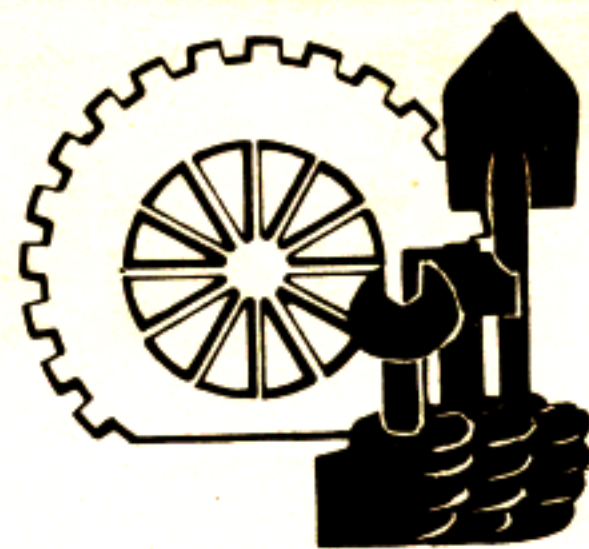


FOSATU WORKER NEWS

Federation of South African Trade Unions



OCTOBER 1983 NUMBER 25



The B & S workers at their last meeting. Their struggle will always be remembered.

THEY'RE BACK!

B & S workers return to work after an out-of-court settlement

IT'S OVER! The 260 B & S Engineering workers who have remained united for over a year, are back at work.

Since September last year, the B & S workers have resisted selective re-employment in the belief that one day they would win.

The workers said on September 9 last year management had come into the factory, switched off the machines and told them they had all been dismissed.

They said they were told that the next day they could apply for selective re-employment.

But this group of workers refused and every day since then they have met in a local church hall to discuss their struggle.

Things were not easy for them.

In an interview with FOSATU Worker News in May, the workers committee said some were starving and that most had been forced to sell their cattle

and other possessions in order to survive.

'But we learnt that by being alone nothing could happen and that the only way was to stick together. We are all suffering and sacrificing.'

During the past year, the dispute has drawn considerable interest from local and overseas newspapers which have carried interviews with the B & S workers.

With the support of the Metal and Allied Workers Union, the workers decided that they would take the company to the Industrial Court for its unfair labour practices.

The workers asked the court to order their re-instatement and put forward a back-pay claim of over

R850 000 - the biggest ever to come before the court.

But before the case could come before the court the company settled with the union - just over a year after the workers were originally dismissed.

A joint statement revealed that the company had agreed to take back the 260 workers.

It said that a 'satisfactory' relationship would now be established between MAWU and the company.

However, nothing was said about the back-pay claim and a secrecy clause in the agreement bars the union from revealing anything to the media (or FOSATU Worker News) beyond the statement.

It is unlikely, though, that the B & S workers would agree to the settlement unless the company had made an effort towards meeting their back-pay claim.

On September 26 all the workers went back to work at B & S Engineering at Brits.

Another Brits dispute was also resolved last month after a week-long strike at Firestone.

The Firestone workers returned to work after the company agreed to give them a productivity linked increase ranging from 10c to 3c.

It also agreed to form a joint management-union committee to examine the present unsatisfactory inc-

entive-based wage system with a view to changing it to a measured day work system.

The company further agreed to negotiate future wage increases with a National Automobile and Allied Workers Union committee.

The strike was sparked off when Firestone declared a unilateral wage increase for August.

The local townships are buzzing with the news of these two successes so it is likely that FOSATU organisation in this 'border' area will really take off.

Hopefully employers in the area will take a close look at these two disputes which have laid the basis for stable labour relations practices in both companies.

Previous Brits employer practices left much to be desired with companies firing union activists and calling in the police to 'solve' labour disputes.

The Ciskei's war against workers

THE major independent unions, including FOSATU, have attacked the recent banning of the South African Allied Workers Union by the so-called Ciskeian government.

In a strongly worded statement the unions said this banning was the 'most serious attack' on the trade union movement since the banning of trade union leaders in 1976.

ARRESTED

They added that neither the South African government nor employers could distance themselves from this action by the 'Ciskei government'.

The involvement of the South African government was clearly shown by the actions of the SA Police which arrested union officials and handed them over to the Ciskei, they said.

SAAWU's banning comes in the midst of a boycott of buses partly owned by the 'Ciskeian government'.

The Ciskei authorities have blamed the unions for the boycott and have launched an all out attack on union members.

DETAINED

Over the past few months more than 80 people have been detained by the Ciskei police, including officials of the African Food and Canning Workers Union, the General Workers Union and SAAWU.

The police and Ciskei-backed vigilante groups have been attacking workers with sjamboks, sabres and knobkerries in an attempt to get the workers to use the buses.

KILLED

And on two occasions the Ciskei police have fired on people outside the Fort Jackson railway station killing five and wounding about 50.

Reports have also filtered through that the Mdantsane stadium has been turned into a 'concentration camp' into which

the Ciskei-backed vigilantes have herded innocent people and then assaulted and tortured them.

The independent unions in the statement 'utterly rejected' the Ciskei's statement that the unions were responsible for the bus boycott.

They said the people of Mdantsane were boycotting buses because the bus company was making profits at the expense of workers.

SUPPRESSED

The unions said there could be no talk of reform while worker organisations were suppressed.

At the September meeting of the FOSATU Executive this statement by the independent unions was fully supported.

The Executive said the banning of SAAWU was a clear act of hostility against South African workers.

FOSATU warned Ciskei that it could not win this 'war' against workers.



MAWU members proudly carry the union's banner into the AGM

'Strive to build a strong working class movement'

METAL workers must strive to build a strong working class organisation - Transvaal branch secretary of the Metal and Allied Workers Union, Moses Mayekiso said at the union's annual general meeting recently.

Speaking to over 5 000 workers, Brother Mayekiso said by organising all the big steel producers, MAWU should have a membership of about 100 000 by 1984.

'We must keep on consolidating, strengthening our democratic structures and politicising our members

'We must negotiate on all levels where our members have the most strength.

'We must fight all kinds of exploitation through our strength,' Brother Mayekiso told workers.

He said the union supported the FOSATU stand on UDF and other political organisations.

'We believe that workers as a class should fight their own problems.

'As the enemy is only one - capitalism - and all other things like influx control are merely appendages,' he said.

Brother Mayekiso said the workers must keep up the

fight against the 'evil' of retrenchment.

'Retrenchments have taught workers that the capitalists are only interested in production and profits - not the workers.'

He said in the urban areas retrenched workers were dying of hunger and lost their accommodation because of unemployment.

'And in the rural areas where there is famine, workers are just dumped there with no thought to alternatives,' Brother Mayekiso said.

In resolutions adopted at the MAWU AGM, workers condemned Seifsa for encouraging employers not to negotiate wages outside of the industrial council.

