 1870's most black societies were independent, for example, the Sotho in Lesotho, the Zulu, the Swazi, the Pedi, the Transvaal Ndebele, the Venda and the various Tswana chiefdoms. In places, the Boer states were in fact on the defensive. In 1868 for example they were pushed out of the Zoutpansberg in the Northern Transvaal. And in 1866 and 1876 they had to fall back after failing to defeat first the Transvaal Ndebele and then the Pedi.

The situation only began to change after the diamond discoveries in the late 1860's and more particularly the gold discoveries on the Witwatersrand in 1886. After the discovery of diamonds, capital began to pour in to exploit the diamond fields. Railways were built into the interior and a huge demand grew for labour and for food to feed the miners and cities began to spring up round the mines. Serious competition for labour was the result. Boer farmers in the independent trekker Republic of the Transvaal began hijacking migrant workers travelling to the mines. Both the Transvaal

In the last issue of FOSATU Worker News, we looked at the breaking of Xhosa resistance in the Eastern Cape. In this issue we move on to examine the part played by the mining revolution in subduing independent African states in the interior of South Africa, and in creating a much larger African working class.



Early mineworkers

and the Zulu states blocked the free flow of labour to the sugar plantations of Natal. Conflict began to grow.

It was in this situation that Britain appointed a new high Commissioner (a kind of governor) named Sir Bartle Frere to its colonies in the Cape and Natal, and instructed him to join the Boer Republics into one united federation with Natal and the Cape. His second task was to defeat the independent chiefdoms of the interior, so as to provide security and new sources of labour.

Frere wrote at the time: 'The uneducated lower classes (of the black races) are well inclined to become the free labouring population of states which protect them. They are in this respect a great benefit and a very decided advantage to the European colonies which do not seem likely to prosper on this continent if restricted to exclusively white labour.'

Of the various independent African states to be attacked, the Zulu were top of his list. In 1877 one of Frere's closest advisers — a man named Theophilus Shepstone — wrote that the Zulu king Cetshwayo was 'the secret hope of every petty independent chief hundreds of miles away from him who feels a desire that his colour should prevail and it will not be until this hope is destroyed that they will make up their minds to submit to the rule of civilisation.'

So, Sir Bartle Frere proceeded first to take control of the trekker Republic in the Transvaal and then to attack the Zulu and the Pedi. Neither of these African states gave up easily and the British suffered serious defeats at the hands of the Zulu, before the Zulu were eventually beaten at the

battle of Ulundi in 1879. In the decade that followed most of the African chiefdoms in and around the Transvaal were brought under white control. Taxes were imposed and migrant labour was drawn out. By 1897, over 75 000 Africans were working at any one time in the gold mines of the Rand. The first major stage of proletarianisation (making people workers) had been achieved. The South African working class was well on its way to being formed.

PART FOUR: THE MINING REVOLUTION

THE GST SQUEEZE

THE government has administered another blow to workers and their families by increasing the GST by another 1 percent.

This was said by the Metal and Allied Workers Union in a statement released after its recent National Executive Committee meeting.

The union said that families living on or below the bread line, 'just can't afford it'.

'There are so many other ways for the government to collect the money it needs from the people who can afford it,' the union said.

