

FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



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SARMCOL's twelve major shareholders' eyes must have nearly popped out when representatives of the Metal and Allied Workers Union walked into their annual meeting in Johannesburg recently.

In an unusual strategy, MAWU purposely bought 10 Sarmcol shares in order to attend the shareholders meeting.

At the meeting, MAWU organiser, Dumisane Mbanjwa, handed out a document detailing the union's grievances.

The statement says, 'Unfortunately we are well aware that many of you will just dismiss our attendance of this meeting as a gimmick to gain attention — merely another irresponsible act by politically motivated unions.'

'This attitude does and will cause suffering and hardship for all in South Africa.'

Sad state

'We are here because we believe that as shareholders of a British company operating in South Africa you should hear our side of the sad state of the industrial relations at your Sarmcol plant in Howick,' the statement says.

It continues to inform

the shareholders that in the 11-year history of MAWU, Sarmcol 'is a legend of struggle and bitterness.'

'We sometimes think that management are proud of such a record of keeping the union out for so long.'

The statement accuses Sarmcol of having never negotiated a recognition agreement constructively.

'In fact at the outset, recognition negotiations only started because of an out-of-court settlement.'

'Since that time all efforts by the union to secure a fair agreement with reasonable dispute settlement procedures have failed,' the statement adds.

Poverty wages

The statement goes on to discuss the wages earned by workers at the Howick plant which it says are 'far below' poverty scales.

'Are production workers really supposed to believe that there are no funds available of any sort to take basic wages above starvation levels,' the statement says.

The MAWU statement concludes by saying, 'At present the union is firmly resolved to sell its shares after this meeting because our members would not feel happy or morally secure in holding shares in a

Union tells shareholders Sarmcol is 'a legend of bitterness and struggle'

British company that had such an attitude to South Africa's social, economic

and political plight.' At the meeting, the chairman of the company's

Board of Directors said he would take the matter up with the relevant managers.

May day march — Uniply fires them all!

IN one of the most severest cases of union bashing in recent times, Barlow Rand company, Uniply, fired its entire workforce rather than settle a dispute with the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

The dispute arose when on May Day, the Uniply workers decided at a lunch-time meeting to celebrate this Workers' Day by marching singing out of the factory gates when they had finished work.

At 5.15pm the workers, all wearing FOSATU May Day stickers, gathered at one point in the factory premises.

They asked one of the night-shift shop stewards to clock their cards while they all marched out of the gates.

While clocking the cards the PWAU shop steward was stopped by management and sent back to work.

A few hours later, he was told to leave the factory premises and return the next day for an inquiry.

As soon as he left work, the night shift downed tools demanding that the shop steward be brought back.

Uniply management refused.

After an hour the workers returned to work but staged a go-slow.

The next day management added fuel to the workers' anger by firing one of the night shift stewards for 'causing the stoppage' and issued warnings to the other two for taking part in the stoppage.

Uniply then fired the shop steward chairman and treasurer, Moses Mkhize and Johannes Msiya, for their part in the May Day march.

Workers saw this as a deliberate attempt by the company to smash the union so they went on strike on May 3.



Singing Uniply workers outside the Cato Ridge factory.

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Uniply workers fired

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They returned to work at midday when management agreed to hold appeal hearings to review the sacking of the four shop stewards.

At the hearings, Uniply decided to take back Brothers Mkhize and Msiya after giving them final warnings.

However, they refused to take back the two night-shift shop stewards.

During the next week the workers went on strike on two occasions while the union attempted to settle the dispute.

Go-slow

But when management threatened to dismiss workers if they took part in any more stoppages, the workers decided to change tactics and instead started a go-slow.

On Monday May 14, management told night shift workers to clean the machines and go home.

When the day shift arrived they found the factory gates locked and a contingent of police with dogs waiting for them.

A PWAU organiser said that rather than stay outside with the police and the dogs, workers decided to storm the gates.

Four options

However, management called the police into the factory in order to get the workers out, she said.

Later that day, PWAU was told that all the workers had been suspended on full pay.

Uniply management said they were now considering four options — either close the factory; retrench most of the workers; fire all the workers; or solve the problems with the union.

On Friday May 18, Uniply made its decision — it decided to fire all the workers.

Since then the 450 workers have been meeting every week in a local hall.

Dirty tactics

The union, in the meantime, has launched an application for the temporary reinstatement of the workers and an application for a Conciliation Board to discuss the dispute.

The Barlow Rand Shop Stewards Council has also been informed of the plight of the Uniply workers and has been asked to pressurise Barlow Rand to take the workers back.

A PWAU spokesperson said, 'Clearly this is one of the ways Barlows is developing to deal with unions — to get rid of all the workers, like Uniply.'

She called on workers to 'unite and fight the bosses' dirty tactics'.

Motorvia workers strike blow against exploitation

AFTER a five-day strike in May, workers at Motorvia near Pine-town have won major changes in their wages and working conditions.

Motorvia, is a car ferry company which employs drivers to take new cars and trucks to various parts of the country.

Previously, the workers had been paid according to the 'trip rate' system.

This meant that the drivers were paid according to where they were driving to, not according to the time spent on the road.

Shortly after the Transport and General Workers Union had organised the Motorvia drivers, it pointed out to the company that this practice did

not comply with the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

This Act states that workers must be paid a basic weekly wage, overtime wages and it limits the hours of overtime.

TGWU's branch secretary, John Mawbey said the 'trip rate' system was one of the most exploitative wage systems in the transport industry.

He said the union had threatened to take Motorvia to the Supreme Court in order to compel it to comply with the Act.

'However, the company responded by trying to get exemptions from the Act through its employers' association — behind the union's back,' he said.

'Unfortunately for them, the

department of Manpower had been informed of the situation by the union and had been asked to inform TGWU if any exemption application was made,' Brother Mawbey said.

He added that only after this had failed did Motorvia finally begin negotiating working conditions with TGWU.

But they continued to start talks and then they would stall, he said.

'This car was one the company was not keen to get on the road,' Brother Mawbey said.

Workers were fed up with the lack of progress and on May 7 decided to refuse to start work.

For the entire five days, the Motorvia workers stayed united

— not a crack appeared in their ranks.

In settling the issue with the union, the company agreed to give the drivers a 20 percent increase and has agreed to pay them according to the number of hours worked.

Motorvia has also agreed to negotiate a recognition agreement and grievance and disciplinary procedures with the TGWU.

Brother Mawbey said the strike struck a blow against the 'highly exploitative' trip rate system.

He added that TGWU was fast becoming a major force in the car ferry industry as it dominated both the Eastern Province and Natal.



TGWU's Mike Gwamanda leads the Motorvia workers on their march back to work.

PWAU steps up its fight against hard-nosed bosses by joining a industrial council

THE Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union has decided to join the industrial council for pulp and paper industry in order to step up its fight against the hard-nosed paper bosses.

This change of strategy comes after a long history of battle between the union and the paper employers.

The employers initially refused to grant PWAU any rights unless it joined the industrial council.

A union organiser said that at that stage PWAU had less than 1 000 members in the industry and had not been prepared to even consider joining the council.

'After a long struggle in the Transvaal employers started signing recognition agreements with the union and at Carlton and Nampak these agreements even gave PWAU the right to negotiate wages outside of the industrial council,' she said.

But by the beginning of 1984, the union's membership has shot up to about 7 000 of which

4 000 are in the pulp and paper industry.

'This means that PWAU has more than three times as many members as all the other unions sitting on the council put together,' the organiser said.

On top of this, the union has also won a majority membership in five out of the six paper mills in the major Mondi group, which makes over half of South Africa's paper.

Now the sixth Mondi factory in Bellville has been organised giving PWAU an overall 70 percent majority in the group as a whole.

Given this position of strength, worker members of PWAU began to reconsider the earlier strategy of boycotting the industrial council.

The PWAU organiser said the issue was widely discussed especially at the newly-formed Mondi Shop Stewards' Council and the Pulp and Paper Shop Stewards' Council.

Finally at the National Executive Committee held on May 18 and 19, it was decided to enter the council.