'We believe that it is the right of workers to bargain on working conditions and wages either at the factory or nationally.'

The workers also said that MAWU would not co-operate or work together with sell-out unions.

They condemned attempts by companies to push MAWU on to joint negotiating committees at plant-level.

After the meeting Moses Mayekiso told FOSATU Worker

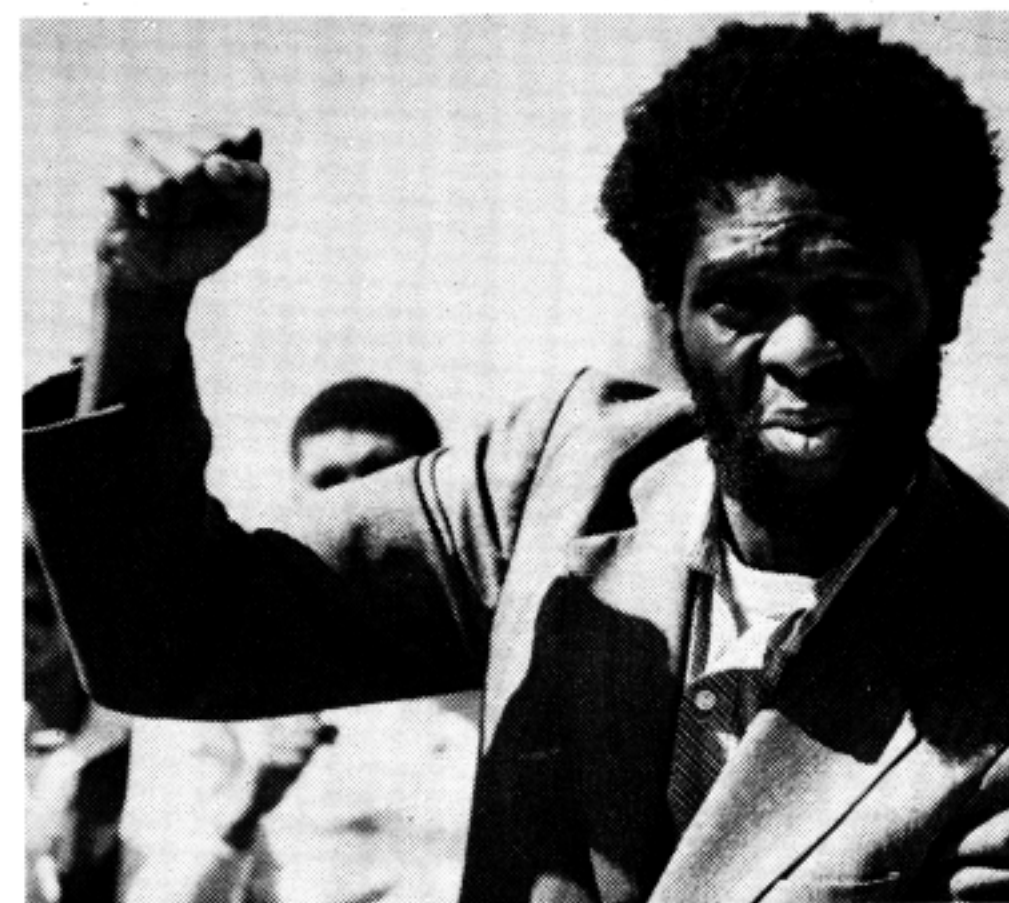
News that MAWU was rapidly becoming a powerful force in the metal industry.

'It is no longer just a union,' he said, 'It is a movement of workers.'

He said the union was not only

involved in 'bread and butter' issues but was involved in the broader struggle for 'liberation'.

'It is impossible to separate the two in South Africa when dealing with the oppressed voiceless masses,' Brother Mayekiso concluded.



Moses Mayekiso

Court attempt to get workers back

THE Metal and Allied Workers Union has taken two East Rand metal companies to the Industrial Court in a bid to win the re-instatement of dismissed union members.

The Alberton factory, Screenex Wire Weaving Manufacturers has been accused by the union of having unfairly retrenched 12 workers.

MAWU has asked the court to order their re-instatement with back-pay.

The union said Screenex had gone ahead and retrenched these workers at the end of last year even though it had previously promised to renew all migrant labour contracts.

The company had also said it would not retrench any workers before looking at ways of avoiding retrenchment, the union said.

If retrenchment became necessary management promised to give up to two months notice to its workers, it added.

However, with only a day's notice these workers were suddenly told that their employment was at an end after, in some cases, ten years' service, MAWU told the court.

The union also said Screenex had refused to meet with the union to discuss the issue and 'not even' the industrial council could bring the company to the negotiating table.

The Screenex case will continue in December.

Barlow Rand's Kew company has also been taken to court after the company fired 12 workers after the recent stoppage at the factory.

The company has argued before the court that where an employer fired a worker after giving the required notice pay, the Industrial Court has no power to decide whether the sacking was 'unfair'.

MAWU is waiting for the court to give judgement on this point.

If the court agrees with the company's argument, this could take away the court's power to order re-instatement of fired workers.

COMMENT

RECENT reports on just how few companies control the South African economy should come as no surprise. If you look at any capitalist economy you will find the same thing. True in South Africa the position seems even worse. But again this should be no surprise. It was monopolies that built the gold mining industry and now it is those same monopolies that have extended their power into other industries.

Yet we are told every day that in South Africa we believe in free enterprise, healthy competition and market forces. What worker can be expected to believe this fairy tale. The giant seven companies and the government itself firmly control the economy. Between these seven there is little competition but plenty of co-operation.

Only a dreamer can think of breaking down all this to bring in more competition. So all this talk of free enterprise, the market and competition has another purpose. Its purpose is to hide the success and greed of these monopolies. They wish to put the blame for inflation and unemployment on trade unions and workers who, they say, are trying to interfere with the free forces of the market.

A recent study of profits earned by companies showed that South African companies earned more profits than those in other countries around the world. The study revealed that the rates of profit were: South Africa 24,8 percent, Britain 6,8 percent, Germany 4,1 percent, Netherlands 4,7 percent, Switzerland 5,9 percent, Japan 4,1 percent and Taiwan 10,6 percent.

However, if we were to compare wages then we would find things to be the other way round — South Africa and Taiwan would be at the bottom.

So who is causing inflation? Is it the monopolies who push up prices so as to continue to earn these fat profits or is it workers who are still struggling to earn a living wage?

When workers ask for higher wages they are told that this will cause the company to be uncompetitive. But since there are only one or two companies monopolising most industries where is the competition? It is the high rates of profit that companies are earning that makes them uncompetitive and not higher wages.

In FOSATU we know that it is not workers causing inflation. Unlike the dreamers who weep about no competition we know this government cannot and will not control monopolies. We know that capitalism and monopolies will ever be one and the same thing.