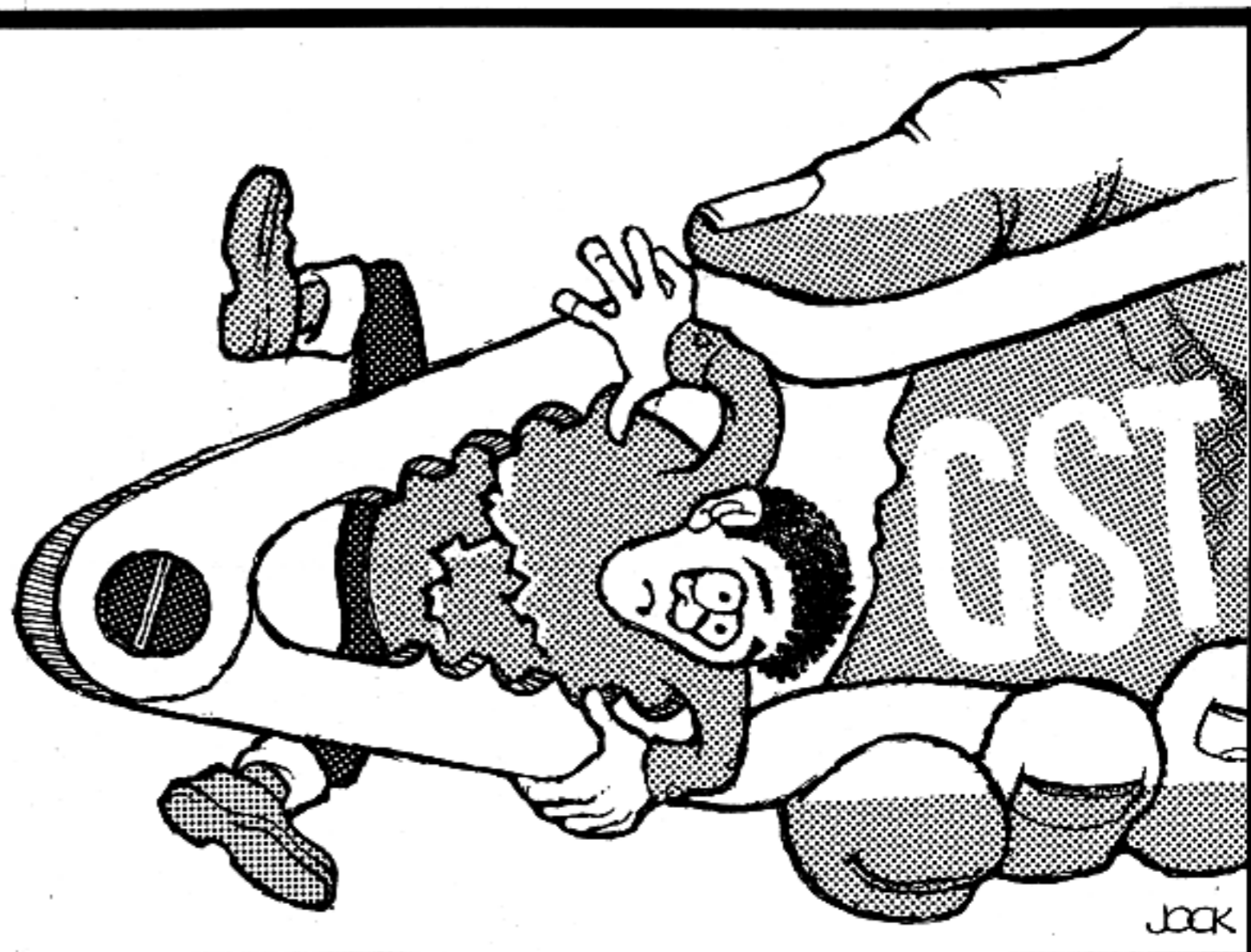
'But workers are not represented on the committees that recommend changes in taxes and those who can afford to pay are represented both directly and indirectly,' MAWU added.

It said despite the recession, most of the major companies in South Africa had reported tremendous profits for 1983.

'On the other hand, workers have suffered more and more — their real standard of living has dropped more and more as inflation, unemployment, loss of land and cattle have forced workers to spread their money more thinly,' the union said.

As a result MAWU's NEC said it would encourage union members to put as the first part of any wage demand to employers the 1 percent to make up for the GST increase.

'If workers have no voice in government, they must speak where they do have a voice — at work,' MAWU said.



Rubber workers strike for wages



ABOUT 300 workers at Isipingo's Wayne Rubber Company recently went on strike in support of a demand for higher wages. During the three day strike, the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union signed up the majority of the workers at the plant — talks are underway for union recognition after which the union will tackle wages.

Education Bursaries

FOR the first time, the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has awarded education bursaries to 19 Port Elizabeth students.

Last year the union announced that it would be examining the possibility of setting up an education fund to assist workers' children to get an education.

Regional secretary of the Eastern Province, Les Kettleidas said at this stage R10 000 had been set aside to assist standard nine and ten pupils.

'The bursaries, which are for a maximum of R500, will go towards school fees, books and in some cases will cover transport and board and lodging,' Brother Kettleidas said.

He said the union would be looking into the possibility of extending the education fund to include technical or university education.

Speaking at the function at

which the bursaries were handed out, NAAWU president, Jury Harris said that this was a 'milestone' in the union's 'proud history and tradition'.

He said the union had done research to find out why the majority of working people lacked formal education.

'The answer is that people in this country are kept oppressed and exploited, to ensure a pool of labour, by the laws that govern this country and the employers that we work for,' Brother Harris said.

'Workers are earning low wages and live from hand to mouth. You can't budget for the future of your children on the wages earned,' he added.