The PWAU organiser said that the union had put forward eight conditions regarding their joining the council, four of which were partially met.

She said the union would continue its fight for the right to plant-level negotiations.

'PWAU also insists that it should receive more seats than the minority unions on the industrial council.'

The decision to join the council has paved the way for the solving of the wage dispute between the union and Mondi.

The union organiser said that during this month PWAU and Mondi would be negotiating interim wage increases in the form of house-agreements.

And in October, for the first time black workers will be represented in the council's wage negotiations by PWAU — this will be for the January 1985 wage increases.

Hostels not fit for pigs

SHELL subsidiary, Protea Asphalt recently attempted to get its workers to clean and repair an old hostel which workers described as 'not fit for pigs'.

And then dismissed the group of contract workers when they refused.

A Chemical Workers Industrial Union organiser said the company had told the workers that they would be moving to a new hostel near their working site.

'One afternoon they were taken to this 'new' hostel and found that there was no electricity, no water, no washing facilities and the doors and windows were broken,' she said.

'The place was filthy and had been used as a toilet,' she added.

The organiser said the workers had then been told to clean up the place.

'Naturally, they refused,' she said.

The management then suspended the workers and later dismissed them 'for refusing to carry out an instruction'.

The CWIU has consulted lawyers and has taken the matter up with Protea Asphalt — negotiations are still proceeding.

Nearly 100 workers show signs of cotton dust disease

Frame Brown Lung Campaign

AS more than 2 000 workers from Frame's New Germany mills were being tested for traces of Brown Lung, the company began to try and squash the National Union of Textile Workers' campaign.

Initial campaign results indicate that as many as 100 Frame workers show signs of being permanently disabled by the cotton dust disease, Brown Lung.

Meanwhile, Pinetex workers report that the company is 'scrubbing' the factory and that for the first time in 20-years they are being given masks to wear in the dusty areas.

And in an attempt to ensure that members of TUCSA's Textile Workers Industrial Union are not drawn into the campaign, Frame has been telling them that the company would be making arrangements for a 'government doctor' to test them.

Throughout the NUTW's recognition battle with Frame, the union has charged that the company has been favouring the TWIU. However, this has been denied by Frame.

An NUTW spokesperson said these moves by the company to squash the campaign have been unsuccessful because 'there seems

to be no government doctor about to step into the breach'.

He also said that workers were questioning what would happen to them if the company did find out they were sick.

'Would that mean compensat-

ion and job security or would the company select them for retrenchment?'

The union spokesperson said that the Frame group's retrenchment policy gave workers much to fear.

'It states that retrenchment will take place on the basis of least competent, first out.'

'Therefore, the more ill a person becomes through exposure to cotton dust, the more likely that worker will be selected for ret-

renchment,' he said.

'How much easier it will be for Frame, if the company has the medical results,' he added.

Although, Frame's moves coincide with the NUTW Brown Lung campaign in its factories, officially the company's managing director, Selwyn Lurie has maintained that 'it is co-operating with an investigation set up by the Textile Federation'.

In turn the employers' association, the Textile Federation, has told the press that it intends working only with the authorities not the union in sorting out its cotton dust problems.

The Textile Federation condemned the NUTW's campaign as being 'too emotive'.

The NUTW spokesperson said the union's Brown Lung campaign had gone too far to be stopped by these moves.

He said the union was at present investigating the establishment of a technical committee in terms of the Machinery and Occupational Safety Act in order to set a national cotton dust standard.

'Because of the skills we have built up through the campaign, it would be impossible to exclude the union from that technical committee,' he said.



Frame workers have their lungs tested for traces of Brown Lung.

TWIU distributes smear pamphlets

TUCSA's Textile Workers Industrial Union has stooped to smear tactics in an attempt to hold on to its declining membership.

Since the National Union of Textile Workers opened a branch in the Western Cape, hundreds of TWIU members have been crossing the floor to join FOSATU.

Recently 140 workers at BKB's Bellville wool warehouse resigned from the TUCSA union to join the hundreds that have resigned from TWIU at the giant Frame complex in New Germany.

NUTW now reports that less than a quarter of the workers at the New Germany complex belong to the TWIU - yet Frame is insisting in maintaining its recognition of the TUCSA union.

NUTW Western Cape branch secretary, Virginia Engel, said that in sheer desperation, the TWIU had distributed hundreds of pamphlets in an attempt to smear the general secretary of NUTW.

The racist pamphlet attacks Brother Copelyn for being a 'white attorney' and for wanting 'to win the war with black workers' blood'.

Commenting on the pamphlet, Brother Copelyn said TWIU fails to realise that workers were resigning from the TUCSA union because they get nothing out of it, not because NUTW's general secretary 'is a great guy'.

He said TWIU had lost more members in the last two months than NUTW had lost in its entire existence.

'Daniels knows that as a matter of principle we don't like to sue other unions and is therefore taking unreasonable liberties,' Brother Copelyn said.

Auto union improves tyre industry's 'dismal' wages

THE National Automobile and Allied Workers Union has extended its fight for a living wage to the Eastern Cape's tyre and rubber industry.

And in its first ever negotiations on the industry's industrial council, the union has hiked the minimum wages from R1,38 to R2,15 an hour.

The recently completed wage talks marked up another first for NAAWU - it was the first time that black workers had direct representation on the council.

Up to now the only union on the council had been the whites-only Yster-en-Staal Unie.

After a long struggle, NAAWU managed to break into the tyre and rubber council in March this

year.

It immediately set about rectifying the 'dismally' low wages it encountered in the industry.

The new two year agreement came into operation on June 11.

And for the first time tyre and rubber workers have been guaranteed minimum six-monthly increases for the two-years covered by the agreement.

NAAWU's Les Kettleas who led the union's negotiating team said that workers were guaranteed a 10c increase not later than February, again in August and then again in February 1986.

The agreement expires in March 1986.

Furthermore, a long service

leave has been agreed upon for the first time.

Brother Kettleas said this starts at two days for five-year's service and goes up to five days for 20-year's service.

On top of this, workers would get an extra public holiday during the year, he added.

Brother Kettleas said the agreement would mean that most workers would get a nine percent increase - at the minimum 20c an hour and at the maximum 58c an hour.

He said NAAWU would still be looking at the issue of incentive work and rates at plant-level.

And it intended to negotiate retrenchment and lay-off procedures with the tyre and rubber employers, he said.

Women demand guaranteed re-employment

ABOUT 200 workers at Motor Assemblies near Durban stopped work for about two-hours recently in support of a demand for guaranteed re-employment after maternity leave.

The women workers at this plant which produces Toyota cars and trucks went on strike when management told a pregnant worker that she had to go on maternity leave.

At Toyota women workers are given no guarantee that they will be taken back after maternity leave.

The National Automobile and Allied Workers Union is attempting to take this and other issues up with Motor Assemblies' management.

Jatex offered bribe, claims union

IN its attempts to keep out the National Union of Textile Workers, SA Breweries subsidiary Jatex tried to find out who had joined the union by offering a R1 000 bribe to a worker, claims the NUTW.

Earlier this year, in an out-of-court settlement this Rosslyn company agreed to recognise the NUTW if within three months it had attained over 50 percent membership.

The out-of-court settlement reinstated 50 out of the 100-odd NUTW members who were dismissed towards the end of last year.

To get above the 50 percent, the union has had to recruit from among the workers taken on by the company during last year's strike.

A key person in this campaign was Michael Bahlekazi who signed on numerous new members.

But, Jatex suddenly fired him for allegedly stabbing a fellow worker - an accusation which was flatly rejected by NUTW

members.

After tense negotiations between the company and the union, it was agreed that Brother Bahlekazi would be taken back if he was found not guilty in the criminal case started by Jatex.

The court subsequently acquitted Brother Bahlekazi and significantly the judge said that his version was the most likely.

But rather than take him back the company decided to pay him R2 000 - as well as paying about R500 in back-pay.

NUTW branch secretary, Bangi Solo said Brother Bahlekazi accepted the company's offer but before he left management offered him another R1 000 if he would give them the names of all the workers that had joined the union.

This he refused to do, Brother Solo said.