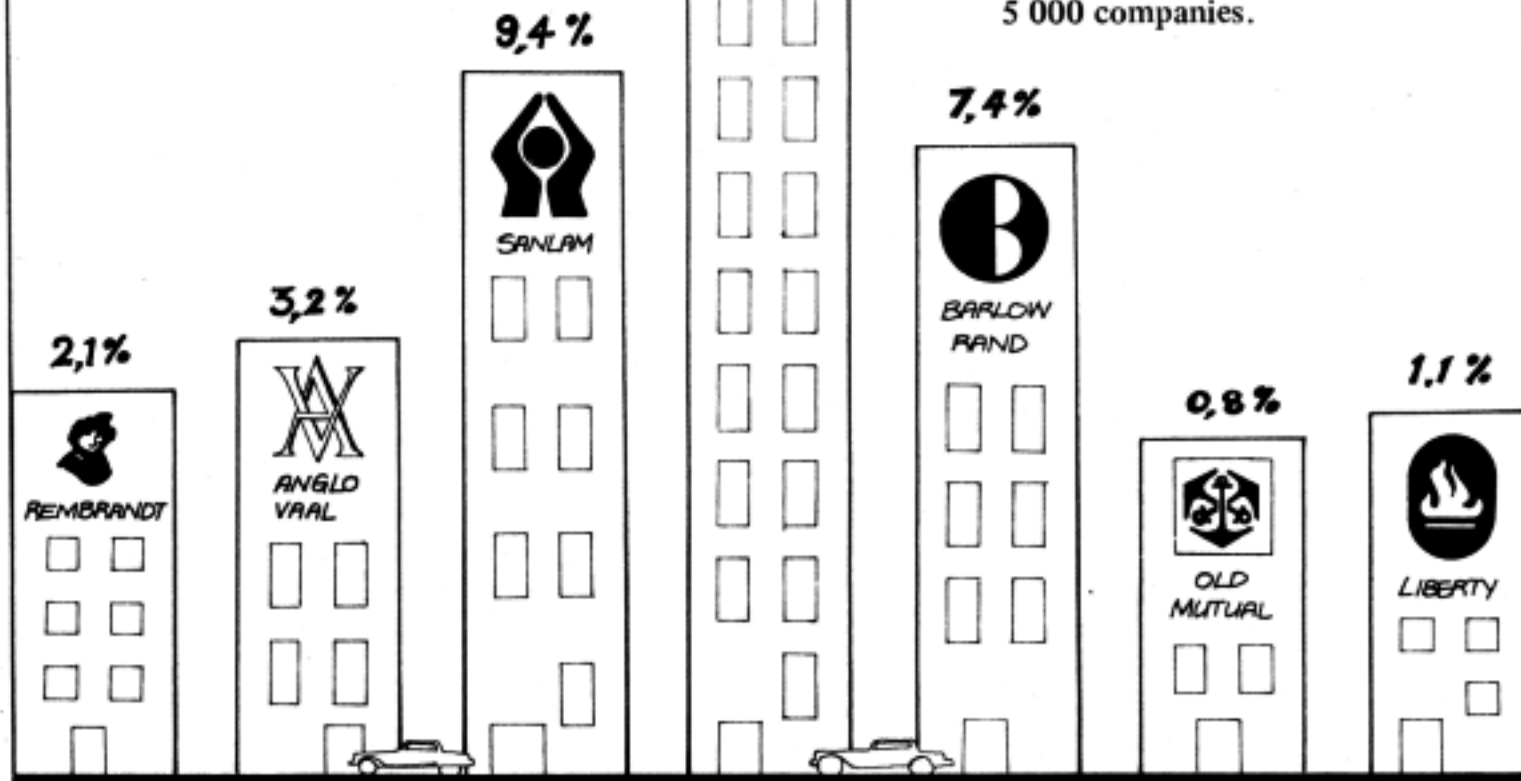
Our job is to organise to get our share of the fat profits raked in by monopolies. However as these monopolies are found in all industries they can move their profits from one place to another. Therefore, one union can never succeed against them.

Only a well organised federation such as FOSATU based on shop floor co-operation among workers can offer any opposition to monopolies. This is why we have now begun to build Shop Steward Councils such as that for Barlow Rand — to match the power of these giants.

THE SEVEN GIANTS

ANGLO AMERICAN CORP.

56%



THESE seven giant corporations control nearly all of South Africa's economic wealth.

Together they control close on 80 percent of all the companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange.

Towering over all the rest is Anglo American Corporation which alone controls a string of companies which represent 56 percent of the R90 000 million value of the Stock Exchange shares.

Even the smallest, Old Mutual with its relatively small share of 0,8 percent represents around R750 million.

Anglo, Sanlam and Old Mutual together are believed to control 5 000 companies.

Meat bosses crack

THE Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union has cracked the hard-line attitude of the management at the Cato Ridge Abattoir.

And the union is rapidly re-emerging as a powerful force among the Cato Ridge workers.

Last year SFAWU suffered a set-back when all its members were dismissed at Vleissentraal — another Cato Ridge factory.

The workers were dismissed after they struck in support of their demand for the re-instatement of five key union activists.

However, inspite of this set-back workers in the area rem-

ained loyal to SFAWU and to FOSATU.

And by early this year, the union reported that it had a majority at the State-owned Abattoir.

The union approached the company for recognition but it insisted that SFAWU extend its scope of registration to cover Cato Ridge and that it produce an audited statement proving paid up membership.

The workers rejected this, seeing it as a delaying tactic. As a result the union threatened to declare a dispute saying that

the company's unwillingness to recognise a majority union amounted to an unfair labour practice.

Recently the company backed down and has now agreed to give the union stop order facilities and has begun negotiations towards a full recognition agreement.

A Cato Ridge worker said the union had won a 'massive victory'.

'The bosses thought they had crushed us at Vleissentraal but FOSATU can never be crushed,' he said.

1 000 ATTEND CWIU'S AGM

MORE than 1 000 workers attended the succesful annual general meeting of the Transvaal branch of the Chemical Workers Industrial Union.

Branch secretary, Chris Bonner said this was a splendid turn out as it represented just over a third of the paid up membership of the branch.

She said that members in each factory had donated money for the meeting and shop stewards had got together to prepare food for everyone to eat after the

meeting.

'The shop stewards had slaughtered a cow and spent all night cutting it up,' she added.

But the meeting was not without its problems.

Sister Bonner said early that morning they had heard that all meetings in the area had been banned.

Because of this the Benoni Municipality did not send their buses to pick up workers from the East Rand.

But the shop stewards and office bearers were incredibly resourceful, Sister Bonner said.

'They quickly went to the police to get permission for the meeting to continue, and arranged alternative transport for the East Rand people,' she said.

Eventually the meeting got under way.

Sister Bonner reported to members on the growth and stabilisation of the branch over the past year and of the project to organise workers at the Sasol plant near Secunda.

The union has nearly 2 000 members at Sasol, and plans to approach management at the plant were approved by the meeting.

