

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



JULY 1983 NUMBER 22

FIRST LEGAL STRIKE FOR YEARS

AT 4.30 pm on Monday 27 June workers of Natal Thread in Hammarsdale walked off the job in the first legal strike in years. Outside the gates, the police were nevertheless waiting with dogs.

Negotiations with the National Union of Textile Workers broke down in June after 5 months of wrangling.

'It was evident' says Prof Sineke, NUTW's branch secretary, that the company was trying to provoke workers to strike in the hope that the workers would lose. The company's offer was no more than a 6 per cent increase for 11 months when inflation was over 12 per cent. The offer was completely unreasonable.'

After negotiations broke down at the factory, NUTW applied for a conciliation board. When the conciliation board deadlocked, NUTW called for a strike ballot on Natal Thread's premises during working hours. Natal Thread was confident that workers would vote against the strike during a recession. Only 8 workers voted to accept the company's offer. An overwhelming 315 voted to strike for an improvement in their wages.

When management realised that the strike was not just an empty threat, the company began to prepare for a strike. The

gates were strengthened. The factory windows were barred. Riot police with dogs were outside on the expected day of the strike. 'Workers never planned a riot' says John Copelyn, NUTW's general secretary, 'this was a controlled exercise of workers' power. While management might be right to be confident of beating a strike during a recession, they miscalculated badly when they underestimated the disciplined response of our union members.'

FWN believes that Natal Thread's management will have to learn to respect workers' legitimate grievances the hard way.



NATAL Thread workers discussing the finer details of the strike the day before it was due to begin.

At 4.30 pm on June 27, Natal Thread workers walked off the job.

THE Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union has broken the tight grip of a closed shop which forced workers to belong to the tame SA Typographical Union.

And now about 350 workers at three Nampak factories - Nampak Sacks, Nampak Conical and Nampak Cores and Tubes - in Industria can now belong to the union they have chosen to represent them.

Workers said the 'Typo Union' had been brought into the factories by the bosses.

'We only had one meeting with that Typo union, when

we joined. Since then we've never had a single meeting until we called them to tell them we wanted to resign,' they said.

Late last year the Nampak workers started joining the PWAWU and as soon as there was a majority in the factory, shop stewards were elected and the union was introduced to management.

The workers immediately said they were opposed to the Typo Union and demanded that deductions be stopped.

However, management said they could do nothing since they were bound by

the Industrial Council.

In terms of the Industrial Council agreement all workers in factories covered by the agreement must belong to the Typo Union, whether they like it or not.

But workers would not accept this and they continued to raise the matter with management and signed petitions saying they wanted to resign from the TUCSA union.

Eventually the Industrial Council agreed to exempt the Nampak factories from the closed shop but only when it was convinced that the workers were opposed

to the Typo Union.

After a long delay the SA Typographical Union called meetings in the factories and workers made it clear that they did not want them, their deductions or their so-called benefits. All they wanted were resignation forms.

Workers said the Typo Union had forced itself on them, it did little for them and they knew very little about this union of which they were supposed to be members.

The SA Typographical Union is essentially a white union which recently set up

'parallel' structures for black workers.

It still maintains separate branches - A for whites, B for coloureds and Indians and C for blacks.

Like many TUCSA unions, the Typo Union has abused the closed shop to force black workers to join this 'racial' union.

FOSATU is not against the principle of closed shop which can be used to protect hard won worker rights. But it must always be the union that the majority of the workers have chosen.

A senior shop steward at Nampak said the exemption from the closed shop was a 'major victory' against 'sweet heart' unions.

'Workers were pressured by management into joining this TUCSA union. But workers conquered in the end,' he said.

WORKERS BREAK FREE

BOSSSES SEND WORKERS HOME TO DIE



KROST Brothers' strikers on the third day of their stoppage. They were watched closely by a small force of riot police further down the road.

RETRENCHED workers and their families face sure starvation in the homelands.

And yet metal employers are still laying off workers without even considering alternatives.

Over the past month more than 500 workers have been retrenched by a number of major companies on the East Rand without any negotiations on alternative methods of cutting back production - like short time or staggered leave.

As a result the Metal and Allied Workers Union, whose members have been effected by these retrenchments, has called on the employers' association, SEIFSA, to halt these inhumane retrenchments.

MAWU's Transvaal branch secretary, Moses Mayekiso said 'these mass retrenchments, which only add to the huge army of unemployed, must be eliminated instead of encouraged by SEIFSA.'



MOSES MAYEKISO

'Employers must learn to share the profits with their workers in bad times instead of kicking them out in order to keep profits high,' he added.

Brother Mayekiso said unemployment was a threat to everybody in this country and the only way this could be curbed was by forcing companies to negotiate with unions.

However, although the companies have tried to retrench workers without negotiating with the union, not all the workers have taken this lying

down.

At Krost Brothers at Heriotdale the workers would not accept that management could just call in their shop stewards and tell them the company had retrenched 140 workers.

The entire workforce stopped work for four days until the company agreed to talk to MAWU.

Shop steward chairman, Elias Novela said as well as management refusing to discuss the retrenchment of the 140 workers, when the shop stewards raised the issue of severance pay 'the managers just walked out of the room'.

Krost Brothers has now agreed to just lay off the 140 workers and has begun to negotiate a retrenchment agreement with MAWU which will also cover these workers.

Litmaster workers also struck for two days after management retrenched 40 workers without any negotiations.

Although, the company at the end of the strike agreed to talk to MAWU, negotiations have deadlocked and the union is considering legal action.

Brother Mayekiso said it was clear that many companies were retrenching workers in order to get back the money they were having to pay for wage increases.

He said MAWU felt that the government should ban all retrenchments and make it compulsory for companies to negotiate short time or lay offs.

WE WILL NOT BE USED — MAWU

WE will not be used as window dressing while SEIFSA continues to sign agreements with the old minority unions - says the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

MAWU said this after the recent round of wage talks at the metal industries' Industrial Council.

At a meeting on June 20, MAWU attacked the director of the giant employers' association, Sam van Coller, for getting the union on to the Council so that it would look as though it now represented black workers and now would look after their interests.

But it still went behind MAWU's back and signed an agreement with the old minority unions on the Council - as it always had done.