The NUTW has recently handed in a list of all its members at the factory - which amounts to well over two-thirds of the work-

force.

In spite of this being well beyond the 50 plus one percent

agreed to in the out-of-court settlement, Jatex has yet to recognise the union.

Personnel officer fired for taking bribes

WORKERS at the Bakers factory near Pinetown have put a stop to a personnel officer taking bribes in exchange for getting workers jobs.

He was fired.

Shop steward chairman, Tom Dlamini said that towards the beginning of last month he went to speak to the personnel manager about the bribes.

He told the personnel manager that one of the workers still owed the personnel officer R30 for getting him a job.

'I got R30 from the manager after we had noted down the serial numbers which I passed on to the worker who then paid the personnel officer,'

Brother Dlamini said.

He said that on the Friday after the worker had handed over the money, he had gone with the manager to confront the personnel officer.

'I asked him whether he had received any money from the worker which he eventually confessed to.

'When we asked him why, he replied that it was a gift from the worker who he had got a job,' Brother Dlamini said.

The personnel officer admitted that this had been going on since April, Brother Dlamini added.

He said he hoped that this would teach people who misuse their power a lesson.

Comment

THE government has not only ignored workers' rejection of the new constitution and is proceeding with the elections to the two new puppet parliaments, it also expects us to pay for it.

Recently, it was revealed that the launching and developing of the new constitution would cost over R2 000 million. And who do you think will end up bearing this enormous cost? The already overburdened workers, of course.

Over the years, workers have been made to pay for their own exploitation. We not only have had to bear the tremendous cost of maintaining the massive bureaucracy needed to keep up the apartheid system. A bureaucracy which forcibly removes our relatives from their rural homes or from 'white' areas, which checks our passes to make sure that we have the right to work in the towns and cities and which makes sure that our leisure time is not spent in the 'white' areas but in the overcrowded townships.

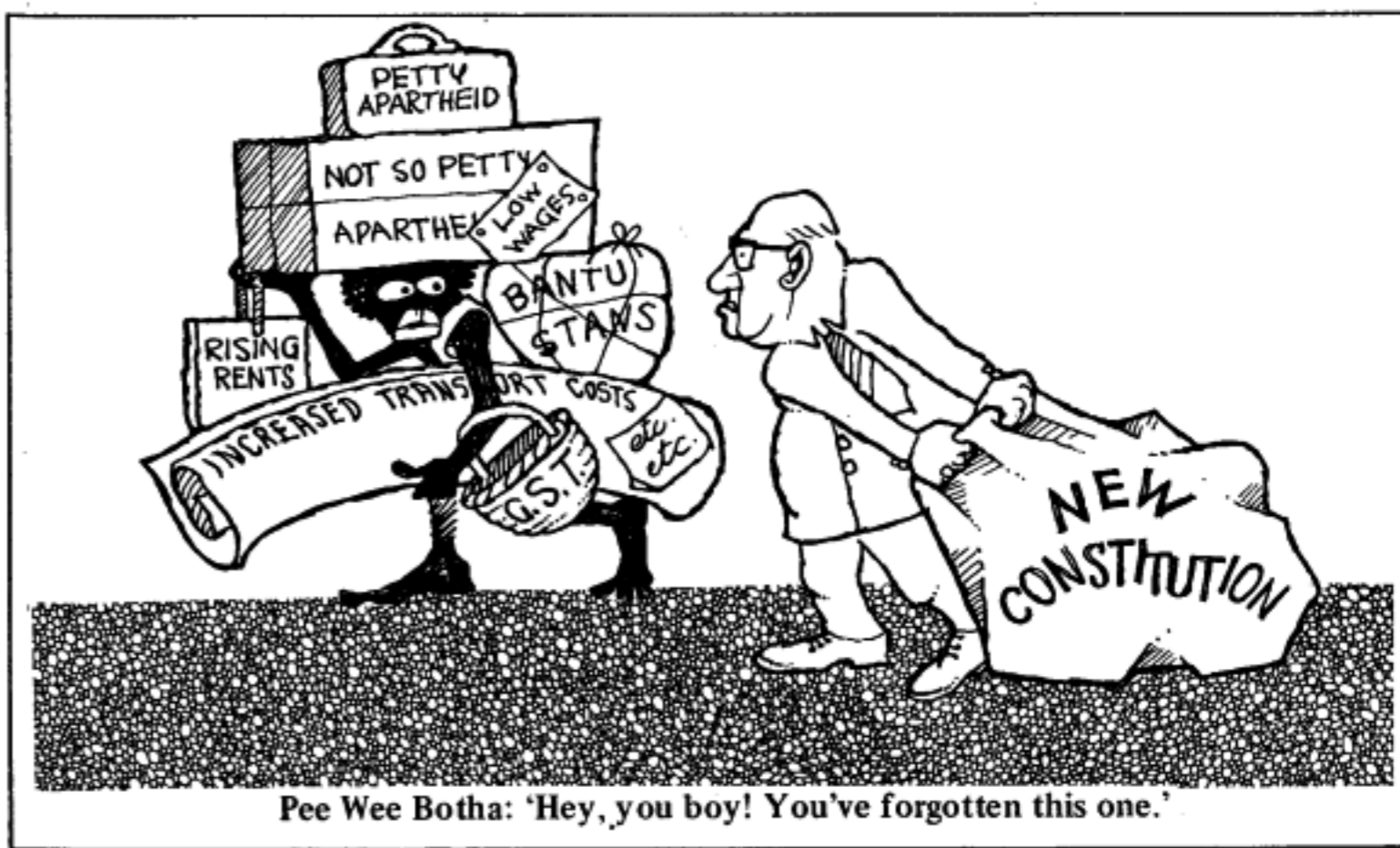
Now the government is building three parliaments, with three separate dining rooms and presumably three sets of toilets. All so that the South African government can tell the rest of the world that it is in the 'process' of removing apartheid. So-called coloureds and Indians will be able to govern their 'own' interests. But all the time under the control of the 'white' government. And we the workers will have to pay higher taxes for this.

Just as we have had to pay for the establishing of the bantustan governments. Last year over R354 million was given to these 'independent' homelands as a budgetary aid by the South African government.

As the government continues to build its elaborate disguise for the same old apartheid system, it keeps on needing more and more money. But the government does not ask for more tax from the companies which continue to make huge profits through workers' labour. It fears that these companies will just close their factories. Instead the workers are taxed by increasing the General Sales Tax (GST).

What have we got out of the present economic system? Racial oppression, poverty wages, rising food and transport costs, unemployment and economic exploitation — these are the benefits for workers of the 'free enterprise' system. Free enterprise is a curtain behind which the rich get richer and the workers get poorer.

This government and big business have no intention of changing the system to the benefit of workers. Nor will the Labour Party, the Solidarity Party or any of the other parties that are fighting for places in the new puppet parliaments. We, the workers, are suffering and only we, the workers, have the power and the real solutions to our problems.



Millions of workers turned into foreigners by new Act

LAWs have always existed covering foreigners in South Africa — these laws control the entry and exit of foreigners and the permits that they need in order to work in this country.

In April this year the government passed the Aliens and Immigration Laws Amendment Act which alters some of the laws covering foreigners.

Although this Act has now been passed, a date has not yet been set for when the law will start to operate.

The significance of these amendments must be seen in the light of the citizenship laws and the recent withdrawal of the Orderly Movement and Settlement of Black Persons Bill.

In terms of the citizenship laws all people who are born in one of the 'independent' bantustans, or who speak the language of that bantustan or are culturally or otherwise identified with any person who is part of the population of that bantustan, are citizens of that bantustan and are therefore foreigners in South Africa.

The Orderly Movement Bill contained very harsh fines for people who were in the 'white' area without a permit or for people who employed permit-less workers.

After a massive outcry by the unions and other pressure groups, the Bill was withdrawn but these same harsh penalties have now appeared as law in the amendments to the Aliens Act.

There is a fine of R5 000 or two year's imprisonment for anyone employing or harbouring an illegal alien and a fine of R500 for failing to produce on demand the necessary permit needed to enter South Africa.