CWIU's president, Abbey Cwele, and present general secretary, Charles Ngema, reported on the national union affairs.

Two new E Province wage deals

TWO new wage agreements have recently been negotiated in the Eastern Province.

At the Port Elizabeth Cadbury factory, the minimum wage has been hiked up by 18c.

The wages of the majority of workers have gone up from R2,16 to R2,34 per hour.

On top of this the wage agreement was backdated to July 11 so the workers received about six weeks back pay.

And at the Mercedes Benz plant in East London, the wages have been brought in line with their colleagues in the Port Elizabeth motor plants.

The workers will immediately get a 10c increase backdated to August and a further 15c increase in February next year.

The wage agreement will be renegotiated in August 1984 where the motor workers' living wage demand of R3,50 will again be the subject for the wage negotiations.

In terms of the new agreement Mercedes' workers will also get a service attendance allowance which for those with ten years service works out to be a further 10c per hour.



Chemical workers sing their way along to the annual general meeting

THE WORKERS STRUGGLE IN

FOSATU Workers News here takes a look at the rise of Poland's independent trade union — Solidarity.

IN December 1981 Martial Law was declared in Poland. Tanks and troops moved into the cities and towns. Solidarity, the free trade union, was banned and its leaders arrested. The workers movement was beaten down by armed force.

Throughout the world workers watched with horror as their Polish brothers and sisters fell beneath the armed might of the Polish state. Many could not believe what was actually happening. How could it be, they wondered, that a democratic worker organisation was being smashed by a state that claimed to believe in socialism and democracy? If socialism is in the interests of workers why did a so-called socialist government in Poland shoot down Polish workers?

These are not easy questions. To answer them we must first look at the 'socialist' history of Poland.

Unlike some other countries Poland never had a socialist revolution. That is, the workers in Poland never seized power from the capitalist class. Poland became socialist after the last world war. During the war Poland was occupied by the German Nazis until they were driven out by the Soviet army. The Soviet Union, which was governed by the Communist Party under Stalin, then put a new government into power in Poland. This government was controlled by the Polish United Workers Party (PUWP).

FASTEST GROWING INDUSTRY

The PUWP wanted to change Poland from being a backward agricultural country into a modern industrial state. But the Polish people did not trust this Party. They did not trust it because it was put in power by another country, the Soviet Union, and because it continued to have close links with the Soviet Union. The Polish people did not know whether the PUWP government represented them or whether it represented the Soviet Union. So the Party had to work very hard to build support among the people for itself and its ideas.

The PUWP had a lot of successes and brought some big improvements to Poland. By the early 1970's Poland had one of the world's fastest growing industrial sectors. It also had one of the highest meat consuming populations in Europe. This shows that by this time the Polish people had gained quite a high standard of living. Also, schools had been built throughout the country. People could read and write. Health facilities were made available to the poor. In general, the condition of the people improved a lot.

But gradually the improvements slowed down. Gradually the people in Poland — especially the urban workers — found it more and more difficult to satisfy their needs and raise their living standards. What cause this change?

FAILED TO MODERNIZE

There were two main causes. First the PUWP failed to modernize agriculture. This was not entirely its own fault. Small peasants refused to accept collectivization of the land in the late 1940's and early 1950's. Instead, each peasant wanted to own and work his/her own tiny plot of land. Because the PUWP government was not rooted in the people, the peasants did not trust it when it argued for collectivisation of the land. The result was that agricultural production in Poland was based on very small farms and was very inefficient. Because of this inefficiency in agriculture by the mid 1970's Poland was forced to import food at great cost to feed its growing urban population.

Secondly, the PUWP failed to give the workers real control over the running of the country. Although Workers Committees existed in the early years of PUWP rule, by 1950 they had lost all

real power. Economic planning fell into the hands of a huge bureaucracy of full-time officials. Many of these officials came from the ranks of the workers. But they soon secured special privileges for themselves. Some even grew very rich through corruption. In this way these officials lost touch with the needs of the working people.

It was these two problems — the shortage of locally produced food and the elitism and corruption of government officials — which produced the decline in living standards that caused workers to revolt in 1970. The PUWP government forcibly put down the revolt. But it was unsure how to respond to the causes of the revolt. That is, it was unsure how to meet the needs and demands of the people. Because it did not have strong support among the peasants it could not collectivize agriculture to increase efficiency without risking a peasant revolt. Because it did not have strong support among workers it could not ask them to accept a short term drop in their standard of living to promote industrial growth without risking a worker's revolt. Instead, the new PUWP leader, Edward Gierek, tried to raise the living standards of the workers by expanding and modernising industry.



Edward Gierek

But where would the PUWP get the money to buy the machinery they needed to modernize industry? And where would they get the money to subsidize food prices and rising wages so as to keep the workers content while industry was being modernised? Under Gierek the PUWP decided to borrow the money from the capitalist banks of the Western countries. Gierek hoped that as Poland's industry grew it would produce more wealth particularly by selling its goods to the capitalist countries, so that he could pay back the banks.

At first it seemed as if the policy might work. But in 1973 and 1974 a recession hit the capitalist world. None of the capitalist countries now wanted to buy Poland's industrial goods. At the same time inflation rose very fast in the capitalist countries. This meant that the machinery which Poland was importing for its industries from the capitalist countries was becoming more and more expensive.

In order to pay back its debt and to pay for the more expensive machinery the Polish government was forced to borrow even more money from capitalist banks. By 1981 Poland owed money to 501 banks and to 15 governments in the capitalist West. Repaying interest on these loans used up all the hard currency which Poland earned from its exports in that same year.

So we can see how the Polish government was being squeezed tighter and tighter because of its dependance on capitalist banks and governments. It had to do something to save money. So it attacked the Polish workers. It did this by cutting

back food subsidies especially the subsidy on meat prices. These subsidies had enabled workers to buy cheap food even though the cost of producing or importing the food was high. The reason that the cuts in the subsidies was actually an attack on the workers was because it meant that the price of food rose so high that workers could no longer afford to eat properly. Faced with an attack of this kind the workers fought back. In 1979 workers rioted in Poland and in the middle of the next year, 1980, they formed the independent trade union, Solidarity.

ATTACK ON WORKERS

What exactly was Solidarity? It was a trade union organisation which the workers themselves set up to help them defend themselves against the attack made by the PUWP government on their living standards. But some people have asked why it was necessary to form Solidarity when there already were trade unions in Poland? The answer is that most workers did not trust these existing unions to defend them because these unions were under the State's control. These workers wanted a union which was independent of the State and which was under workers' control.

But because Solidarity was formed to defend workers against the government's attack it was more than just a trade union. It was also a political organisation which mobilized workers against some parts of government policy. In particular, it attacked the government's mismanagement of the economy. It also attacked the authoritarian way in which government decisions were taken. And it attacked the privileges and corruption of the government officials. Solidarity argued that Poland was meant to be a socialist society and as such should have done away with gross economic and political inequalities. So Solidarity called for 'socialist renewal' in Poland. That is it called for the creation of a more democratic and efficiently managed socialist system in Poland.