It was for that reason, he said, that NAAWU had committed itself to 'actively participate' in all efforts to unite all the oppressed people in South Africa 'irrespective of race, colour, sex or creed'.

Sugar workers sweet on SFAWU

SWEET Food and Allied Workers Union's organising drive into the sugar industry is beginning to pay off.

The union reports that hundreds of workers at Pongola and Matubatuba mills are resigning from the National Union of Sugar Manufacturing and Refining Employees (NUSMRE) and are joining the SFAWU.

Discussions are now underway with CG Smith for union recognition.

SFAWU said sugar workers throughout Natal had become disillusioned with the NUSMRE which was set up by the sugar bosses.

The SFAWU has also been making significant strides in other industries in Natal.

At Bakers BB Bread plant the union has ousted the Natal Baking Industry's Employees Union and talks towards recognition are nearly finalised.

And the signing of a recognition agreement with Universal Mills, now makes SFAWU the biggest union in Natal's milling industry.

The union recently won a major breakthrough when the

Port Natal Administration Board recognised it as the majority representative of workers at Congella Brewery.

However, at the KwaZulu Development Corporation's Imbali Brewery a major dispute is brewing.

SFAWU said the workers at the brewery were being paid 'starvation' wages — the starting rate is R120 per month —

MAWU says 'rubbish' to CI's sabotage claim

'INDUSTRIAL sabotage,' said the bosses at CI Industries at Pinetown.

'Rubbish!' replied the Metal and Allied Workers Union, 'the worker was just resetting his machine at the end of a shift.'

However, the company still insisted on firing a union shop steward for 'tampering with his machine in order to prevent workers from working overtime'.

But, this was not the end of the story.

MAWU refused to accept the shop steward's dismissal and

and were being 'abused' by management.

The union said the KDC had been 'evading' discussions on wages and it had 'no alternative' but to take legal action against the KwaZulu Development Corporation.

continued to pester the company which finally agreed to refer the issue to arbitration.

It was agreed that two arbitrators be appointed — one by the company and the other by the union — and both sides would put forward their case.

It only took the arbitrators a short while to make their decision.

The shop steward was taken back and given full back pay for the time he was off.

Another victory in the union's struggle against unfair dismissals.

Arise Sir Garth!

AN ODE

By a shop steward at SA Nylon Spinners

(Written during wage negotiations and dedicated to his boss)

A certain guy named Garth was invited to the Queen's Ball to be knighted

At her call, he kneeled and she touched his shoulder with her sword saying

'Arise Sir Garth.'

Sir Garth apparently did not hear.

So again, she said 'Arise, Sir Garth.'

Those present held their breath — Sir Garth was still kneeling!

Her majesty, the Queen, knelt down and whispered in his ear.

'Arise, Sir Garth, Arise.'

So, the Honourable, Sir Garth replied

'Lady, I work at Sans. I do not know what a rise is.'

Mondi workers storm boss's office



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other Mondi mills where the PWAU has majority membership.

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to negotiate wages, PWAU must enter the industrial council and give up the right to negotiate any issue at plant level — if it is also negotiated at the industrial council.

A PWAU organiser said this was 'unacceptable', especially since the present industrial council represents less than 10 percent of the workers in the pulp and paper industry.

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Court for refusing to recognise the union at the Merebank mill.'

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The Mondi workers are demanding an additional wage increase to the 8 percent they received in terms of the December industrial council agreement.

A joint meeting of shop stewards

from the two Durban factories has taken place and a joint meeting of shop stewards from all the five mills is scheduled.

'It has become clear to union members in all the Mondi factories that in their struggle for the right to negotiate wages with their bosses, workers must be united not only in each factory, but also in the entire Mondi company,' the PWAU organiser said.

MAWU prepares for this year's metal wage talks

Workers reject TUCSA union

THE preflight preparations have begun for this year's wage battle at the metal industry's industrial council.

And once again the Metal and Allied Workers Union has pledged itself to raising the minimum wage up to a living wage.

MAWU will demand a living minimum wage of R112,50 a week and an across the board increase of R22,50 a week.

It will also put forward other demands in its bid to substantially improve the working conditions of metal workers — these are very similar to the demands put forward by the union last

year.

'The reason why our demands have not changed much from last year,' said Brother J Vilane, MAWU president, 'is that in 1983 SEIFSA did not give serious attention to what our members wanted.'

'So we decided to tell them again this year — we believe they will soon get the message from MAWU's members. When we reach agreement on these demands, then we will make new ones.'

He added that obviously the wage demand had been increased

as the cost of living had risen.