SEIFSA did this at the meeting of the main Industrial Council when it signed an agreement with the old unions for an increase of 10c an hour.

DID IT AGAIN

The employers' association then went and did it again for the Cable Manufacturing Industry.

At the meeting with both the

Cable Manufacturing Association and SEIFSA, MAWU made it quite clear that its members had rejected the 11c to 14c per hour increase that was being offered.

SEIFSA then raised the offer to 12c per hour but then refused to allow MAWU to take this offer back to its members.

WENT AHEAD

Instead when the other unions agreed to accept the offer, SEIFSA just went ahead and signed an agreement.

MAWU said this clearly showed that SEIFSA intends to negotiate in 'bad faith' with the union and was blocking MAWU from democratically reporting back to its worker members.

'It seems that SEIFSA is intent on continuing with the bad old ways of negotiating with unions representing a minority of the workers and which do not involve their members in negotiations nor report back to them,' MAWU said.

A RETRENCHED WORKER TALKS

I worked for a metal company for 9 years in Vereeniging. In February this year I was told that there was no more work. I left with 30 other workers and came back here. I came with my weekly wage of R40 and they gave me R12 for the train. I am still waiting for work and my family is suffering.

I go to the labour bureau once a week - it costs me 70c for the bus but now there are many of us. I was sending R60 a month to my family and also meat and sugar when a car was going from Johannesburg.

I live with my parents (67 years old), my four brothers, my wife and three young children. We get nothing now - no food. I am afraid for my children - one of them has died of sores in the stomach. This was the baby born last year while I was still at work.

Only my mother gets a pension - R40 every two months - and sometimes my father gets a little money when he sells herbs. I went to borrow money from my friend who is still at work and he gave me R60 - now I do not know anyone with money.

We sold four cows this year for R60 each and now we only have two left and a calf. There are a few chicken left and I am thinking of selling another cow soon.

My two brothers are at school but I must pay R15 and there is nothing for this. My kids need jerseys for winter and now the other little one is sick and should go to the Doctor.

In April I applied for my Unemployment Insurance money but there is nothing yet and I must go again this week to ask at the office.

We do not eat much - only porridge and nothing with it - we need money for food. We need tea, sugar and wood. We are all hoping that something will happen but there are many of us like this.

METAL PENSION FUND BOARD MADE MORE REPRESENTATIVE

THE Metal and Allied Workers Union has booted off the Board of the Metal Industries Pension Fund a number of racist unions.

Previously, unions like Yster and Staal and the Amalgamated Engineering Union (which only allow white members) have sat on the Board although they did not have any members in the fund.

But at the insistence of MAWU and its sister unions - the General Workers Union, the Chemical Workers Industrial Union and the National Auto-

mobile and Allied Workers Union - these unions have been kicked off the Board.

And as part of the push to make the Board more representative of the workers who belong to the fund, it has been agreed that only the biggest unions will be represented on the Board.

However, SEIFSA - the giant employers' association - has once again rejected MAWU's demand that the employers be allowed less than 50 percent of the seats on the Board.

SEIFSA has claimed that they could not possibly co-operate with the unions if they had less

than half the seats on the Board of the fund.

MAWU made it quite clear at a recent meeting of the pension fund that it did not accept this position.

MAWU has continually argued that the money in the fund belonged to the workers and there was no good reason why the employers should have 50 percent of the seats on the Board.

Surely the workers have more right to decide what to do with their money which has grown to millions of Rand in the pension fund?



METAL workers at a report back meeting to discuss pension meeting and Industrial Council meetings.

WORKERS WIN LIVING WAGE

ANOTHER battle for a living wage has been won - this time at Isando factory, TW Beckett.

In terms of wage talks between the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union and the company, the minimum wage has been increased to R2 an hour.

The workers' night shift allowance has also been increased from R1,80 to R2 per night.

FOSATU president, Chris Dlamini, who was involved in the negotiations said it was 'quite an achievement to push up the minimum weekly wage from R68 to R90 especially in the middle of a recession'.

'It just goes to show that if workers are involved in negotiations they will push even through a recession - and win,' he said.

COMPANY IMPROVES WORKERS' HOSTELS

VAST improvements to hostel accommodation have been won by the workers at Duropenta near Germiston in the Transvaal.

Although the hostels are managed by the East Rand Administration Board, workers felt that it was time their company took some of the responsibility for their housing.

They therefore instructed the Chemical Workers Industrial Union shop stewards to take up the issue of the disgusting conditions of the hostels.

COMPLAINED

Workers complained that there was no heating in the rooms, windows were broken, there were no mattresses and because of the lack of lock-up facilities food and clothing was stolen.

After an inspection of the hostels with the shop stewards and a CWIU organiser, Duropenta agreed to complain to ERAB about the conditions.

The company has also bought mattresses for its workers and has had the windows fixed.

Duropenta also agreed to put a full heating system into the hostels.

LOCKERS

And since the hostel inspection, management have provided lockers for storing food at the factory and have provided soap and towels.

Also, the company has opened a non-racial canteen with subsidised meals.

Hopefully more companies will take up Duropenta's example and begin to take responsibility for their workers' housing.

WAGES DOUBLE

WORKERS at Rolfe's, a crayon and explosives factory at Elandsfontein must be overjoyed with the Chemical Workers Industrial Union.

Since the union achieved recognition at their factory last year their wages have nearly doubled.

The latest wage negotiations have brought the minimum rate up to R1,70 an hour.

When the CWIU started organising in the factory, Rolfe's was the lowest paying chemical company in the Transvaal.

Workers were only getting 80c an hour. But the CWIU kept on fighting for a living wage and even in the middle of recession was able to win this tremendous increase for Rolfe's workers.

END OF TEN YEAR BATTLE IN SIGHT

THE long ten year struggle for union recognition at Sarmcol at Howick may well be over - the company has finally agreed to sit down and negotiate with the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

Since about 1973 MAWU has been organising workers at Sarmcol against tremendous odds.

The company has continually refused to talk to the union, has had organisers arrested and at one stage was telling its workers that it was illegal to join MAWU.

In the middle of a renewed campaign at Sarmcol which began last year, the company retrenched 13 union members without any consultation with MAWU.