Because of its programme of 'socialist renewal' workers rushed to join Solidarity. Soon it had almost 10 million members and was fast becoming the most important force of resistance against the PUWP governments.



Solidarity C

But some people have argued that Solidarity was not a progressive organisation. They have argued that Solidarity was in fact leading the workers astray. These people point to the role which the Catholic Church has played in the organisation. They say that Solidarity was just a tool of the Catholic Church.

It is true that Solidarity often used religious symbols in its campaigns of protest. It is also true that church officials were influential among

POLAND

many of the Solidarity leaders. But we must remember that before Solidarity was formed it was the Catholic Church that had opposed the authoritarian power of the PUWP government. It was the church which had spoken out against economic mismanagement, corruption and privilege in government. So millions of Poles, including workers, had looked to the church to protect them. As a result, when Solidarity was formed many workers wanted to see Solidarity and the church join forces against the government. But it seems that the church was not so keen on this. The church seemed to fear that Solidarity would replace it as the champion of the people. When Solidarity was eventually crushed in 1981 the Catholic Church did little to defend it.

It is then true that there was a conservative side to many of Solidarity's members, including some of the leaders. Perhaps these workers put too much faith in the church? They mistakenly relied on the church to join with them in their struggle for 'socialist renewal' in Poland.

DEMAND FOR OWNERSHIP

But the conservative side of Solidarity was not its only side. At the same time as some workers were looking for an alliance with the church others were developing a progressive set of demands for Solidarity to fight for. These demands were based on the public ownership of the means of production in Poland. They included:

- * the equalisation of wages,
- * major improvements for the lowest paid,
- * the extension of food services and social services,
- * the retention of full employment,
- * the abolition of official privileges,
- * the democratic accountability of business managers and economic planners.

In other words, Solidarity was demanding a radical socialist democracy in Poland.

So Solidarity had both a conservative and progressive side. But it is important to remember that even the church-supporters in Solidarity supported these demands. This suggests that these workers were not reactionary, as has been claimed, but that they were confused. The progressive members of Solidarity hoped to educate the others through



Solidarity's headquarters in Warsaw



Progress in 1981

struggle.

So we can see that, despite its name, Solidarity was not a disciplined and united organisation. Rather, it was seriously divided and broken into factions. As a trade union it was also weakened by the fact that its shop floor organisation was poor. Also, it did not organise workers on industrial lines. Instead, it organised on a regional basis. This reflects the fact that in many ways Solidarity was more of a political organisation than a trade union.

There was also a serious division within Solidarity over the strategies and tactics to be used in the struggle. One faction wanted to concentrate on economic reforms rather than take up political issues. This faction hoped that eventually Solidarity would win acceptance from the PUWP government. They hoped eventually to form an alliance with both the Catholic Church and the PUWP which would give them influence in running the country. This was the moderate faction.

The other faction was the radical faction. They rejected the moderate approach. They wanted Solidarity to seize power on behalf of the workers movement and to govern Poland. They rejected the idea of an alliance with the PUWP and the church. They wanted to take up political issues immediately.

The central leadership of Solidarity was broadly speaking controlled by the moderate faction. Lech Walesa, Solidarity's leader, was part of this group. The leadership was afraid of the political demands being made by the radical faction. They called on the members to be cautious and tried to hold back the forward movement of the workers. Sometimes

they used undemocratic methods to achieve this. The radicals attacked them for this. The radicals called Walesa 'a dictatorial vain fool'. They attacked him for entering into discussions with the government and church without consulting the rank-and-file. In the election for leader of Solidarity, Walesa only managed to get 55 per cent of the vote. This shows how strong the radical faction was within Solidarity. This also shows how badly divided the organisation was.

But despite these divisions Solidarity won some important reforms. This was because it had the support of the mass of the people. It won freedom for the press and freedom of travel. It won the extension of religious freedom. It won the removal from office of large numbers of corrupt state and party officials.

Solidarity's influence even extended into the ranks of the PUWP itself. As the Polish workers through Solidarity took up the struggle for radical socialist democracy in Poland, so large sections of the governing Party responded. These Party

CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE

members began demanding the democratisation of the PUWP. A million Party members joined Solidarity and raised the cry 'odnova' which means 'renewal'. Under pressure from the rank-and-file in the Party the established leaders began to fall. First Gierk was driven from office to be replaced by Kania. Kania acknowledged the need for reform but he did little to implement reform. The important question here is 'why not'? If Kania saw the need for reform why did he not use his official position as leader of the governing Party to implement the reform?

PRESSURE FROM BUREAUCRATS

The answer lies in the fact that Kania was not only under pressure from Solidarity and the rank-and-file in his own Party. He was also under pressure from the senior bureaucrats and technocrats in his government to resist reforms. These people feared that the reforms would mean they would lose their positions of privilege and power in Poland. These people had no support among the Polish people. But they did have the support of the Soviet Union which was strongly opposed to the democratisation of the Party and government in Poland. Kania thought that the Soviet Union might well use its military strength to smash the reform movement as it had done earlier in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. When the Soviet army began massive military manoeuvres right on Poland's borders it seemed as though they were about to invade Poland.

Kania's failure to act decisively led to his removal from office and replacement by Jaruzelski. Like Kania, Jaruzelski also claimed to support reform in Poland. But unlike Kania, Jaruzelski was a general in the army — and the army had very close ties with the Soviet Union.

DECLARES MARTIAL LAW

As the demands from the people reached new heights Jaruzelski acted. He claimed that the deterioration of the economy was so serious that strong government was now necessary. He claimed that Solidarity's increasingly political demands were making it impossible for the PUWP to rule. So in December 1981 he declared Martial Law in Poland.

Under Jaruzelski the Polish Army moved into the streets and took over the government of the country. In doing this the Army was supported by the technocrats in the PUWP and by the Soviet Union. But the Army was opposed by Solidarity and the democrats in the PUWP. Thus in order to succeed the Polish Army had to crush Solidarity. This it



Lech Walesa (front) at the last legal meeting of Solidarity

did by banning the organisation, by arresting thousands of its leaders and members, by smashing its meetings and demonstrations.

But unlike the Army, Solidarity is rooted in the working people of Poland. Though Solidarity can no longer function legally it continues to survive in the hearts of the working people. It continues to organise from underground and in exile. Since Martial Law was declared strikes, go-slows and mass cynicism have continued in Poland, depressing the economy even further. Faced with this working class resistance Jaruzelski has been forced to release many Solidarity leaders, including Lech Walesa. And recently Jaruzelski was forced to lift Martial Law.