There is no doubt that these new fines will apply to people from the 'independent' bantustans.

During the parliamentary debate on the new Act, the opposition party suggested several amendments which would then exclude people from the 'independent' bantustans from the Act.

Not one of these was accepted.

Since then the deputy Minister of Internal Affairs has said that an alien is an alien, no matter what his country of origin is.

Since 1976, the South African government has turned eight million people into foreigners by creating 'independent' bantustans.

In addition there are thousands of black aliens from countries like Lesotho and Swaziland who were recruited by the government to come and work on the mines and farms — some of these have spent their lives working in this country.

If these workers had been white they would have been able to acquire permanent residence and citizenship.

But now these workers are no longer needed because of the high unemployment and the government has begun to push them back across the borders.

The Aliens and Immigration Laws Amendment Act joins the many laws passed by this government to deprive millions of black people of their right to a South African citizenship.

Zulu and Gum Boot dancers entertain at Vereeniging local

THE workers at the last Labour Studies Course were treated to a dance show by FOSATU's Vereeniging local.

About 250 workers in the Vereeniging area turned out to welcome the Labour Studies delegates and to express their solidarity with FOSATU members spread all over South Africa.

Workers from Samancor at Meyerton performed the Baca dance from Mzimkulu which they practice at their factory.

This was followed by the Mokhibo dance (a Southern Sotho dance usually performed for chiefs) which was performed by families of FOSATU members.

Then came Zulu and Gum Boot dancers.

Finally, the workers were entertained by a praise singer who accompanies himself on the concertina.

A similar evening was held for the Labour Studies delegates at the Springs local where the Irvin and Johnson and the Braitex choirs sang.

The more than 700 workers who came to this meeting also

listened to talks on the role of workers in the community.

A Thembisa worker attacked the community councillors for being sell-outs.

He said in Thembisa there was a rubbish dump where the unemployed and suffering people would scratch for a living.

'But instead of the councillors helping these people get jobs and food, they just fenced off the dump,' he said.

Workers also spoke of the lack of communication between the students and the workers and said there was a need for joint action.

Another speaker raised the problem of scabbing by the unorganised people in the community.

He said that as there was no right to picket in South Africa, there was a need for unity in the community.

The chairperson of the Irvin and Johnson shop stewards committee argued that as women had shown that they can do any job in the factory, they should be accepted as equal partners in the workers' struggle.

Workers' education fund

SPRINGS factory, Irvin and Johnson has set aside R6 000 for education grants for its workers' children as part of an agreement between the company and the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union.

This factory has been the subject of bitter battle between SFAWU and a rival splinter union.

And since workers came into the Springs' offices last year and demanded to be members of SFAWU, a number of verification exercises have been held as tests of the union's majority.

Now, a year later, the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union has finally succeeded in signing a major agreement with the company.

An unusual part of this agreement is the company's setting aside R6 000 every year as an education fund for their workers.

SFAWU president, Chris Dlamini said they had a similar arrangement in the Kelloggs factory where he works.

He said that Kelloggs had agreed to pay school fees and for books of workers' children.

'We have agreed at I & J that if the fund should run dry, the management would consider adding to it,' he said.

The union has also recently completed wage negotiations at I & J which hiked the minimum wage from R56 to R70 a week.

Brother Dlamini said the wage minimum was not really satisfactory but 'it was a start'.

He said the company had also

agreed to 16 weeks maternity leave with guaranteed re-employment at the end of it.

'The company said it would pay R20 per week for 12 weeks of maternity leave and assist workers in claiming their UIF benefits,' he added.

Sales tax rise shows contempt for workers

THE Minister of Finance's decision to push up the General Sales Tax to 10 percent strongly reflects the government's contempt for workers.

This was said in a hard-hitting statement released by all the unions involved in the unity talks.

The statement said that the list of foodstuffs on which GST was eliminated 'is totally inadequate'.

'At the very least GST should have been taken off canned and certain processed foods,' it said.

'The majority of workers do not have refrigeration and have to spend a substantial part of their wages on these foodstuffs,' it added.

The statement said workers were not able to store fresh

fruit, vegetables, meat or fish and so would gain little from the dropping of GST on these products.

The 10 percent GST will mean that workers will have to pay more for the food they eat.

The statement also said that the GST rise would affect other household necessities bought by workers, like candles, soap, paraffin and clothing.

'This is absolutely unacceptable and will strongly influence our attitudes in wage negotiations,' the unions said.

'As workers have no representation in government, they will have no choice but to recover these losses in wage negotiations and failing this through collective action,' the statement ended.

FOSATU calls on workers worldwide to unite and fight oppression

FOSATU has come out strongly in favour of building solidarity with workers worldwide in order to fight against economic, political and social oppression of workers.

In a new international policy statement recently released by the Central Committee, the federation pledged itself:

- * to build effective worker organisation to counter and reduce the power of the giant multinational companies.
- * to support worker struggles in other countries in whatever way we can.
- * to ensure that the institutions of the international trade union movement are not being used by anti-worker forces to create divisions and a loss of independence within the South African worker movement.
- * to assist in increasing the international condemnation of and pressure on the present racist regime in South Africa.

The statement says that FOSATU has continually stated its opposition to South Africa's racist regime and therefore 'fully supports international pressure on South Africa to bring about social justice and a truly democratic society'.

Being a trade union organisation concerned with the jobs and livelihood of its members, FOSATU has had to give careful consideration to the question of disinvestment, the statement says.

'However, it is our considered view that the policy of disinvestment has had a positive effect and should not therefore be lessened.'

'FOSATU is definitely oppos-

ed to foreign investment that accepts the conditions of oppression maintained by this regime,' the policy statement says.

However, it adds that the federation is clear that its own focus must be the building of a strong worker movement in South Africa 'that can set the terms of foreign investment and ultimately ensure that the factories, machines and buildings presently in South Africa will be retained to the ultimate benefit of all.'

FOSATU says it is important for the federation's leadership to travel outside of South Africa and meet other unionists in order 'to educate ourselves in the common problems of the working class'.

It also adds that visits to South Africa by worker leadership from abroad were also of great value but these should only be made 'on the specific request or arrangement of the independent non-racial unions in South Africa.'

Gain credibility

The reason for this, it says, is that other visits are used by the South African government to gain credibility for its actions both within and outside the country.

The statement adds that for similar reasons FOSATU is opposed to the stationing of permanent representatives of the international trade union movement and related organisations inside South Africa.

It says that FOSATU believes that the institutions of the international union movement are still 'bedevilled by the pol-

itics of international power and the cold war - to the lasting detriment of workers.'

'FOSATU's own experience makes it wary of the dangers of division and organisational collapse that arise out of many of the practices of these institutions.'

'FOSATU believes that we have to guard against being caught in the web of international politics rather than building effective worker solidarity,' the policy statement says.

For this reason, the federation says there must be clear control over the access of international financial assistance.

'The dangers of such finance have already been seen in South Africa - it props up non-existent unions, creates disunity and can be used for particular political purposes rather than to assist in the development of trade unions,' the new policy says.

On the issue of Coordinating Councils, like the IMF Coordinating Council, the statement says, that FOSATU accepts the principle of such Coordinating Councils but they 'should not be used as a vehicle for propping up splinter unions and giving credibility to the anti-worker and racist practices of certain trade unions in South Africa.'

Turning to the issue of the giant multinational corporations, the policy statement says that the multinational's 'excessive power' is used to the detriment of workers both in South Africa and in the home countries of these multinational companies.

It says that it is in the common interest of all workers

that organisation is strong in all places where the multinationals operate.

'FOSATU's experience has shown that as a minimum strong factory based organisation around a shop steward movement and active membership is needed to counter the power of capital.'

'Effective worker solidarity in the struggle against multinationals depends on contact at all levels - membership, shop stewards, the union and the international trade secretariat.'

Worker solidarity will not be built on the basis of contact at one or two of these levels only,' the statement says.

It says that FOSATU will initiate and join any positive attempt to build international organisation within each multinational.

'We believe that the bringing together of shop stewards is the key element to such organising efforts and in this way the whole union can be fully integrated into this bitter struggle,'

the policy says.