In the light of this, the union decided to take the company to the Industrial Court for this 'unfair labour practice'.

But before the matter could come before the court, Sarmcol decided to settle.

In settling the dispute, the company agreed to pay out R7500 which MAWU said would go as severance pay to the retrenched workers.

Sarmcol also agreed to negotiate a recognition agreement with MAWU as soon as it got 50 percent plus 1 members.

And in the meantime, it has agreed to implement the union's stop orders from July and has granted MAWU officials access to the factory.

MAWU branch secretary, Geoff Schreiner said since the company was approached by the union in October it had been stalling on the question of recognition.

'It was getting quite ridiculous as during those six months we only had one meeting,' he said.

The settlement is a major victory in the history of union struggle at Sarmcol.



FARM FARE VICTORY BALLOT

A BALLOT held at Farm Fare at Uitenhage has proved once and for all that the majority of workers at this chicken factory want to belong to the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union. However, the ballot is not the end of the workers' struggle for union recognition. In spite of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the workers voted in favour of the union, management is still requiring that the workers pay union dues for seven weeks before they will discuss union recognition. But as the photo shows, the spirit at the factory is high although the company is being so stubborn.

KNITTING WORKER TAKEN BACK

THE National Union of Textile Workers has won the re-instatement of a Polyknit worker who was dismissed in February.

She will also get six weeks back pay for the time she was out of work.

But the fight for the re-instatement of the senior shop steward at this Transvaal factory who was fired when he tried to take up her case, still continues.

The issue arose when the woman worker was asked to especially come in on a Saturday to work a special machine.

Overtime is voluntary in this factory but she agreed to do it.

However, when she arrived at work she found the machine already had an operator so the manager told her to sweep the floor.

She refused and was fired by the company for supposedly walking off the job.

The senior shop steward, Moore Mehlomakhulu tried five or six times to take up her case but management refused and finally told him that if he persisted with the matter he would be fired.

When he walked out of the factory to go and tell the union, all the workers stopped work.

The company then fired the senior shop steward for 'causing the strike'.

The NUTW then decided to take the case of both the fired worker and the shop steward to the Industrial Court.

Before it could get to the court, Polyknit agreed to take back the fired worker.

But the senior shop steward has not yet been taken back and his case will still go to court.

Samson Cele Remembered



ON July 18 1980 a central National Union of Textile Workers' shop steward at a Frame factory, Samson Cele, was shot dead at point blank range. Why? Nobody knows. But what we do know is that he was a key figure in the negotiations which took place during the 1980 Frame strikes. But the struggle for union recognition at the New Germany mills continues. And on June 27 this year, thousands of Frame members of NUTW gathered to remember Brother Cele. At the memorial meeting, Jabulani Gwala (who was also a Frame shop steward at the time but is now an NUTW organiser) said 'We must all put the spirit of Samson in our hearts and continue the struggle. If we don't go on we will be asked one day - what did we do for Samson in the struggle.'



HE WAS KILLED ON 18 JULY 1980 HIS SPIRIT IS ALIVE!



The latest news in the union's struggle for recognition at Frame, is that the company went to the Industrial Court in an attempt to get the NUTW to pay for its costs in the recent unfair labour case that the union brought against the company. But once again NUTW was victorious. The court said Frame must pay its own costs.

ANOTHER PART OF WORKER STRUGGLE

JUNE 16th now marks a special and tragic day for us. It is the day our children were tear gassed, beaten and even shot in their rejection of inferior education. It also reminds us that the struggle for liberation is also a struggle for a better education.

Workers can easily see the benefits of education. Factory workers know that those who work in good jobs have a higher education. Street sweepers and car washers know that those who own the BMW's and Mercedes Benz are university trained. Shop stewards know that management have been trained all their lives to negotiate. Management tries to show their ability to out talk, out argue and to confuse workers with law books and so-called educated facts.

Under the present system workers are taught to believe that you have to have education to be wealthy. However many workers know that because their wages are low, most of them will never be able to afford to educate themselves or their children. Even if they manage to send their children to school, they will not get education. Schools are ill-equipped and teachers are under-trained. There are few school books, and at home no lights or no space makes it impossible to study.

FOSATU realised right from the start the importance of worker education. A policy motion at the first FOSATU Congress in 1979 called for the establishment of an education programme.

When we looked at what was being taught in schools and universities we found there was very little about workers and their history. There was nothing about the history of popular struggles in which workers or their parents took part. We found that English and Maths courses helped the business community but did not teach basic literacy and numeracy. Medical schools were more concerned with the problems of the rich such as heart diseases, than kwashiorkor or industrial health problems of the poor.

And when FOSATU tried to work within those universities to give our members the kind of education only allowed to the sons and daughters of the rich, we were chased off the campus by the university councils. These councils are controlled by members of the business community and the government.

It became clear that workers would have to decide for themselves what sort of education was needed. It is for this reason that FOSATU has embarked on its own independent worker education programme. This programme will give workers the training that they need to build their organisation. Only a powerful worker movement will ensure that our children can also get a proper education. This education will not be designed by the wealthy, for the wealthy to ensure that the wealthy minority remain the only educated people. It will be an education programme which looks at the needs of our members who are the majority in this country. It will be an education programme made by workers, for workers.

Let us remember June 16 to renew the struggle for knowledge. Knowledge must become a right, not a privilege. Education must be freely available and freely given. It must be for the benefit of all in a free and just society.

NEW FOSATU WINTER SCHOOL

FOSATU's Education programme is on the move with the launching of the new Winter School.

This two week programme of union seminars and the Labour Studies Course will be held for the first time this year during July in Johannesburg.

The idea grew out of last year's rewarding experience of running a number of seminars at the same time.

WORKER LEADERS

More than 180 shop stewards and worker leaders from all over South Africa will gather at St Peters Seminary for courses on topics as different as book-keeping, wage negotiating and popular politics.

The Labour Studies Course will be still the central event of the Winter School and once again 15 shop stewards and organisers will attend lectures on labour history, bargaining and popular politics.

But at the same time other workers will be attending seminars organised by the National Union of Textile Workers, the Metal and Allied Workers Union and the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union.