But the democrats have by now been purged from the PUWP. The Party which now governs Poland again is run by the old established bureaucrats and technocrats. It is authoritarian and undemocratic. It has maintained the ban on Solidarity, continues to imprison Solidarity activists and to ban opposition meetings and demonstrations. In this the Party has the clear support of the Soviet Union and other Communist powers. (East Germany's leader, Honecker, recently paid a good-will visit to Poland).

But the Party also has some support from the Catholic Church which, though critical, is opposed to Solidarity's return. And the Party also has the support of the capitalist banks who want strong government in Poland in the hope that this will enable them to get their money back.

But for the workers of Poland there are only higher prices for food and other essentials and increased hardship. With no organisation to fight openly for them the workers have suffered a terrible blow. Their dream for a land of democracy and greater wealth has ended in tragedy. It has ended in authoritarian rule and increasing poverty. But their resistance continues. It continues because Poland's workers are the same as workers throughout the rest of the world. They dream the same dream. They dream of freedom, of democracy, full employment and rising living standards. And, like the workers in other parts of the world, the Polish workers have shown that they are prepared to struggle and suffer to make their dream become a reality. The struggle of the Polish workers stands as an inspiration to other workers in their struggle. And despite the terrible defeat they have suffered, we know that the Polish workers will not give up their struggle.

MAWU wins major battles in Natal

A NUMBER of major long-standing battles have been won by the Metal and Allied Workers Union in Natal.

For over two years workers at WB Camerons in Jacobs have been pushing for the recognition of MAWU at their factory.

In June this year things came to a head when the shop stewards put forward a demand for an R18 across-the-board increase.

ANGERED

This was the same demand that MAWU had put forward at the metal industry's industrial council but the 'sell-out' unions on the council agreed on far less.

Predictably, the company said they would look at the wage demand but refused to negotiate with the shop stewards until it had signed a recognition agreement with MAWU.

Angered at this response, workers staged two one-day work stoppages.

Branch secretary, Geoff Schreiner said the union had tried to resolve the matter.

'But it appears that with the help of Barlows head office, the company was prepared to sit out the strike', he said.

GO-SLOW

The workers then changed tactics by going on a go-slow which reduced production by as much as 50 percent in the major departments.

'At least this way workers were able to ensure that they got paid while involved in industrial action,' Brother Schreiner said.

The go-slow was called off when the company agreed to negotiate an agreement and thereafter to discuss wages.

'Within three weeks we had completed a recognition agreement which just goes to show the initial bad faith of the company,' Brother Schreiner said.

However, wage negotiations did not go as smoothly, because the company was prepared to only offer a maximum increase of R4,05 a week — a long way off the workers' demand of R18.

BALLOT

MAWU declared a dispute with the company which was referred to mediation and at the same time held a strike ballot.

Three hundred and two workers voted in favour of the strike and there were 21 spoilt papers — none voted against.

As part of the dispute, the union had charged that the company should have provided it with reasonable information on the company's financial standing.

Eventually WB Camerons agreed to provide reasonable information during wage negotiations and agreed to pay a R4,50 per week increase back-dated to July 1, a R1,35 increase from September 1 and a further

R4,50 increase from January 1.

This effectively brings the minimum wages to R90 a week — the MAWU minimum wage demand.

The union has also won this demand at Prestige SA in Pietermaritzburg where an R8,10 per week increase hiked the minimum wages up to R90.

MCKINNON

Another major victory was won at Pietermaritzburg factory, Mckinnon Chain.

Brother Schreiner said that during the past four years that the union had been active at the factory, the company had failed to keep to any agreement it had made with MAWU.

'They agreed to give us access — this was withdrawn.

'The company agreed to meet with shop stewards — they have not done this for months.

ENOUGH

'They agreed to give us stop orders but this was also withdrawn. Finally they agreed to negotiate a recognition agreement — one and a half years later we were still waiting for this,' he said.

At the middle of this year, the workers decided they had had enough and said it was clear that the company had no intention of recognising the union so a

dispute was declared.

Brother Schreiner said the Industrial Council had been notified and officials from the council had flown down from Johannesburg to urge Mckinnon Chain to settle the dispute.

SETTLED

In settlement negotiations, the company agreed to submit a draft recognition agreement within two weeks and that it would take all possible steps to conclude recognition talks before the end of November.

However, the union has said that should the company again appear to be avoiding recognising MAWU it would proceed straight to the Industrial Court.

Meanwhile at Scottish Cables, where MAWU declared a dispute after the company refused to open wage talks at factory level, the company has agreed to push the Cable Manufacturers' Association to re-open negotiations with the union.

In turn, MAWU agreed not to push for factory level negotiations if talks were re-opened with the employers' association.

SIGNED

Following the example of the metal industry's main industrial council, the Cable Manufacturers earlier this year also signed a wage agreement with the 'sell out' unions in the face of fierce opposition from MAWU.

Another Nampak firm free from closed shop

WORKERS at Nampak in Pietermaritzburg have won the right to be represented by the Paper Wood and Allied Workers Union.

The Nampak factory is covered by the closed shop of the printing industry which forces workers to belong to TUCSA's SA Typographical Union.

But recently in a ballot held at the factory, workers voted in favour of resigning from the TUCSA union.

Now the factory has been given an exemption from the closed shop and workers are free to be members of the PWAWU.

This is the fourth Nampak factory to be exempted from the closed shop since PWAWU started organising at Nampak's packaging factories.

A PWAWU organiser said the Nampak workers were 'thrilled at their well earned success'.

1000 workers in three major cities go on strike

IN a unique strike, more than 1 000 workers from three Autoplastics factories in different parts of South Africa downed tools at the same time last month.

The workers, all organised by FOSATU's National Automobile and Allied Workers Union, struck when they heard that management was not prepared to give them a wage increase.

In national negotiations in August which covered the three Autoplastics factories — Cape Town, Pretoria and Port Elizabeth — NAAWU put forward its 'living wage' demand of a R3,50 per hour minimum.

IMPOSSIBLE

The company replied by saying that it was impossible to have full scale wage negotiations at this stage as the company's budget had already been set for the year.

NAAWU agreed to accommodate this and put forward an interim wage demand for a 15c per hour increase across-the-board.

Autoplastics called a special Board meeting to discuss this but returned on September 12 saying 'there is no money therefore we cannot give an increase'.

STRIKE

Hearing this workers at the Pretoria and Cape Town plants downed tools that afternoon and the Port Elizabeth workers followed the next morning.

On September 13 after the company agreed to meet the union again that afternoon and also agreed that there would be no dismissals, workers returned to work.

At the afternoon meeting the company put forward a proposal of an 8c per hour increase.

Workers accepted this increase

Womens' group to fight for maternity rights

WOMEN shop stewards and organisers from all FOSATU affiliates in the Transvaal have been meeting to discuss maternity.

As one shop steward put it, the problem facing women workers is clear 'if you get pregnant, that's it, the boss fires you'.

This Transvaal womens' group was formed shortly after the education lecture on Women Workers presented as part of the FOSATU Winter School in July.