FOSATU has also pledged itself to establishing direct contact with workers in multinationals based in so-called Third World countries which share many similar problems to those experienced in South Africa.

Finally, the statement says that FOSATU believes that affiliation to an international confederation of trade unions - the ICFTU, WCL or the WFTU - would not be of significant advantage to the federation's membership and to workers in South Africa at present.

'The particular position in South Africa would make any such affiliation politically complicated and would prevent a full and active participation in all activities of these organisations.'

'FOSATU believes that only one unified national trade union federation should affiliate to such international organisations,' the international policy statement says.

'We mean business'

WAGE settlements have recently been reached at Dunlop in Benoni and at Colgate in Boksburg but only after workers downed tools to show they meant business.

The Chemical Workers Industrial Union said it was clear that workers were not prepared to put up with management's low wage offers and their unfair negotiating tactics.

At Dunlop, workers won a minimum wage of R2 an hour with a further increase promised in November.

Both day and night shift workers stopped working during the wage talks and were threatened with dismissal.

'But the workers carried out the stoppages in a disciplined manner and returned to work before the company could carry out its threat,' a union organiser said.

Meanwhile, at Colgate all three shifts stopped work when the company offered a 10c increase on the bottom grade.

The CWIU organiser said the workers could see that the company's position had greatly improved but Colgate refused to reveal its profits.

'The workers were incensed at the offer which amounted to only 4,3 percent in a year when inflation is rapidly rising,' she said.

The union organiser said after further 'tough' negotiations, workers settled for a minimum rate of R2,60 an hour, with increases ranging from 32c to 40c per hour.

Thousands of coal miners strike for the right to work

HUNDREDS of thousands of British miners are fighting for their jobs. 120 out of Britain's 174 coal mines have been closed by the mass walkout by members of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Earlier this year the government-owned National Coal Board announced that it plans to close 'unproductive' pits and trim 20 000 jobs of the 180 000 jobs in the industry.

Major battle

For the past fifteen weeks the majority of miners have responded to their union's call for a nationwide strike in support of the miners' right to work.

The strike has turned into a major battle between workers and Britain's Conservative Government which since it has been in office has introduced anti union laws in an attempt to smash the giant British unions.

The government's economic policies have also worsened Britain's high unemployment. Nearly four million people are out of work.

Violent clashes

The strike has been marked by violent clashes between the police and miners' pickets.

And hundreds of miners, including NUM's president, Arthur Scargill, have been arrested and charged with 'interfering' with the police.

The striking miners are attempting to persuade the other mines to join the stoppage and have also been trying to stop coal being delivered to the

country's steel mills.

NUM members have been travelling across the country to join the picket lines

Outside Orgreave coking works, more than 7 000 miners recently set up a picket in a bid to stop 35 coal lorries taking

coke to a nearby steel mill.

Thousands of police, part of the special force that the government has been flying around the country in search of the miners' pickets, charged repeatedly into the crowd.

Unbelievable brutality

At the end of the day, 81 strikers had been arrested and at least 110 people hurt.

NUM's Arthur Scargill said afterwards, 'There were scenes of brutality that were almost unbelievable! What you have now in South Yorkshire is an actual police state.'

Recently, thousands of miners staged a march through Britain's capital city, London.

The 'war' between the police and the miners continues but the British miners are determined to hold out until the government realises that they have a right to their jobs.

35-hour strike

Meanwhile, in West Germany thousands of metal workers are on strike in support of their demand for a 35-hour week.

The two million-strong IG Metall says that the 35-hour week will create more jobs and therefore ease the unemployment in Germany.

About 58 000 metal workers are now on strike and the employers have locked-out a further 26 300 at 16 factories.

The metal employers have at this stage have offered a gradual move towards a 38-hour week which the IG Metall has rejected as 'absolutely unacceptable'.



Metal workers in Germany demonstrate for a 35-hour week.

PART SEVEN: INDIAN WORKERS ARRIVE

The making of the WORKER CLASSES

IN the 1850's coastal land owners in Natal were searching for cheap labour to build a sugar industry. The Natal Africans would not work for the very low wages offered by the land owners, so the Natal government started to import workers from India. They were able to do this because Natal and India were both parts of the British empire. A vast system of labour exportation already existed in India — every year thousands of Indians were sent to different British colonies to serve as cheap labour for the colonial economies. The Natal government simply joined the other colonies as a receiver of cheap labour. These labourers were followed to South Africa by several hundreds of Indian traders. Many of them became very wealthy. But they were a tiny minority of the Indian community and we are going to concentrate on the 150 000 Indians who came to South Africa as contract workers between 1860 and 1911.

The Indian workers had to sign a five-year contract before they got on a ship for the long journey to South Africa. The terms of the contract demanded nine-hours work every day except Sundays. In exchange men were paid 10 shillings a month and a food ration. Women and children were paid half these amounts. Each year of the contract, their wages increased by one shilling so that men were earning 14s by the end, and women and children nine shillings. Their employers were also supposed to provide good accommodation and health services.

But most employers violated the terms of the contract. Between July and December each year, when the mature sugar crop was being harvested, and a new crop was being planted, many workers were forced to work as much as seventeen or eighteen hours a day in order to get their full monthly wage. Their accommodation was in very poor condition. Most workers lived in rows of back-to-back rooms, with low ceilings and no ventilation. Sometimes, as many as 20 people had to share a room. These barracks were built from grass and thatch; or perhaps brick and iron as the years went on. They were built on land that was no suitable for planting cane. Often this meant that the land was semi-swamp, where pools of stagnant water collected after rainfalls, and water seeped into the floors of the barracks. There were no sewage systems. With these long working hours and terrible living conditions, many workers became ill. The health service that the government provided was too small to cope with this burden and many workers died when they need not have.

It is easy to understand from this description why Natal Africans would not work for the sugar planters, and it seems very surprising that thousands of Indians kept coming to Natal every year until 1911. The main reason is that the Indian countryside was so impoverished as a result of taxation, landlessness and drought that the conditions of daily life were even worse there than on the Natal sugar plantations.

But Indians did not only work on the plant-



ations. When other Natal whites realised what a reliable and cheap source of labour the planters had found, they also began to demand access to Indian contract workers. By around 1900, thousands of low paid Indians worked for other agricultural enterprises, or served as domestics in hotels, restaurants and private homes, and thousands more worked for the Natal Government Railway or the coal mines in Northern Natal. Except for domestics, they were all unskilled workers. A large company had tried to import some skilled

workers in 1896; but the white working class in Durban was so concerned at the possibility of having their wages undercut by cheap Indian contract labour, that they organised big demonstrations. After that, the government made sure that only unskilled workers were brought in.

These workers were never able to organise sufficiently to protest about their terrible conditions and low pay. Employers and state officials kept a close watch on their Indian workforce. The workers were partly controlled by fines, jail sentences and

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Indian workers harvest pineapples (Picture courtesy of Killie Campbell Africana library)



Tea plantation workers (Picture courtesy of the Africana Museum Johannesburg)

a class of successful small farmers. So, in 1896 they passed a law which stated that all Indians who had come to the colony as contract workers, and their children, must pay a tax of three pounds every year. After the Anglo-Boer war, when the Natal economy was severely depressed, thousands of Indians were unable to pay the tax. This forced them back into contract work, where payment of the tax was suspended as long as they remained under contract.

It must have seemed, to many of these workers, as if they would have to spend the rest of their lives working for almost nothing and undergoing jail sentences or beatings if they tried to resist. But in 1913 this all changed. One of the Indian political leaders, called Mohandas Gandhi, stopped concentrating on the problems of the wealthy Indians, and for once turned to the workers' problems. He went to the Natal coalfields with some of his friends, where they told the workers that if they

went on strike the three pounds tax would be abolished. The response was overwhelming. Soon Indian workers all over Natal were on strike. The police beat up many of these workers, and shot some of them to death. Nevertheless, they stayed out on strike until the government abolished the tax which had forced them back into contract work.