'The sales tax has gone up, rent has increased and transport expenses are huge,' Brother Vilane said.

MAWU's other demands are:

- * a forty hour working week.
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* stop order and access facilities be granted automatically to any union (registered or unregistered) which has 50 percent membership or 500 members in any factory.

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Barlow's policy reversed

WORKERS at Barlow Rand's Brollo Africa factory in the Transvaal have successfully overturned a head office policy to not give across-the-board increases.

But it was a long, hard battle to get the 13c an hour increase.

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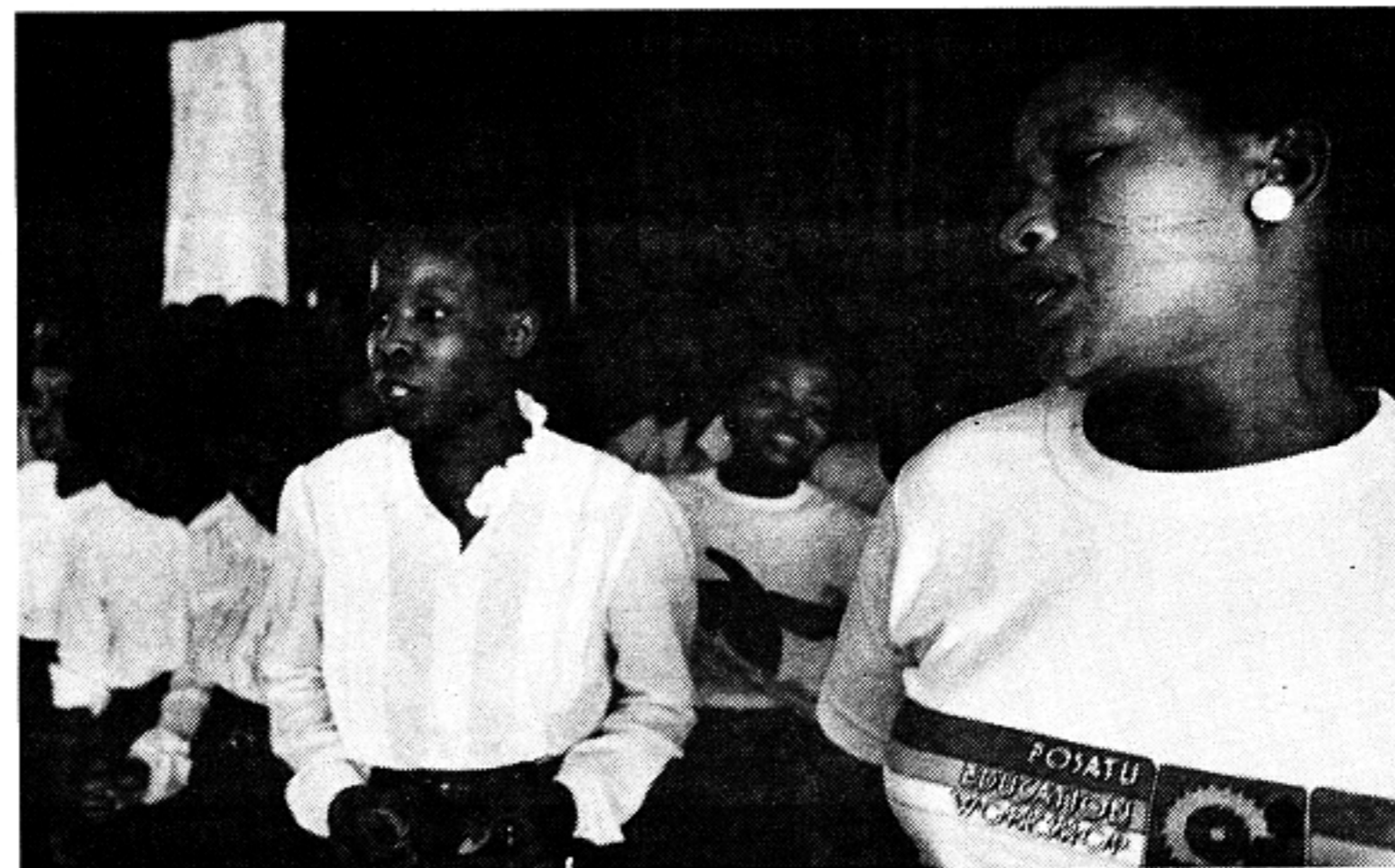
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Worker choir in action

WORKER choirs are shooting up all over the place in FOSATU. Here, it is the Simba-Quix choir which sang at the Annual General Meeting of the Transvaal branch of Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union. About 300 union members attended the meeting which, as well as other things, discussed the United Democratic Front — those at the meeting completely supported FOSATU's non-affiliation.