SPECIAL COURSES

Also there will be a number of special courses - one on union accounting organised by SACHED; a course on Labour Law by Charles Nupen from the Legal Resources Centre and a negotiations course by FOSATU's assistant educational secretary, Taffy Adler.

PUBLIC TALKS

For the first time FOSATU has organised a number of public talks in order to develop a greater understanding between the worker movement and progressive people in the wider community.

These talks will be given by the worker leadership of FOSATU who have been meeting in small study groups during the past month in order to pre-



pare the talks on topics like the Shop Steward Movement in FOSATU and Women Workers.

The present is a crucial time for the worker movement in South Africa and within FOSATU and in other independent unions there has been a great deal of debate.

FOSATU hopes that these public talks will give people an insight into the debates that have been taking place as well as encouraging the worker leadership to present their ideas on a wider platform.

The worker lectures will obviously not represent the official policy of FOSATU (this can only be made at Central Committee level) but will represent the views of these worker leaders themselves.

WORKER CULTURE

Another first for FOSATU, is that a number of worker cultural activities have been organised for

the middle of the Winter School.

With the help of progressive artists and groups such as the Junction Avenue Theatre Group two plays have been produced within FOSATU.

These are not performed by professional actors but by factory workers who tell their story as they see it.

There will also be a workshop discussing the problems of producing such plays.

FOSATU SONGS

Within FOSATU songs have always played an important role in mobilising against hostile employers, so as part of the cultural programme a worker choir from Pretoria will sing worker songs.

Workers are becoming more and more aware that 'culture' is also an important level of struggle.

STRUGGLE OF IDEAS

For too long they have had to put up with the ideas put across by the ruling class through the radio, television and in films.

Now they are developing their own cultural ways to put across their struggles and ideas.

SONGS

PLAYS

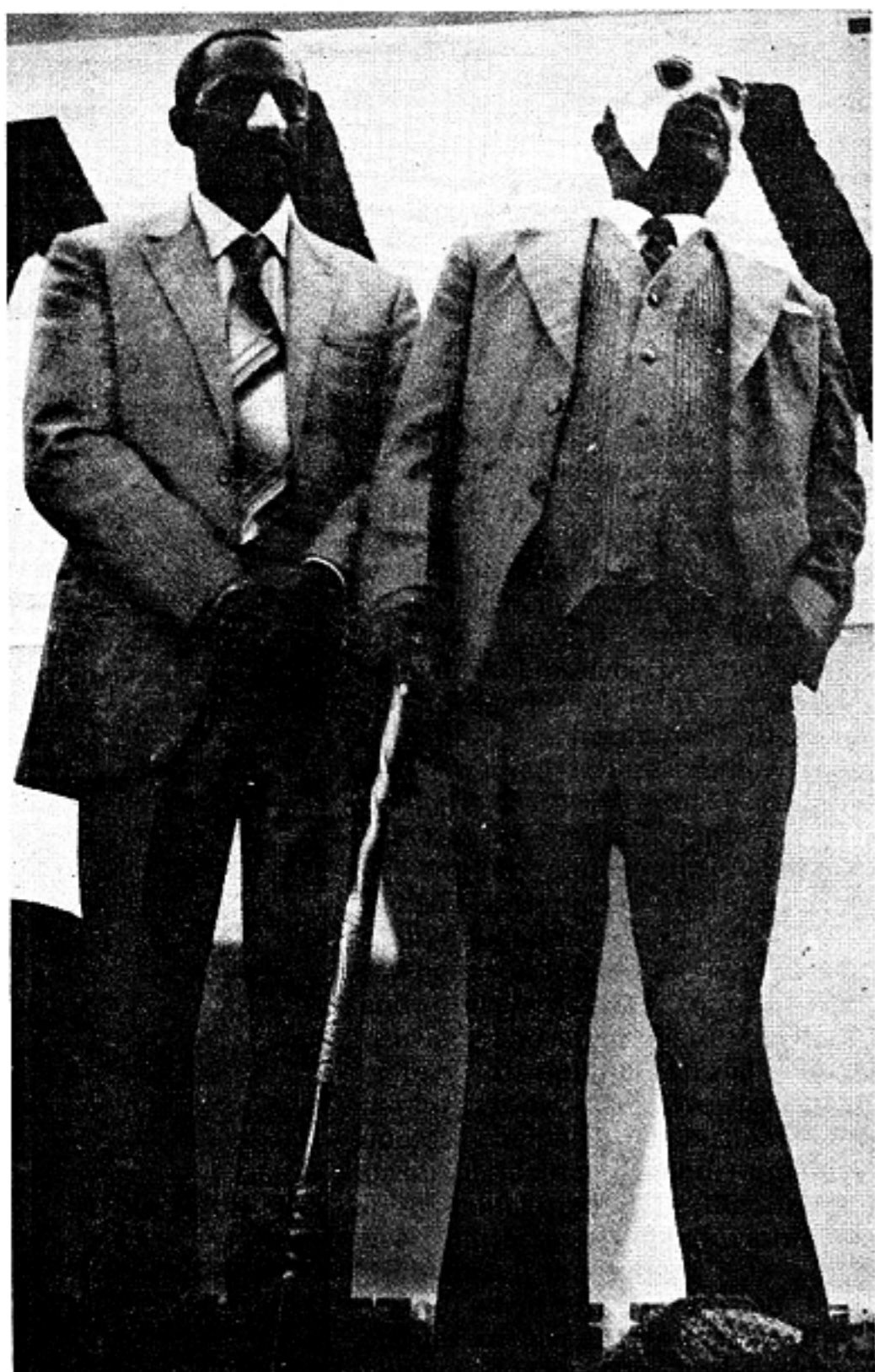
TALKS

FULL PUBLIC PROGRAMME CARRIED ON NEXT PAGE



EVEN the worker struggle has its lighter moments - shop stewards and organisers at the last Labour Studies Course.

SCENES FROM THE DUNLOP PLAY — which will be featured as part of the cultural programme of the FOSATU Winter School. The 11-man cast of the play are all workers at Dunlop's Durban factory.