The 1913 strike was a victory for Indian workers, but only a temporary one. The abolition of the three pound tax meant that Indians were no longer forced into contract work for white employers. But, after the First World War (1914-1918) other kinds of economic pressure forced Indians to accept low paying jobs in industry. Often conditions for these workers were no better than those we have described above. They only began to improve in the 1940's when large scale labour organisation started. We will discuss that in a later issue of FOSATU Worker News.

beatings. And, if any signs of organization appeared, it was broken up, and the 'troublemaker' was transferred elsewhere. So, the workers conditions barely improved at all between 1860 and 1913.

About half of the workers who survived their five year contract decided to remain in South Africa. To begin with, most of them tried to stay in the countryside. Some of them leased small plots of land and took up market gardening, others hawked this produce to white housewives in Durban. But the Natal whites wanted a cheap labour force, not

Maternity - a worker right!

THE present law as far as maternity is concerned is very disadvantageous to women workers. In particular, there is no guarantee that an expectant mother will be re-instated after childbirth.

To avoid problems caused by children and loss of labour caused by pregnancy some employers have introduced Family Planning Clinics in their factories. Workers are given contraceptives without any explanation. The manufacturers of these contraceptives acknowledge that these have side effects such as vaginal discharge, disruption of menstrual cycle and sometimes even sterility. I believe workers should be educated about these contraceptives by a person acceptable to the workers and employers. They should know the disadvantages as well. And thereafter, they can choose whatever is best for them.

The determination of women to keep their jobs has led them into a situation where they will prevent pregnancy by all means. A woman has to choose whether to be a mother or a worker. As a result, we have people who resort to back-street abortions and some fasten their stomachs tightly so that the foreman cannot see that she is pregnant. In practice, a woman is often fired as soon as the employer finds out she is pregnant or she is not re-instated after childbirth especially if she is not favoured by her foreman. Maternity, then, becomes retrenchment through the backdoor. It will not be taken into account that she needs to keep her job. Are women not supposed to bear children who will be the pleasure of their old age just because they want to secure their jobs? If women stop bearing children who will be the workers of the next generation? What about the husbands of these women - should they be happy that their wives are afraid to conceive? I think it is time we all realise that it is a natural right to bear children.

To avoid infant deaths and

miscarriages, expectant mothers should attend ante-natal clinics before the tenth week of pregnancy and more often thereafter. These clinics are not open on Saturday - they function on weekdays. Women should be given paid leave to attend these clinics. Seeing that some women are breadwinners, they cannot afford to lose half a day's wages - so they then avoid going to these clinics.

Working conditions in some

a woman up to six months to get her paltry benefits from the UIF. So, at her time of greatest need, the mother does not have any money. It is time that employers recognise their responsibility towards their women workers. Imagine the worry of a mother with a new baby - no guarantee of work and no money. If women exhaust their UIF benefit through maternity, how will they survive if they have no job to go back to? What

In the last issue of FOSATU Worker News we carried an article written by a women worker on the issue of the 'Double Shift'. We carry on this month with NUTW's Khosi Maseko discussing problems which pregnant workers face. She says that often women have to choose between being a worker or a mother. Rightly, Sister Maseko insists that women workers have the right to be both. She also points out that the law governing maternity in South Africa is even worse than that in our poorer neighbours of Lesotho, Swaziland and Botswana.



factories are terrible. No provision has been made for expectant mothers to be transferred to healthy departments, to be given light work, not to be exposed to dangerous chemicals and to be given jobs where they don't have to stand all the time. All these things can cause spontaneous abortions.

I am well aware that if employers pay less than a third of a woman's normal wage during maternity leave, then she can claim 45 percent from UIF, provided she qualifies. However, my experience is that most employers pay nothing and it takes

about the people who do not contribute to UIF at all, such as part-timers and domestic workers. With contract workers it is even worse because they do contribute but in order to claim their maternity benefits they have to undergo a long and unnecessary process in their homeland.

The position in this country is even worse than its poorer neighbouring countries. In Lesotho women do not work six weeks before childbirth and six weeks after and they cannot be given notice of dismissal whilst on maternity leave. In addition,

women get half an hour off twice a day after birth to breast-feed their babies. In Botswana it is also six weeks before and six weeks after, with re-instatement guaranteed plus half an hour off twice a day after birth. In Swaziland, women workers also get six weeks off before birth and six weeks after and they can resume their former or equivalent work without any loss of seniority.

DEMANDS:

* Education on contraception to be given by a person acceptab-

le to workers.

* Family planning clinics should be equipped with a full range of contraceptives so that women workers have a genuine right to choose the one that is best for them.

* Women should be given the right to attend ante- and post-natal clinics without loss of pay.

* Women should be given the right to maternity leave and to return to the same or a similar position after such leave.

* Women should be given the right to full pay while on maternity leave.

Women workers speak out at FOSATU booklet launch

WOMEN workers representing most of the FOSATU unions in the Transvaal attended a meeting on June 9 to launch the federation's newest booklet - Women Workers.

The booklet was put together following the success of last year's worker lecture on the problems facing women workers which was given as part of the FOSATU Education Workshop.

In her union

It deals with issues like maternity, contraception, child care and sexual harassment.

The booklet rightly concludes that 'a woman's place is in her union'.

At the booklet launch, workers spoke of the problems that they had faced in their factories.

Sexually harassed

Sister Irene Stracher of Nampak Polyfoil spoke about the problems of sexual harassment at her factory.

She said a manager used a company car supposedly for 'business' but a delivery worker saw the car in the workers' residential area.

'He reported the matter to the shop steward committee which decided to speak to



TGWU shop steward, Elizabeth Makhonjwa speaking at the launch (Picture courtesy of the Sowetan)

the managing director,' she said.

'The next day when the manager again wanted to go on business in town, he was followed to a worker's house by the managing director and the shop stewards,' she added.

Sister Stracher said they had found the manager 'hard at work'.

Fired instantly

He had been fired instantly and the shop stewards managed to prevent the worker losing her job, she told the meeting.

Other women's issues like the fact that some workers get lower wages than their male colleagues were also discussed at the booklet launch.

Women's voices heard

Towards the end of the meeting, Sister Refilwe Ndzuta, general secretary of the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union said, 'If we are going to fight these issues in the factory we must also make sure there is true solidarity and equality in the unions.'

'This means that women's voices must be heard,' she said.

The Women Workers booklet can be obtained from the FOSATU Printing Unit.

Sigma signs first maternity agreement

THE motor industry's first formal maternity agreement has been signed at Sigma near Pretoria.

The agreement which forms part of a wage deal negotiated by the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union gives women workers three month's unpaid maternity leave.

During this time, the company has agreed to pay the worker's medical and pension contributions.

Sigma also said where possible it would place women workers back in a job at the same rate of pay.

R1 800 paid in back-pay

AT Willard Batteries in the Eastern Cape, the company has backed down on its earlier dismissal of a worker and has agreed to pay-out R1 800 in back-pay.

The worker was dismissed on February 9 for refusing to attend a disciplinary hearing.

The company backed-down when the National Automobile and Allied Workers Union's attorneys wrote saying the dismissal was an unfair labour practice.

Three metal unions reject 'final' offer

THREE major metal unions — the Metal and Allied Workers Union, the SA Boilermakers' Society and the Steel, Engineering and Allied Workers Union — have rejected the metal employers' last offer in talks at the industrial council.

The three unions are all members of the SA Coordinating Council of the International Metalworkers' Federation.

This is the first time that other unions have joined MAWU in its attempts to win better wages for the industry's largely unskilled black workers.

Last year, all the other unions on the metal industry's huge industrial council sold-out and signed the agreement with SEIFSA, the employers' feder-

ation.

This year the craft unions under the umbrella of the Confederation of Mining and Building Unions have all accepted the employers' offer but the Boilermakers and CUSA's metal union have joined MAWU in its rejection of the offer.

At the last wage talks held on May 15, SEIFSA said it could only offer a 20c increase on the minimum — which would bring it up to only R1,73.

This is still way off, MAWU's demand of a minimum wage of R2,50 an hour.

At this stage SEIFSA has said this was its 'final offer' but the three IMF unions have called on SEIFSA to reconsider.