'WE never agreed to belong to the South African Typographical Union in the first place. We want the union of our choice.'

This was the response of the 800 workers at two Transvaal factories, Print Pack and Kohler Corrugated, to the industry's closed shop which forced them to belong to this TUCSA union.

It began their long struggle to win the right to be represented by the union they had chosen — the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

Recently they joined the four other PWAU factories which have been exempted from the closed shop.

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Workers said that the TUCSA union did not represent them in the factory or fight for their rights.

'That is why we joined PWAU. We want a union, not a benefit society,' they said.

The closed shop had been negotiated between the Typographical Union and the bosses. It had never been agreed to by black workers, the workers said.

A PWAU organiser said the union had now begun the struggle to make sure that all the workers were refunded their full pension fund contributions by the Typographical union.

'The struggle against one of the most powerful members of TUCSA is not yet over,' he said.

What's the use of boots without laces?

THE low percentage polls in the recent elections for the new town and village councils was a real slap in the face for the present government.

During the build-up to the elections, the government had heralded the town councils as an opportunity for urban blacks to take over the running of their own townships.

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As one government official aptly said, 'blacks were asked to vote for boots without laces'.

Over the years, as the government has tried to put a new face on apartheid, these councils have undergone many name changes — they were originally called Native Advisory Boards, which then became Urban Bantu Councils, then Community Councils and now town councils.

But although the name has changed, their powerlessness has virtually remained the same.

The new town councils, though, have been given additional responsibilities in terms of the Black Local Authorities Act.

The town councils will be responsible for the 'moral and social' welfare of the residents, sound community development, the beautifying and neatness of the area, parks and public resorts, sport and recreational facilities, libraries, museums, botanical and zoological gardens, bursaries, and building plans.

The councils will control street trading, water supply, sewerage, electricity, and the building of roads.

They will also be responsible for the demolition of illegal buildings, like shacks.

Here are the boots but at this

stage the government is not sure what to do about the laces — it is not clear how these town councils will be funded.

Municipalities in white areas — to which the government has compared these town councils — get most of their funds from rates which factories and other businesses have to pay.

But townships do not have factories or big businesses which can pay rates — townships are really dormitory suburbs of the nearest 'white' town or city.

So by making the townships independent of the cities, the factories have the benefit of workers' labour without having to pay for the upkeep of the areas where the workers live.

One of the few ways the town councils can raise money is through rents — the councils could increase the rent being paid by township residents.

People's anger at rent increases would then be directed at the town councils.

Which is exactly what the government wants.

Dr P J Riekert said 'these local authorities will serve to defuse pent up frustrations and grievances against Pretoria (the government).'

To add to this, in spite of claiming that these new councils are 'autonomous', the government has still retained control over them.

The Minister of Cooperation and Development, Dr Koornhof, will still have the power to take away these new functions of the councils and to dismiss the council.

If no council members are elected for any reason, the Minister can appoint people to fill the empty seats.



Townships get their independence — but at what price?

If a council fails to do the things which it is responsible for, like the demolition of shacks, the Minister can arrange for this

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It is clear, then, that although

these councils have been given a new face, they remain merely as a 'rubber stamp' for the government.

Massive wage increase

Textile gets its foot in the door

WORKERS at NCS Plastics in Pinetown have won a massive 65 percent wage increase — no small achievement in the middle of an economic recession.

Back in 1975, the management of this company managed to crush union organisation in the factory — but the workers never gave up.

And last year they reorganised themselves into the Chemical Workers Industrial Union.

A recognition agreement was signed and the union began its task of sorting out the company's chaotic wage system.

A CWIU organiser said NCS Plastics had had no grading system before the union stepped in.

'One of our members was doing the identical job to a fellow worker, but was getting half his wages,' he said.

The organiser said a grading system had now been introduced and the system of merit increases scrapped.

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As a result of the December wage negotiations, the starting rate has been increased from a disgustingly low 85c per hour to R1,40 per hour.

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Out of a workforce of 269, 219 voted in favour of NUTW and only 43 voted for TUCSA's Garment Workers' Industrial Union.

A new agreement negotiated between the NUTW and James North will now come into operation.

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the union in an industry which up to now has been dominated by key TUCSA unions.

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The union has asked the court to overturn the textile industrial council's refusal to give stop order rights for union members at Table Bay Spinners.