Instead of focusing on all the problems facing women workers, the group has initially decided to focus on maternity.

At a recent meeting of the group, a chemical shop steward reported that women workers were actually made to sign a document which stated: 'I the undersigned hereby declare that I am currently not pregnant. I furthermore agree that should I fall pregnant in the next twelve months, my services could be terminated immediately'.

A textile shop steward said that before leaving to have her baby she had been earning a meagre R22 a week.

When she returned she was told by management that she was lucky to get re-employed after the birth — at R17 a week!

Yet another women said she had successfully hidden her pregnancy from her boss by wearing

at general meetings held in the three different plants.

NAAWU organiser, Taffy Adler said the workers saw the wage increase as a 'substantial shift' on the part of the company — from nothing to 8c.

INADEQUATE

'But it is still inadequate in terms of what we want and we will be raising the NAAWU national demand again next year,' he said.

Cape Town organiser Andrew Wilson said the 'unity' of the workers had been a 'bit of a surprise' as the union had only just started recruiting in the plant.

'But at the end of the strike everybody just flocked to membership cards,' he said.

POLICE

Eastern Cape regional secretary, Les Kettledas said that at the Port Elizabeth plant, the local management had called in the police during the stoppage.

'We told the manager that we were not happy with the police presence as there was no need for them, but his attitude was very negative,' he said.

'We then said we would like to speak to the company's head office in Pretoria. Shortly after this the police were removed from company premises,' he added.

However in spite of this incident the peaceful stoppage by Autoplastics' workers was a huge success — showing what can be achieved by disciplined united worker action.

oversized dustcoats because she could not afford to stay at home with no pay.

After a lot of discussion the women resolved to fight in their factories for the following maternity demands:

- * the right not to be dismissed.
- * the right to return to a job at the same rate of pay.
- * the right to paid maternity leave.
- * the right to time off to attend clinics of their own choice before and after the birth of their babies.
- * the right to time off for breast feeding.
- * the right to safe conditions of work while pregnant.

New trade union library

SOUTH Africa's first trade union library has been opened in Cape Town.

Jewellers and Goldsmith Union general secretary, Ted Frazer, who is also the chairman of the library said it had been formed because 'knowledge is too important to remain in the hands of the bosses'.

The library which is at 108C Malta House, Malta Road, Salt River is open from 10 am to 5 pm on Saturdays.



NEW ORGANISERS COURSE

TWO new national organisers courses have been recently launched by FOSATU — a beginners' course and an advanced course. Here organisers from the beginners' course are shown the ins and outs of the FOSATU printing unit by Lawrence Mchunu (centre).

Think twice before you fire!

TEXTILE employers in the Transvaal must surely be thinking twice before they fire members of the National Union of Textile Workers.

Over the past year, the union has made major in-roads into the so-called right of employers to arbitrarily fire workers.

The union recently again won the re-instatement of a worker — this time at Edenvale knitting factory, AA Fabrics.

Brother Typo Thobejane was fired for allegedly disobeying an order.

But, Brother Thobejane said he had refused to sweep an area of the factory when told to do so by a manager because he was a machine operator and still had been busy working on his machines.

After his dismissal, the shop stewards took up the matter in terms of the disciplinary procedure, but without any success so a dispute was declared.

At a hearing at the knitting industry's Industrial Council, the NUTW argued Brother Thobejane's case and won his re-instatement.

However, it appears that some employers just never learn.

Recently the Industrial Court ordered the re-instatement of the senior shop steward at Polyknit.

MAWU attacks Seifsa for changing migrant contracts

A MOVE by the giant metal employers' association, Seifsa, to make the retrenchment of migrant workers easier has been slammed by the Metal and Allied Workers Union.

In a recent report, Seifsa informed its members that it had approached the department of Co-operation and Development in order to change the migrant labour contracts and call-in cards.

Seifsa said the department had 'no objections' to the contract period being changed from 12 months to an initial probationary period of one

month and 'thereafter be continued on a daily basis with one day's notice required to terminate the contract'.

The association advised its members that to avoid 'any possible problems with retrenchment during the contract period' they should consider changing the contracts.

A MAWU spokesman said the changes to the contract would mean that the employers could dismiss a migrant worker with only a days notice.

He said MAWU had called for the scrapping of the contract

Major breakthrough at Congella Brewery

AFTER a nine month battle, the Sweet Food and Allied Workers Union has finally been recognised at the Congella Brewery in Durban.

A SFAWU organiser said the Port Natal Administration Board owned brewery had continually delayed recognition saying that there were '13 Administration Boards in the country and we have not yet developed any policy in relation to the recognition of trade unions'.

He said SFAWU members viewed the recognition as a 'major breakthrough' for thousands of workers employed by Administration Boards throughout the country.

In this agreement, the employers agreed that there would be no retrenchments this year.

NUTW also said it had reason to believe that two of the women had been fired after they had refused to accept sexual harassment.

In response to both these actions by the company, NUTW has taken court action against Polyknit.

A worker leader said the union had won the right for Administration Board workers to have their own 'democratic representative unions'.

The agreement recognises SFAWU's right to elect shop stewards, to stop orders, to access for union officials and for time off for union training.

It also lays down a six month time limit for the signing of a full recognition and procedural agreement.

Since the union won recognition at the brewery, workers from other sections of the Port Natal Administration Board have been clamouring to join SFAWU.

system but this had been ignored by Seifsa.

'But as soon as it suits them, the employers change the contract', he added.

The spokesman said it was obvious that Seifsa had changed the contract in order to prevent a union suing a company for breaking a migrant workers contract in the event of retrenchment.

Earlier this year, MAWU successfully sued Dunswart Iron and Steel on the basis that it had retrenched workers in the middle of their contract.

AT LAST! Five months later, the Minister of Manpower, Fanie Botha, has finally appointed a Conciliation Board for the Frame dispute.

During those five months, the National Union of Textile Workers has been forced to go to court twice to block Frame from recognising the Textile Workers Industrial Union.

All this could have been avoided had the Board been appointed earlier.

BRAKE

It is likely, though, that Frame's opposition to the Conciliation Board acted as a brake on an early decision from the Minister.

At a recent general meeting hundreds of Frame workers crammed into Kranskloof hall to elect their representatives who will sit on the Conciliation Board.

This will be the first time that workers have ever effectively participated in any negotiations with Frame management.

TESTIFY

However it remains to be seen whether Frame will even agree to go to the Conciliation Board.

If not, the NUTW will proceed straight to the Industrial Court with its unfair labour practice case.

In this case, workers will testify how they were forced by management representatives to join the TWIU.

The NUTW will also tell the court how Frame had initially agreed to recognise it mill by mill - when it had got a majority.



Frame workers greet the news of the appointment of a Conciliation Board

Frame C.B. at last!

But the company shortly after this changed its mind and said it could not recognise the union because it did not have a majority in the entire Pinetown complex.