'Welcome, welcome to this great occasion, this is the 25th anniversary of some of our Dunlop workers. We are here as a big company because of your devotion to us. Through this devotion we have seen giant steps being taken by this company'. A scene from the Dunlop play — the workers act out the day they got presented with gold watches (plus some beers) by their bosses for 25 year's service.



'You know Mr Armstrong. I am sure that if I came to live on the moon, Dunlop would start a factory up there just to torment me. And Vorster would come up just to make sure I carry a pass.' Another scene from the Dunlop play — the day astronaut, Armstrong lands on the moon (the worker at the back on top of the tyres is acting as Armstrong).

HISTORY AND SOCIETY AS THE WORKERS SEE IT

FOSATU EDUCATION LECTURES



FOSATU

WORKER LECTURES

SH B5 LECTURE THEATRE 6.30 P.M.

MON JULY 11	THE SHOP STEWARD MOVEMENT IN FOSATU
WED JULY 13	WORKERS AND DEMOCRACY
THUR JULY 14	WORKERS AND THE COMMUNITY
TUES JULY 19	WOMEN WORKERS

WORKER CULTURE

SATURDAY • JULY 16 • 3 - 10 P.M.

3 - 3.45 P.M.
WORKER SONGS - PRETORIA CHOIR

4 - 5 P.M.
WORKER PLAYS - A WORKSHOP

5.15 - 6 P.M.
THE MARABI DANCE
THROUGH A WORKERS EYES A TALK BY
B. SOLO
SUPPER AND SONGS

7.15 - 8.15 P.M.
JUNCTION AVENUE - SONGS & PLAYS

8.30 - 9.30 P.M.
A PLAY - DUNLOP WORKERS

STARTS JULY 11

UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND

ALL WELCOME

HIGH COURT GRANTS CONTRACT WORKERS PERMANENT RIGHTS

THE highest court in South Africa – the Appeal Court – has granted migrant workers who have worked for the same employer for more than 10 years permanent city rights.

This decision strikes a mighty blow against the hated influx control system.

With section 10 1 (b) rights, contract workers will now have the right to:

- look for work in the towns.
- if they find work they do not have to go back to the labour office to get registered.
- they can move from one area to the next as long as they have legal accommodation.
- they can live permanently in the city.
- they cannot be sent back to homelands if they become unemployed.

But in order to get these rights workers must go to their nearest pass office with a letter from their employers proving that they have been registered with the same company for 10 years or more.

FOSATU unions, particularly on the Reef where there are thousands of migrant workers who now qualify for 'city rights', have appealed to employers to assist their workers to get these rights.

Since the decision of the Appeal Court, the government has been threatening

to block it, but recently the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr Koornhof, announced that it would implement the Court judgement.

However, for the past few weeks the Administration Boards themselves have been blocking people getting their city rights.

On the East Rand, Administration Board officials have been telling workers that they can only take eight people a day.

And even then, the officials are only giving the workers a

number and telling them to come back next month for their Section 10 stamp.

Adding to fears that the government will only allow a very few of migrant workers to get their section 10 rights, Koornhof said as little as 5000 out of the 143000 might be given city rights.

But unions and civil rights organisations are gearing themselves up for a fight.

Black Sash said if city rights were not granted, it would set up a panel of lawyers and fight each case in court.

ADMINISTRATION.
ADMINISTRASIE.

P. N. B. A.

RESIDENT OF CENTRAL DISTRICT IN TERMS OF SECTION
IN. VAN DER VAN DISTRIK SENTRAAL INGEVOLGE ARTIKEL
10 (1) (B) ACT 25 OF 1945 AND RESOLUSIE AT
WET 25 VAN 1945 EN WOON TE

DATE 8-05-1981 LABOUR OFFICER
DATUM 8-05-1981 ARBEIDSBEAMPT

THE MUCH SOUGHT AFTER SECTION 10 1(b) STAMP

POLICE MINISTER ORDERED TO PAY R500 TO FOSATU NATAL CHAIRMAN



JAMES NTSHINGILA

THE Minister of Law and Order has been ordered to pay R500 to FOSATU's Natal regional chairman, James Ntshingila for wrongfully imprisoning him.

Brother Ntshingila, who is also a senior shop steward at Progress Knitting, was arrested shortly before last year's strike at this Hammarsdale factory.

He was taken from the company premises by the police, as management said he was encouraging workers to strike.

However, workers only went on strike three days later, while he was still in jail.

In terms of the law, Brother Ntshingila should have been brought before a court within 48 hours.

But he only appeared in the Camperdown court on May 4 – four days after his arrest.

The charges against Brother Ntshingila were later dropped but assisted by National Union of Textile lawyers, he took the Minister of Law and Order to court for wrongful imprisonment.

Recently the court ordered that the Minister pay him R500 for damages.

TRANSPORT UNIONS SPEEDY EXPANSION INTO BUS COMPANIES

THE Transport and General Workers Union has made huge strides in organising bus companies in the Natal region.

It now stands on the verge of having all the major companies organised – more than 3000 bus workers have been organised out of a possible 4810.

The major expansion has been into the KwaZulu Transport Group and the union is now recognised at KwaZulu's Trans Mzimkulu Transport at Port Shepstone, at Sizanani Mazulu at Pietermaritzburg and at Ezakeni at Ladysmith.

SHORTLY

TGWU branch secretary, John Mawbey said the union would shortly be negotiating preliminary agreements with other companies within the Group which would make TGWU the majority union.

'This will put us in a position to negotiate a full recognition agreement covering all operating centres,' he said.

The union is also on the verge of having majority membership in at least two of Putco's Durban depots.

NOT EASY

However, organising bus companies has not been all plain sailing for TGWU. There have been a number of sharp conflicts with

management.

Last year at Sizanani MaZulu Transport the behaviour of the Engineering manager sparked off two strikes and in February the workers organised a petition demanding that he be removed.

TENSE TALKS

After a series of tense negotiations, management was finally forced to transfer him.

And earlier this month at Trans Mzimkulu, the workers staged a four hour stoppage in the three engineering workshops over the dismissal of a breakdown mechanic. He was later taken back.

But the sharpest conflict has been in Pietermaritzburg's Transport department.