The closed shop does not allow stop order deductions for any other union except the one that sits on the industrial council — the Textile Workers Industrial Union.

And this TUCSA union has repeatedly refused to give NUTW an exemption from this part of the agreement.

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IN a major leap forward, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union has organised more than half the workforce at the giant Sasol plants at Secunda.

Sasol, which produces oil from coal, is by far the biggest company within South Africa's chemical industry and is rapidly expanding.

The union's 4000 members at Sasol has considerably added to the size of the CWIU. The union now stands on the verge of massive expansion.

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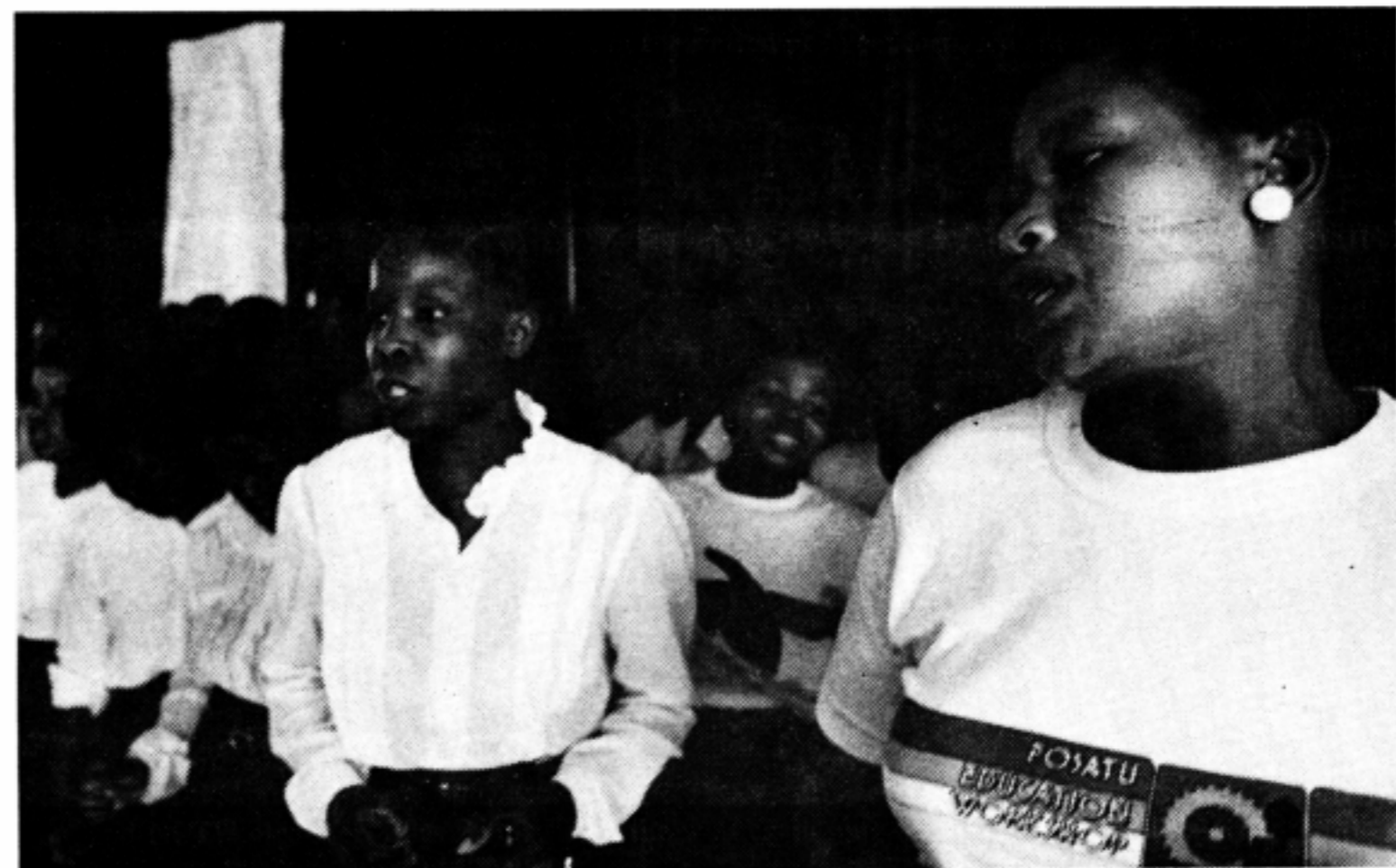
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