During the industrial council talks, MAWU organiser, Dr Bernie Fanaroff, attacked the metal employers for 'at no point considering our proposals'.

He said there was no doubt in his mind that MAWU's members would send the negotiating team back next year and in 1986 and again in 1987 with the same proposals until SEIFSA paid attention to them.

Adding to this MAWU president, Jeffrey Vilane said that the union had put in a reasonable demand but 'it is quite clear to us that the employers are treating us unfairly'.

'I want to make it clear that when we leave this meeting we are going back to our members

and individual employers, and every employer at this meeting knows where MAWU is and we will demonstrate our muscle to each and every employer,' Brother Vilane warned employers at the council talks.

Meanwhile, MAWU is pushing the same demands in the separate Cable Industry negotiations.

Initially, the Cable employers had announced at the industrial council meetings that it did not want separate negotiations — this was strongly rejected by MAWU.

At this stage, the Cable employers have informed MAWU's cable industry shop stewards that they are not prepared to better SEIFSA's final offer.

Pensions!

THE issue of pensions has reared its head again following the setting up of a select committee to look once more at the preservation of pensions.

Already, it has led to a strike at a Pinetown paint factory and unions report that workers are once again expressing concern about their pensions.

Three years ago, the infamous Pensions Preservation Bill which threatened to 'freeze' workers' pensions set off a wave of strikes throughout the country.

More than 20 000 workers at over 40 factories stopped work in support of demands for the withdrawal of their pension money.

As a result of this wide-spread worker protest, the government withdrew the Bill.

But recently it has announced the setting up of a select committee which among other things will look again at the issue of pension preservation.

In direct response to this announcement, workers at Berger Paints demanded to speak to management about their pensions.

A Chemical Workers Industrial Union organiser said management had initially responded by saying that workers did not really understand pensions.

They suggested that officials from the fund come to the factory to explain to workers how the fund operates, he said.

On hearing this, workers stopped work and only agreed to go back when the company agreed to negotiate the terms of Berger's pension fund with the union.

It is clear that the freezing of pensions has been rejected by workers and FOSATU hopes that this time the government will consult with workers' representatives before taking any steps towards introducing a new pension bill.

Maritzburg factory pays R6 500 to 5 workers following retrenchment

PIETERMARITZBURG engine manufacturer, Deutz Diesel has agreed to pay out R6 500 to the Metal and Allied Workers Union following the retrenchment of five workers.

MAWU was in the process of taking the company to the industrial court for its failure to negotiate the retrenchment of the five workers with the union.

However, the company decided to settle out-of-court.

Deutz Diesel has agreed to re-employ the retrenched workers when suitable vacancies arise.

It has also signed a preliminary recognition agreement with MAWU giving it stop order facilities, access to the factory and shop steward recognition.

In a similar settlement, Smith and Nephew in Pinetown has

agreed to take back 10 retrenched workers and to pay-out a substantial sum of money in compensation to other retrenched members of the National Union of Textile Workers.

The company retrenched 30 workers following the ten-day strike by its entire workforce earlier this year.

During the strike, management issued a pamphlet threatening to retrench workers saying that because of the stoppage the company was unable to fulfill its orders.

Shortly after the workers returned to work, Smith and Nephew went ahead with its retrenchment without any consultation with the union.

NUTW declared a dispute with the company for refusing to

consult the union.

In the settlement, the company agreed to take back 10 workers and to give temporary work to five, who would be given special preference when vacancies become available.

However, with one dispute settled another looms on the horizon.

NUTW reports that Smith and Nephew has said that if the wages for January 1985 were not agreed to before that date, it would not pay any back-pay.

NUTW general secretary, John Copelyn said this was a departure from the company's practice over the last ten years.

He said this was totally unacceptable to the union and it would merely heat up the situation unnecessarily.

Pictures from MAWU's AGM



Over 2 000 workers went to the Annual General meeting of MAWU's Southern Natal branch held at Curries Fountain in Durban. It wasn't possible to get them all into one photo so here are some pictures of some of those who attended the successful meeting. In the picture above is one of the MAWU choirs which sang at the AGM.

German chemical unionists visit South Africa's workers



IG Chemie's Bernd Leibfried (right) and Horst Metke.

TWO top officials from the German chemical union, IG Chemie, recently visited South Africa at the invitation of FOSATU's Chemical Workers Industrial Union. The IG Chemie has 650 000 members in the paper, chemical, ceramic, glass, rubber and petrol industries. During their two-week visit, Bernd Leibfried, the head of the union's international department, and Horst Metke, head of IG Chemie's collective bargaining department, spoke to chemical and paper workers in the various regions of FOSATU.

Pictured here at a seminar in Natal, the IG Chemie officials explained to shop stewards and union organisers how their union operated. They said that in Germany each industry had only one union which covered both unskilled and skilled workers. As head of the department for collective bargaining, Horst Metke, spoke about the contracts governing wages and working conditions for workers in the chemical industry. These, he said, were negotiated at industry-level. He said that every year, the union had new negoti-

ations covering workers' wages. Workers in the chemical industry were divided into six groups depending on how much training a worker had, Brother Metke said. An unskilled worker, with no training gets R4,50 per hour, he said. 'We do not think that is a very good wage,' he added. Brother Metke said the same wages were paid in the big factories and the small factories. The visitors from the IG Chemie also discussed Germany's labour laws which include the right for unions to strike without threat of dismissal.

Overworked Freight drivers stop work

WORKERS at Freight Forwarding at the City Deep depot in Johannesburg were fed up with the company making the drivers do more and more work under the excuse of 'bad business' so they refused to take their trucks out on May 17 in protest.

Transport and General Workers Union shop steward, Solomon Kekana said in 1983 more trucks were bought by the company and more drivers were hired but no assistants.

'And when assistants were dismissed or left, they were not replaced,' he said.

'The drivers were having to do the driving and then off-load at the other end, often by hand,' he explained.

Brother Kekana said the drivers were 'exhausted' and their complaints were met with 'some excuse or another'.

The stoppage brought management immediately into negotiations.

TGWU organiser, Lydia Kompe said, 'We sat for many hours arguing about the demand, until eventually the workers suggested that they should demonstrate the problem.'

So, the managers were taken outside and shown how packed-up the trucks were.

'Finally, they were convinced and workers returned to work at about two o'clock when man-

agement agreed that every truck should have a driver and two assistants,' she said.

Sister Lydia said the victory was very important 'because it shows other workers that they can fight the attempts of management to get them to work harder, with no extra pay'.

'Management calls it improved productivity but we call it extra exploitation,' she said.

Meanwhile, on the same day as the City Deep stoppage, the workers at Freight Services depot near the Jan Smuts airport also stopped work.

The workers were protesting against bad treatment by their foreman.

TGWU said the shop stewards had been putting complaints to management for months but nothing had been done about it.

So, early on May 17 when a foreman swore at workers, the members of TGWU said 'this is it' and stopped work.

They agreed to go back to work when management promised to see to the grievance.

An investigation led to the foreman being suspended for three days and to him being given a final warning.

'Workers are satisfied that the foreman has learnt a lesson,' a union organiser said.

New Federated Timbers' shop steward council

THE Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union has formed a new Shop Stewards Council to cover all the Federated Timbers' factories organised by the union.

Shop stewards from factories at Mobeeni, Pinetown, Empangeni, Pietermaritzburg and Park Rynie met for the first time on June 10.

The Federated Timbers' Shop Stewards Council represents about 450 workers - it has drawn up joint wage proposals for talks which are due to start in July.

First worker spokesperson for knitting unions

FOR the first time since the formation of the Transvaal knitting industry's industrial council, a worker has been chosen as the spokesperson for the unions.

Over the last 14 years the sole spokesperson for the 2 500 knitting workers has been Dr Anna Scheepers - president of the TUCSA affiliated Garment Workers Union.

Dr Scheepers' union only represents about 30 workers in the entire industry.

Last year when the National Union of Textile Workers applied for membership of the council, this was fiercely opposed by Dr Scheepers.

However, NUTW's court

action forced Dr Scheepers and her union to back-off and allow FOSATU representation on the council.