It then claimed that TWIU had

that majority.

Frame will deny all this.

Meanwhile in the mills, workers are resigning from the TWIU daily and are joining NUTW.

And last month workers from the various Frame mills travelled

up to Pietermaritzburg to watch the outcome of NUTW's court case.

In an out-of-court settlement, Frame agreed once again not to recognise TWIU at the Frametex mill until the dispute was settled

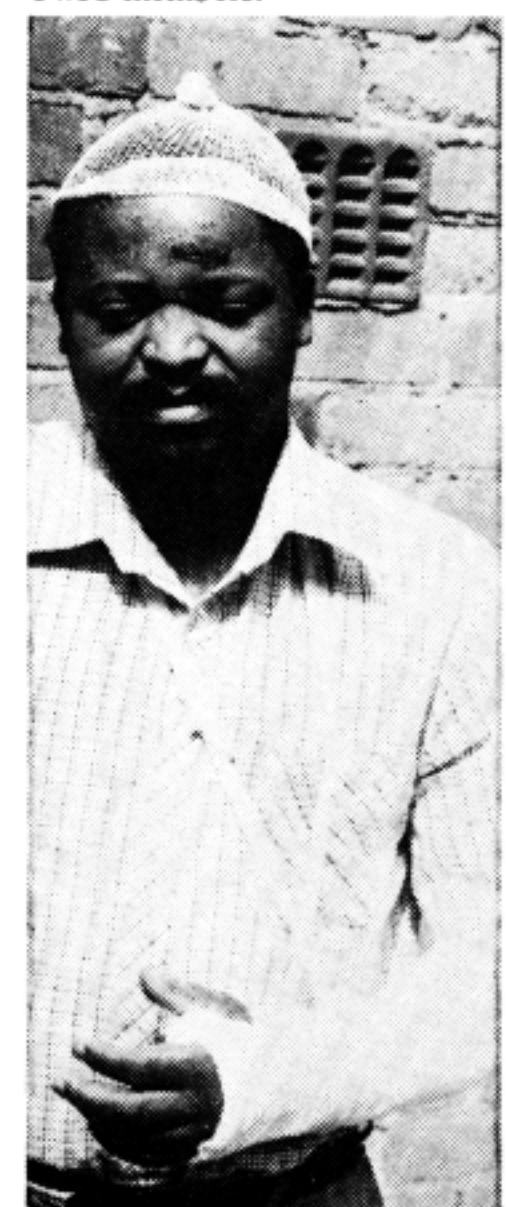
either by the Conciliation Board or the Industrial Court

NUTW organiser, Jabulani Gwala said the support for NUTW was 'high' and workers were 'eagerly' awaiting the Conciliation Board.

Pipe-wielding gang attacks NUTW members while recruiting

THE Frame campaign was recently marred by violence when supporters and shop stewards of the Textile Workers Industrial Union beat up and seriously injured three members of the National Union of Textile Workers

As a result criminal charges have been laid against these TWIU members.



Albert Hadebe

The incident occurred one evening last month when NUTW members were peacefully recruiting workers outside Frame's Pinetex mill.

Brother Albert Hadebe who was severely injured said while he was signing up workers he had noticed a shop steward from the red card union (TWIU) with 'something' in his hand.

'I got a strange feeling as this man had previously chased me and said he would kill me.

'He then started whistling to call all the people around,' Brother Hadebe said.

He said he had then pushed NUTW organiser, Jabulani Gwala aside as he could see what was going to happen.

'After that the fight started and the people with sticks and pipes began hitting me and I fell down,' he said.

Brother Albert Hadebe was taken to hospital where his broken arm was treated and numerous cuts on his body and head were stitched.

Sisters Gugu Khambule and Sina Buthelezi also had cuts from the attack which were stitched.

At the Frame meeting at Kranskloof, NUTW general secretary, John Copelyn told workers that it was obvious that a number of 'red card' activists were getting desperate.

'It would be easy for us to get sticks and do the same thing to TWIU members' he said.

'But our fight is not with other workers. It is with Frame,' he told the crowded meeting.

Rehiring of workers becomes prime issue

AS the economic recession begins to lift in South Africa, the issue of re-hiring retrenched workers is likely to become a prime focus for worker action.

Many companies throughout the country which are organised by FOSATU have agreed to give preference to workers they have retrenched.

But, as with many other agreements reached with unions, not all the companies stick to them.

Last month at Hammarsdale Clothing in Natal, the company took on 9 workers before negotiating with the National Union of Textile Workers.

PREFERENCE

Branch secretary, Prof Sineke said the company had retrenched 460 workers in February and at the time had agreed to give first preference to these people.

On hearing of the hiring of the 9 new workers, the entire workforce of Hammarsdale Clothing immediately downed tools.

RESULTED

The two-day strike resulted in the company agreeing to employ more than 40 of the retrenched workers as well as the 9 who, according to management, were going to teach the retrenched workers a new production line.

CONSULTING

It also agreed not to employ any outsider without first consulting with the NUTW and has said that by March next year all the retrenched workers would be re-employed.

Brother Sineke said the company had also said that nobody would lose pay because of the strike which he saw as an acknowledgment by the company that it had 'blundered'.

Meanwhile at Hammarsdale's Flamingo Textiles, workers have been on strike for over two weeks.

They are demanding the reinstatement of a women worker who was fired for allegedly refusing to sign a warning.

The NUTW has contended that this is an unfair dismissal as a person should only be fired after three written warnings.

Franz Falke turns around

IN a major turn-around, Western Cape textile factory, Franz Falke has agreed to begin negotiations towards recognising the National Union of Textile Workers

This German-based company had initially gone out of its way to block the unionisation of its workers and instead attempted to introduce a works committee.

This led to the NUTW taking the matter up with the 250000 strong German textile union which pledged its support.

At a recent sitting of a Conciliation Board, the company agreed not to victimise union members and has granted stop order facilities.

However, Franz Falke, though, only changed its initial stand when the majority of the workforce proclaimed their support for the NUTW in interviews with department of Labour officials.

And at this stage it has refused

using to sign a warning.

On going to press the workers were still out and the company had threatened to close down the factory.

to disband the works committee or to re-instate workers who were unfairly dismissed.

So although the union and the company have begun to travel on the road towards recognition, the journey is unlikely to be a smooth one.

A union spokesman said there were still a number of obstacles to overcome but the union was making 'slow but steady progress'.

At another Western Cape factory, Table Bay Spinners, the union has appealed to the Industrial Court against an industrial council decision not to grant it stop order facilities.

Once again a TUCSA union is abusing its position on an Industrial Council.

The Textile Workers Industrial Union is deliberately blocking the right of Table Bay Spinners' workers to be represented by the NUTW.

SORRY!
 WE could not fit in 'The Making of the Working Class' due to the length of the Poland feature. But next month we will carry a double page spread of the Working Class history.