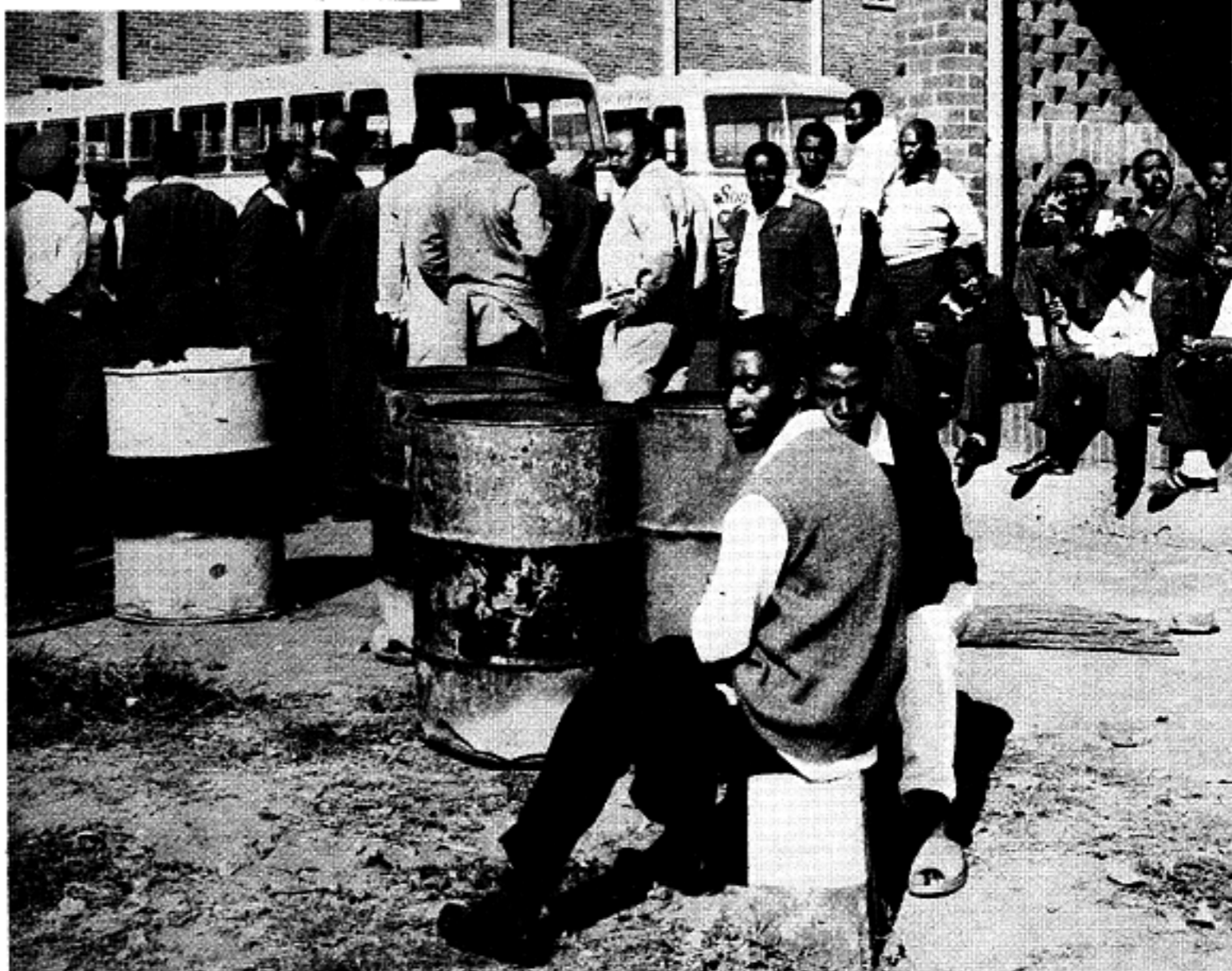
NEW TIMES

In March, management attempted to introduce new schedules for the drivers without consulting them.

After the buses had done their early morning run, the drivers instructed their shop stewards to tell management to return to the old schedules.

The TGWU negotiated with management and they were forced to agree that the confrontation had been caused by their failure to negotiate the new schedules with the union.

In April and May a series of



Pietermaritzburg Bus drivers await the outcome of talks between the City Transport Department and the TGWU during their recent stoppage. (Photo courtesy of the Natal Witness).

meetings were held in an attempt to find an acceptable new schedule which covered a number of the drivers' complaints but no final agreement was reached.

However at the end of May the Transport Department announced that from June 2 the new schedules would be introduced.

After six days on the new schedules the drivers again decided to stop work saying the running times were inadequate and they were being confronted by hostile passengers.

STILL UNITED

Brother Mawbey said the drivers eventually decided that it would be better to return to work united rather than to continue the strike against the combined might of the City Council and the Police.

'But the situation remains very tense,' he said.

UNION'S NEW BRANCH IN SOUTHERN NATAL

THE Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union has opened a new branch in Southern Natal.

Since the union started in the Transvaal in 1974, it has opened branches in Northern Natal and now in Southern Natal.

It hopes to open one in the Eastern Province later this year.

Already in Southern Natal, the PWAU has majority membership in six factories and members are being recruited in four other factories.

At by far the biggest paper factory in the region – Mondi at Merebank – the union has 850 members. This includes nearly 500 Indian workers.

Mondi has gone out of its way to encourage workers to join the TUCSA union which sits on the Industrial Council but this has not discouraged PWAU members who say that Mondi has had it too easy with the vast majority of its workers non-unionised.

So far the union has won stop order rights at the Mondi mill and discussions about recognition are due to start.

At the inaugural meeting of the new branch, the Northern Natal Chairman, Brother Ngwane especially welcomed the 500 Indian members saying that this made PWAU a truly non-racial union in practice.

UNITY TALKS ON THE MOVE

ON July 1 and 2 representatives from South Africa's major independent unions, including FOSATU, will gather in Cape Town to discuss the formation of a new federation. The April Unity meeting also held in Cape Town set the unions on the road to forming a wider unity and now the feasibility committee (set up after this meeting) will discuss how this can be achieved. Seven unions at that stage committed themselves to the formation of a new federation and since then others have joined. FOSATU Worker News here gives a brief history of the unions which will be represented so that worker members can follow the future developments.