And this year, for the first time ever, shop stewards of the three unions involved in the council met to discuss a joint strategy.

The joint shop steward caucus unanimously elected NUTW's Norman Ratsidi as chief spokesperson.

Prior to the start of this year's wage talks, the unions presented a joint set of demands to the employers.

So far, three negotiating meetings have been held without any

significant success.

The employers have taken a hard-line on the forthcoming July increase by initially asking for a wage freeze until January 1985.

The workers are demanding a 13 percent wage increase in July, a further 15 percent in January and an 18 percent increase next July.

In negotiations, the employers have claimed that the low wages in decentralised areas have made their goods uncompetitive.

However the workers have countered by saying that they have been working overtime despite the recession and compet-

ition elsewhere.

Besides, in 1983 the workers gave up half of the July increase in order to prevent retrenchment, they said.

The joint union caucus has also demanded protection against dismissal for pregnant women, an industry retrenchment procedure and the doing away of the category of mechanic's assistant - this has been used by firms to avoid paying black mechanics a mechanic's wage.

The negotiating team anticipates tough negotiations ahead but believes if the unions stick together their objectives will be achieved.

500 Brewery workers demand higher wages

TOWARDS the end of last month about 500 workers at the Port Natal Administration Board's Congella Brewery stopped work in support of their demand for higher wages.

The eight-hour stoppage also affected depots and bottle stores owned by the brewery.

The Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union over the past few months has been attempting to negotiate wages with the PNAB but has been told that only the Minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr Piet Koornhof, can agree to wage increases.

Brewery workers said, 'This is unacceptable to us. We are being

paid poverty wages. We are sick and tired of the PNAB hiding behind the Minister.'

They said that their union had been recognised and 'we therefore demand the right to negotiate wages right inside the factory'.

The workers returned to work when management assured them that they had sent a telex to the Minister asking him to take urgent action on the workers' demands.

Recently, SFAWU was told that the PNAB would be sending a delegation to the Minister to discuss the issue of wage increases.

Sexual harassment leads to Isithebe metal strikes

SEXUAL harassment at an Isithebe metal factory, Kempar, sparked off a near general strike in the area last month.

Workers at Kempar at the end of April decided to approach management following reports from women workers that an induna was forcing them to have sex with him.

However, Kempar's manager told Metal and Allied Workers Union shop stewards that he was not prepared to fire the induna.

Furthermore, the manager said that workers not happy with the induna were free to leave the company.

When shop stewards reported back, an argument broke out between one woman worker and other workers.

The shop steward chairman intervened and stopped the fight and managed to get workers to return to work.

But half-an-hour later the police arrived, accompanied by management, and arrested 18 workers.

When the Kempar workers later heard that the 18 workers who had been arrested, including the shop steward chairman, had been fired by the company, they all stopped work.

After attempts by MAWU to resolve the issue with Kempar failed, workers at seven Isithebe factories downed tools in sympathy.

Unfortunately, the sympathy strike failed to break through to the hard-headed Kempar management and workers eventually

were forced to return to work.

Sexual harassment and other malpractices are rife in decentralised industrial areas, like Isithebe

Management take advantage of the fact that workers in the 'homelands' are not protected by South Africa's labour laws.

Under South African legislation, MAWU would have been able to take up an 'unfair labour practice' case against Kempar.

But in Isithebe, because it falls under KwaZulu, workers have no legal protection.

However, MAWU is at present investigating legal action against Kempar's induna.

And FOSATU is seriously examining the position of workers in the 'homelands' and so-called independent states.

I came to the urban areas with someone from home. I found the city a strange and ugly place. Finding work was not an easy task. My brother-in-law found a job in a factory where an old friend worked. The work was very hard and there were no other vacancies. I eventually found work in a factory which made boxes in Kempton Park but did not stay long as it was so far away from Driefontein Hostel where I had managed to get a bed. I worked for a while on the East Rand in a number of jobs and went home as often as I could.

Over the years it became more and more difficult to spend much time at home. The money which had been saved did not seem to last. There were children to feed and the eldest ones had now started to go to school, which was very expensive. The times spent at home became shorter and the periods between visits longer and longer. It was after one of these short visits that I found work at the foundry called Rely Precision Castings and I worked there for over seven years until May 1980 when management fired all of us because of a strike. I want to tell you of my work inside the foundry as a furnaceman. I will also tell you of the difficulties migrant workers have.

I had come to the city to find work. And now in Boksburg I discovered that workers from the country-

side can only get lower jobs than township people. In those places where workers are gently treated we are not needed. We are only needed in those places where there is rough work.

The work in the foundry was hard and dangerous and the hours were long. But I stuck out the tough and unsafe working conditions because there was no other place to go. We were the only people who could do this kind of work, and this was well known to our employers. Many of them knew migrant workers were the best workers. We were also prepared to do the heaviest of work. But they treated us badly and still didn't treat us like human beings but like animals. They knew that as soon as they expelled us we would lose a place of residence, because we would not be able to pay the hostel fees without the money we earned. Then the pass office would be indifferent and instruct us to go back where we came from. That was very painful. But what is more painful is this. It is clear that profits mean more to the bosses than our lives. Our children could die in the countryside but they would still fire us.

This bad treatment became too much to bear so we organised ourselves in order to do something about it. But first I want to show what kind of work a furnaceman does.

A furnace is like a large oven powered by elect-

ricity. The heat from the mouth of the furnaces at Rely makes you weak. The white-hot light is so bright that you cannot look into the furnace without a mask to protect your eyes.

Your job is to hook an overhead trailer full of molten metal and pour the metal into moulds. The job is very dangerous and you are given no training at all, but just sent in with the others. After about two months you get the hang of the job. But before that many are sacked because they recoil from the fires. It was this job that I did for seven years the work of a furnaceman. But inside the Foundry they call you a cast-boy.

One of our main complaints about our small foundry was this. We were not given proper safety boots and overalls. And we were still supposed to do a dangerous job.

There are many accidents at the furnace when we pour and when we carry pots. Very often the molten metal falls out of the pot and burns us. It can burn you from the waist down, mostly on the legs. We only have boots on and when the metal spills, it gets into your boots. There is no way you can escape the danger of burning. We could use coats, arm covering, gloves and boots, but the firm does not give them. We are two or sometimes four people carrying a pot - we have to pick it up. If someone is not experienced

Furnace heat makes you weak But the union makes you strong!

we will always spill. Even with experienced men we may have an accident if we have to pick the pot up very high to pour into a big mould. I have been burned so many times I can't count.

At Rely we were not even given strong safety boots. If we stepped on a hot piece of metal, the load of molten metal could be spilled. Other workers could also be badly injured or even killed by boiling metal.

There is also a big danger if the furnace explodes. When the furnace is nearly empty only the sand is left at the bottom and it can explode. If it starts to explode it cracks. The metal will fly all over the room.

a story by **Mandlenkosi Makhoba**

You must rush to switch it off. If you are near you are going to burn.

I tell you these things to give you an idea of how we worked. This is why we stood up united about the unsafe conditions at work. It was the first complaint we mentioned to the union organiser when we met him in the office at Benoni. But there were also other problems where we worked.

Mandlenkosi Makhoba is a metal worker on the East Rand where he has worked for the past twenty years. This story is part of a book called 'The Sun Shall Rise for the Workers' (Ilanga Lizophumelo Abasebenzi). The book has been jointly published by FOSATU and Ravan Press and is the first in a new Workers' Series. It will be officially launched at the FOSATU Education Workshop on July 14. 'The Sun Shall Rise for the Workers' tells how Mandlenkosi joined the Metal and Allied Workers Union and the struggles metal workers fought in the factories on the East Rand. Mandlenkosi says in the book, 'I tell this story to remind you of your life. I tell this story so you will remember your struggle and the story of the struggle we fight.'



MILNER PARK SHOWGROUNDS 10 am



CHOIRS

VIDEOS

PLAYS

DISPLAYS

STALLS

ABAFANA BOMOYA

THE JAZZ PIONEERS

SPECIAL

CHILDREN'S

EVENTS

**FOSATU EDUCATION
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