AFRICAN FOOD AND CANNING WORKERS UNION / FOOD AND CANNING WORKERS UNION.

The Food and Canning Workers Union was formed in the Western Cape in 1941 by Ray Alexander. From the beginning the union was committed to non-racialism and to the organisation of all the workers in the food industry. In 1947 the FCWU was forced by the government to separate into two branches - one for black workers and the other for coloureds. It was then that the African Food and Canning Workers Union was formed. The FCWU remained a registered union and the AFCWU has stayed unregistered. In 1955 it joined the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) and during the crackdown on SACTU unions during the 60's, the unions became largely inactive. Only with the re-emergence of black unions during the 70's did they revive. The major membership of the Food and Canning Unions is in the Western Cape, although they now have branches in all major centres.



AN AFCWU WORKER TALKS AT THE APRIL UNITY MEETING.

THE COMMERCIAL CATERING AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION OF SA.

CCAWUSA was formed in 1975 as a black parallel to the already existing TUCSA unions for white and coloured shop workers. It never joined TUCSA and at one stage was affiliated to the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions but has since split away. Over the past two years CCAWUSA's membership has rocketed and the union has been recognised by the majority of the giant chain stores.

CAPE TOWN MUNICIPAL WORKERS ASSOCIATION.

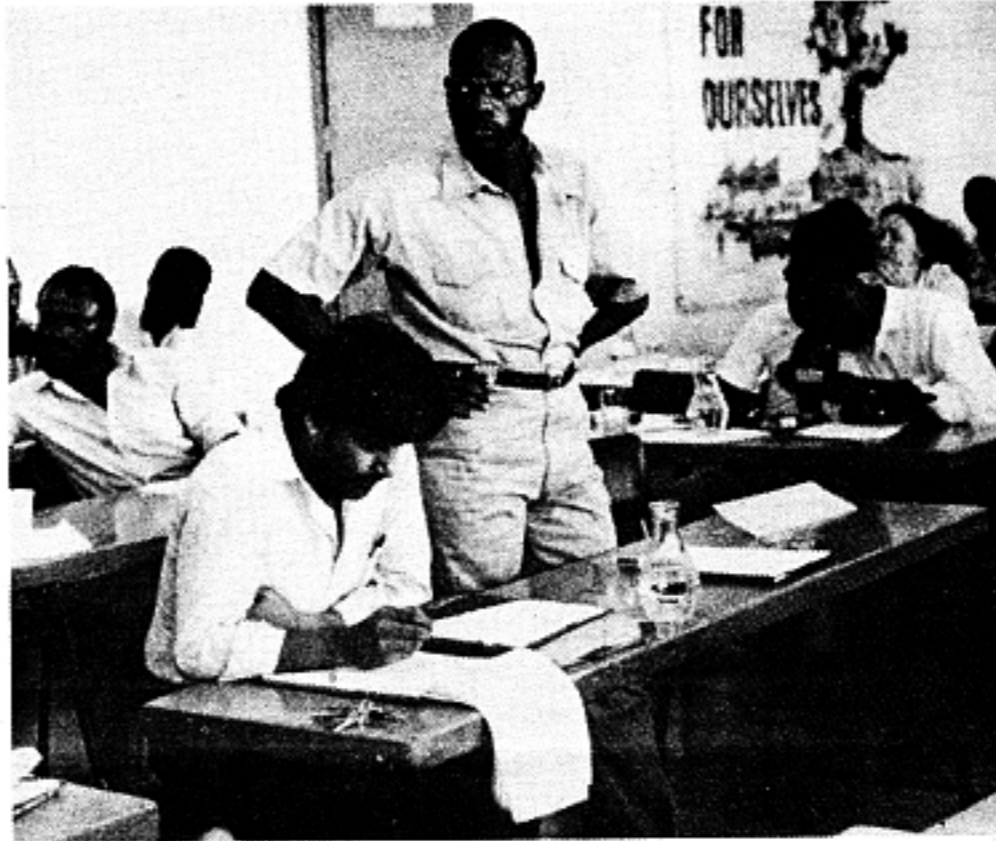
This union was started in 1943 but was substantially re-organised by a grass roots movement in the early 1960's. The CTMWA is based in Cape Town and is registered. Since its re-organisation, the union has taken a politically progressive position and is firmly committed to non-racialism.



CTMWA GENERAL SECRETARY, JOHN ERNSTZEN ADDRESSES THE MEETING.

THE COUNCIL OF UNIONS OF SA.

After throwing out three unions which joined FOSATU (the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union, the Glass and Allied Workers Union and the Engineering and Allied Workers Union) the Consultative Committee of Black Trade Unions decided to form themselves into CUSA - which was set up in September 1980. CUSA has a well publicized policy of black leadership. At this stage it has 11 affiliated unions including the new National Union of Mineworkers.



THE CUSA DELEGATION TO THE APRIL MEETING

THE GENERAL WORKERS UNION.

In 1973 with the renewed interest by black workers in unions, the Western Province Workers Advice Bureau was formed in Cape Town. The Advice Bureau involved itself in the formation of works committees at factories around the Western Cape and in 1977 formed the Western Province General Workers Union. When the union expanded its organisation to the docks at Port Elizabeth and East London it dropped the Western Province from its name. The GWU's main worker base is the stevedores and it has successfully organised over 2000 stevedores in South Africa's major ports.



PART OF GWU'S WORKER DELEGATION AT THE UNITY TALKS.

THE GENERAL AND ALLIED WORKERS UNION.

Little is known about GAWU except that it was formed when the Transvaal officials of the Black Allied Workers Union (a black consciousness union formed in 1972 whose activity is now limited to around Newcastle in Natal) broke away to form their own union. GAWU's main organising base is in the Reef area.

THE MOTOR ASSEMBLERS AND COMPONENT WORKERS UNION OF SA / THE GENERAL WORKERS UNION OF SA.

After the Ford strike of December 1979 rebel members of the United Automobile and Allied Workers Union of South Africa (which later became the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union) decided to form a new union. MACWUSA was launched in September 1980 and about the same time the union decided to start a general union - GWUSA. The unions operate mainly in the Port Elizabeth area, although a branch was started by Donsie Khumalo in Pretoria (he has since broken away to form his own union).

THE SOUTH AFRICAN ALLIED WORKERS UNION.

SAAWU was started in 1978 when members of the Black Allied Workers Union broke away to form a new non-racial organisation. Unlike FOSATU which is a federation of industrial unions, SAAWU is a general union. During the 1980's the union was particularly active in the East London area, although it has branches in Natal and in the Transvaal.



PROFILE

IN THIS THE SECOND INTERVIEW WITH FOSATU OFFICE BEARERS, FOSATU WORKER NEWS TALKS TO THE FEDERATION'S PRESIDENT, CHRIS DLAMINI.

FOR Chris Dlamini FOSATU has become a way of life.

Much of his time is spent either addressing mass meetings as FOSATU's president, talking to representatives of international trade unions or chairing the federation's highest decision making body, the Central Committee.

'In fact I am hardly at work or at home,' he often jokes.

Yet like all of FOSATU's office bearers, his experience at the factory is his qualification for being elected president of the country's largest non-racial union federation.

And within FOSATU the factory where Chris is senior shop steward - Kelloggs at Springs - has quite a reputation.

Not only does it have capable shop stewards like Chris, the unity and discipline of the workers has enabled them to win tremendous victories.

They have been so successful, in fact, that the white artisans at the factory have also joined FOSATU's Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union - breaking down apartheid's racial barriers.

Ever since Chris Dlamini first started work - at the Consolidated Brass Foundry - he has always fought for worker rights.

'I remember once when the company introduced a canteen system - where you could get a quarter of a loaf of bread for free.

The old lady who was running the canteen used to supply us with stale bread and people used to grumble but they never did anything.

Well one day I had had enough of this stale bread so I went back to her.

Look, I said, the company decided to give us bread but it never said you should give us stale bread.

She started swearing at me, so I threw the bread into a basket next to the counter.

Well, she phoned the general manager who came in and dragged me by my dustcoat to the top manager's office.

He told me I should be dismissed for such an action but I asked for a chance to defend myself.

I stated my reasons why I rejected the bread and even brought the stale bread to him.

Well, he said to me, don't you think you should have adopted a different attitude when you spoke to the white woman.

I replied that I don't know. If one is angry it doesn't matter if the person is white or black as far as I am concerned.

In spite of everybody expecting me to be fired, I wasn't.

Chris always felt there was a need for workers to have some kind of representation - but definitely not a liaison committee.

'When I worked at Rank Xerox, before I moved to Kellogg, I was elected to the liaison committee, which frustrated me a lot.

LIAISON COMMITTEES ALLOWED WORKERS ONLY TO AIR THEIR PROBLEMS - BUT NOTHING WAS EVER DONE.

Workers would give us a mandate to make demands but when we arrived at the meeting it was dominated by management and some supervisors.

Immediately the chairman, who is always one of management, wants to close the matter, he just closes it.

And if you are dissatisfied you are told that you can find a job somewhere else.

At times we managed to air our grievances and the bosses would say they would investigate the matter and come back to us - but nothing ever happened.

Because of our powerlessness we were forced to talk about whether the forks and knives were nice, whether the tables were clean, whether the lawn was OK or whether we had enough equipment for sports. That kind of jazz.'

BEFORE THE UNIONS PEOPLE WERE INHUMANLY TREATED BY THEIR BOSSES.

Chris spoke of the times before the unions when people were exploited financially, were beaten and inhumanely treated by bosses and often had money deducted from their wages for damages done while on duty.

'What was really aggravating was that workers could be dismissed without any notice and for no apparent reason.

And as a result of this dismissal, a worker would lose his house, children would be forced to leave school and that would mean a dead end for that family's future.'

Chris said that the presence of the union at Kelloggs certainly eliminated some of these malpractices as workers could elect representatives of their choice who would fight for them.

'The presence of the union has meant that a balance of power has emerged between management and the workers.

If workers are well organised the bosses are forced to realise that we are not just people who produce things in their factory but real human beings with rights.

In Kelloggs, through the we have blocked retrenchments, have fought for a living wage and this year we achieved R2 an hour.



Workers deserve a fair share of what they have produced and this can be achieved by a worker organisation.

WORKER CONTROL IS CRUCIAL TO BUILDING A WORKING CLASS ORGANISATION.

But it must be worker controlled' and that is why FOSATU sees worker control as crucial for the building of an organisation which will help the working class.'

Chris, then, as a worker leader was not elected because of any formal educational qualifications but because of his experience of the hardship faced by him and his fellow workers on the shop floor.

Living in the Spring's township of KwaThema, Chris is the first to admit that a worker cannot be separated from his community. But that does not mean, he says, that his union must link up with the many community organisations existing in this country.

'I am convinced that the worker movement cannot be pushed to link up with non-worker organisations because that might hinder or misdirect its programme of action.

Workers at this stage are enslaved by the economy and the challenge facing them and their unions is to make the economy their slave.'

Following the independence of Zimbabwe, many people in South Africa have also been discussing liberation. Chris has recently visited Zimbabwe for a conference of the International Food Unions so we asked him what he thought - as a worker.

'During the time in Zimbabwe, I noticed that although some people were liberated workers were not.

While there I visited a factory where we were shown round by a black general manager who kept on telling us about the good relations there were between the workers and management since they had taken over.

Well, I sneaked off and talked to one ordinary worker who painted a very different picture of what was happening in the factory.

The worker said they did not have a union inside the factory, wages were low and conditions were bad.

They had nobody to turn to when they wanted to raise factory floor grievances.

ONLY A STRONG WORKER MOVEMENT CAN ACHIEVE WORKER LIBERATION.

It seems to me that the people in Zimbabwe were taken up with the popular struggle but failed to organise themselves into a worker organisation, like a union, which would have then liberated them as workers in their workplaces.

Now they are faced with the problem of starting from scratch - having to organise themselves into a union to fight the bosses in the factory.

Worker liberation can only be achieved by a strong, well-organised worker movement.'



ONE of Chris Dlamini's major tasks as FOSATU President is to chair the Central Committee which meets twice a year. Here Chris (with his back to us) calls the meeting to order at the last meeting of the Central Committee held in April.